

The BRONZE BELL

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SYNOPSIS.

David Amber, starting for a duck-shooting visit with his friend, Quain, comes upon a young lady who has been disconcerted by her horse becoming frightened at the sudden appearance in the road of a hairy Hindu. He declares he is Bahari Lal Chatterji, the appointed mouthpiece of the Bell, addresses Amber as a man of high rank and pressing a mysterious little bronze box, "The Token," into his hand, disappears in the woods. The girl calls Amber by name. He in turn addresses her as Miss Sophie Farrell, daughter of Col. Farrell of the British diplomatic service in India and visiting the Quains. Several nights later the Quain home is burglarized and the bronze box stolen. Amber and Quain go hunting on an island and become lost and Amber is left marooned.

CHAPTER III. (Continued).

He had, then, these alternatives: he might either compose himself to hug the leeward side of a dune till day-break (or till relief should come) or else undertake a five-mile tramp on the desperate hope of finding at the end of it the tide out and the sandbar a safe footway from shore to shore. Between the two he vacillated not at all; anything was preferable to a night in the dunes, beaten by the implacable storm, haunted by the thought of Quain; and even though he were to find the eastern causeway under water, at least the exercise would have served to keep him from freezing.

Ten minutes after his last cartridge had been fruitlessly discharged, he set out for the ocean beach, pausing at the first dune he came upon to scrape a shallow trench in the sand and cache therein both guns and his game-bag. Marking the spot with a bit of driftwood stuck upright, as pressed on, eventually pausing on the overhanging lip of a 20-foot bluff. To its foot the beach below was awestruck knee-deep with wash of breakers.

Awed and disappointed, Amber drew back. The beach was impassable; here was no wide and easy road to the east, such as he had thought to find; to gain the sandbar he had now to thread a tortuous and uncertain way through the bewildering dunes.

A demon of anxiety prodded him on; he must learn Quain's fate, or go mad. Once on the mainland it were a matter of facility to find his way to the village of Shampton, telephone Tangier and charter a "team" to convey him thither. He shut his teeth on his determination and set his face to the east.

Reset and roughly buffeted by the gale; the snow settling in rippling drifts in the folds of his clothing and upon his shoulders clinging like a cloth; his face cut by clouds of sand flying horizontally with well-nigh the force of birdshot from a gun; he bowed to the blast and plodded steadily on.

Imperceptibly fatigue benumbed his senses, blunted the keen edge of his emotions; even the care for Quain became a mere dull ache on the back of his perceptions; of physical suffering he was unconscious. He fell a prey to freakish fancies. For a long time he moved on in stupid, wondering contemplation of a shining crescent of sand backed by a green, steaming wall of jungle. Many visions formed and dissolved in dream-like phantasmagoria; but of them all the strongest and most recurrent was that of the girl in the black riding-habit, walking by his side down the aisle of trees. So that presently the tired and overwrought man believed himself talking with her, reasoning, arguing, pleading desperately for his heart's desire; . . . and awakened with a start, to hear the echo of her voice as though she had spoken but the instant gone, to find his own lips framing the syllables of her name—"Sophia!"

Abruptly he regained consciousness of his plight, and with an effort shook his senses back into his head. It was not precisely a time when he could afford to let his wits go wool-gathering. Inflexible of purpose in the face of all his weariness and discouragement, he was on the point of resuming his march when he was struck by the circumstance that the whitened shoulder of a dune, quite near at hand, should seem as if frosted with light—coldly luminous.

Staring, speculative, he hung in the wind—inquisitive as a cat but loath to waste time in footless inquiry. The snow-fall, setting in with augmented violence, decided him. Where light was, there should be man, and where man, shelter.

His third eager stride opened up a wide basin in the dunes, filled with eddy veils of snow, and set, at some distance, with two brilliant squares of light—windows in an invisible dwelling. In the space between them, doubtless, there would be a door. But a second time he paused, remembering that the island was said to be uninhabited. Only yesterday he had asked and been so informed.

Odd!

So passing strange he held it, indeed, that he was conscious of a singular reluctance to question the phenomenon. He had positively to force himself on to seek the door, and even when he had stumbled against its step he twice lifted his hand and set it fall without knocking.

There was not a sound within that he could hear above the clamour of the goblin night.

In the end, however, he knocked stoutly enough.

CHAPTER IV.

The Man Perdu.

A shadow swept swiftly across one of the windows, and the stranger at the door was aware of a slight jarring, as though some more than ordinarily brutal gust of wind had shaken the house upon its foundation, or an inner door had been slammed violently. But otherwise he had no little evidence that his summons had fallen on aught but empty walls or deaf ears that he had begun to debate his right to enter without permission, when a chain rattled, a bolt grated, and the door swung wide. A flood of radiance together with a gust of heated air struck him in the face. Dazzled, he reeled across the threshold.

Three paces within the room, Amber paused, waiting for his eyes to adjust themselves to the light. Vaguely conscious of a presence behind him, he faced another—the slight, spare silhouette of a man's figure between him and the lamp; and at the same time felt that he was being subjected to a close scrutiny—both searching and, at its outset, the reverse of hospitable. But he had no more than become sensitive to this than the man before stepped quickly forward and with two strong hands clasped his shoulders.

"David Amber!" he heard his name pronounced in a voice singularly resonant and pleasant. "So you've run me to earth at last!"

Amber's face was blank with incredulity as he recognized the speaker. "Rutton!" he stammered. "Rutton—why—by all that's strange!"

"Guilty," said the other with a quiet laugh. "But sit down." He swung Amber about, gently guiding him to a chair. "You look pretty well done up. How long have you been out in this infernal night? But never mind answering; I can wait. Doggott!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take Mr. Amber's coat and boots and bring him my dressing-gown and slippers."

"Yes, sir."

"And a hot toddy and something to eat—and be quick about it."

"Very good, sir."

Rutton's body-servant moved noiselessly to Amber's side, deftly helping him remove his shooting jacket, whereon snow had caked in thin and brittle sheets. His eyes, grey and shallow, flickered recognition and softened, but he did not speak in anticipation of Amber's kindly "Good evening, Doggott." To which he responded quietly: "Good evening, Mr. Amber. It's a pleasure to see you again. I trust you are well."

"Quite, thank you. And you?"

"I'm very fit, thank you, sir."

"And"—Amber sat down again, Doggott kneeling at his feet to unlace and remove his heavy plaskin hunting boots—"and your brother?"

For a moment the man did not answer. His head was lowered so that his features were invisible, but a dull, warm flush overspread his cheeks.

"And your brother, Doggott?"

"I'm sorry, sir, about that; but it was Mr. Rutton's orders," muttered the man.

"You're talking of the day you met Doggott at Nokomis station?" interposed his employer from the stand he had taken at one side of the fireplace, his back to the broad hearth whereon blazed a grateful driftwood fire.

Amber looked up inquiringly, nodding an unspoken affirmative.

"It was my fault that he—prerogative, I'm afraid; as he says, it was by my order."

Rutton's expression was masked by the shadows; Amber could make nothing of his curious reticence, and remained silent, waiting a further explanation. It came, presently, with an effect of embarrassment.

"I had—have peculiar reasons for not wishing my refuge here to be discovered. I told Doggott to be careful, should he meet any one we knew. Although, of course, neither of us anticipated . . ."

"I don't think Doggott was any more dumfounded than I," said Amber. "I couldn't believe he'd left you, yet it seemed impossible that you should be here—of all places—in the neighborhood of Nokomis, I mean. As for that—Amber shook his head expressively, glancing round the mean room in which he had found this man of such extraordinary qualities. "It's altogether inconceivable," he summed up his bewilderment.

"It does seem so—even to me, at times."

"Then why—in heaven's name—"

"I see I must tell you something—a little, as little as I can help—of the truth."

"I'm afraid you must; though I'm damned if I can detect a glimmer of either rhyme or reason in this preposterous situation."

"In three words," Rutton said deliberately: "I am hiding."

"Hiding!"

"Obviously."

Amber bent forward, studying the elder man's face intently. Thin and dark—not tanned like Amber's, but with a native darkness of skin like

that of the Spanish—it was strongly marked, its features at once prominent and finely modeled. The hair intensely black, the eyes as dark and of peculiar fire, the lips broad, full, and sympathetic, the cheekbones high, the forehead high and somewhat narrow: these combined to form a strangely striking ensemble, and none the less striking for its weird resemblance to Amber's own cast of countenance.

Indeed, their likeness one to the other was nothing less than weird in that it could be so superficially strong, yet elusive. No two men were ever more unlike than these save in this superficial accident of facial contours and complexion. No one knowing Amber (let us say) could ever have mistaken him for Rutton; and yet any one, strange to both, armed with a description of Rutton, might pardonably have believed Amber to be his man. Yet manifestly they were products of alien races, even of different climes—their individualities as dissimilar as the poles.

"Hiding!" Amber reiterated in a tone scarcely louder than a whisper. "And you have found me out, my friend."

"But—but I don't—"

Rutton lifted a hand in deprecation; and as he did so the door in the rear of the room opened and Doggott entered. Cat-like, pausing behind Amber, he placed upon the table a small tray, and from a steaming pitcher poured him a glass of hot speed wine. At a look from his employer he filled a second.

Amber lifted his fragrant glass. "You're joining me, Rutton?"

"With all my heart!" The man came forward to his glass. "For old sake's sake, David. Shall we drink a toast?" He hesitated, with a marked air of embarrassment, then impulsively swung his glass aloft. "Drink standing!" he cried, his voice oddly vibrant. And Amber rose. "To the king—the king, God bless him!"

"To the king!" It was more an exclamation of surprise than an echo to the toast; nevertheless Amber drained his drink to the final drop. As he resumed his seat, the room rang with the crash of splintering glass;

the flames. And silently studying his face—the play of light from lamp and hearth throwing its features into silent relief—for the first time Amber, his wits warmed back to activity from the stupor the bitter cold had put upon them, noticed how time and care had worn upon the man since they had last parted. He had never suspected Rutton to be his senior by more years than ten, at the most; tonight, however, he might well be taken for fifty. Impulsively the younger man sat up and put a hand upon the arm of Rutton's chair. "What can I do?" he asked simply.

Rutton roused, returning his regard with a smile slow, charming, infinitely sad. "Nothing," he replied; "absolutely nothing."

"But surely—!"

"No man can do for me what I cannot do for myself. When the time comes—he lifted his shoulders lightly—I will do what I can. Till then . . ." He diverged at a tangent. "After all, the world is quite as tiny as the worn-out aphorism has it. To think that you should find me here! It's less than a week since Doggott and I hit upon this place and settled down, quite convinced we had, at last, lost ourselves . . . and might have peace, for a little space at least! And now," concluded Rutton, "we have to move on."

"Because I've found you here?"

"Because you have found me."

"I don't understand."

"My dear boy, I never meant you should."

"But if you're in any danger—"

"I am not."

"You're not! But you just said—"

"I'm in no danger whatever; humanity is, if I'm found."

"I don't follow you at all."

Again Rutton smiled wearily. "I didn't expect you to, David. But this misadventure makes it necessary that I should tell you something; you must be made to believe in me. I beg you to; I'm neither mad nor making game of you." There was no questioning the sane sincerity of the man. He continued slowly. "It's a simple fact, incredible but absolute, that, were my whereabouts to be made public, a great, a staggering blow would be

tell you nothing more. I'm sorry."

"But only let me help you—any way in my power, Rutton. There's nothing I'd not do . . ."

"I know, David, I know it. But my case is beyond human aid, since I am powerless to apply a remedy myself."

"And you are powerless?"

Rutton was silent a long moment. Then, "Time will tell," he said quietly. "There is one way . . ." He resumed his monotonous round of the room.

Mechanically Amber began to smoke, trying hard to think, to penetrate by reasoning or intuition the wall of mystery which, it seemed, Rut-



Rutton Turned to the Fire, His Head Drooping Despondently.

ton chose to set between himself and the world.

Presently he grew conscious that Rutton was standing as if listening, his eyes averted to the windows.

"What is it?" he inquired at length, unable longer to endure the tenacity of the pause.

"Nothing. I beg your pardon, David." Rutton returned to his chair, making a visible effort to shake off his preoccupation. "It's an ugly night, out there. Lucky you blundered on this place. Tell me how it happened. What became of the other man—your friend?"

The thought of Quain stabbed Amber's consciousness with a mental pang as keen as acute physical anguish. He jumped up in torment. "God!" he cried chokingly. "I'd forgotten! He's out there on the bay, poor devil!—freezing to death if not drowned. Our boat went adrift somehow; Quain would insist on going after her in a leaky old skiff we found on the shore . . . and didn't come back. I waited till it was hopeless, then concluded I'd make a try to cross to Shampton by way of the tidal bar. And I must!"

"It's impossible," Rutton told him with grave sympathy.

"But I must; think of his wife and children, Rutton! There's a chance yet—a bare chance; he may have reached the boat. If he did, every minute I waste here is killing him by inches; he'll die of exposure! But from Shampton we could send a boat—"

"The tide falls about midnight tonight," interrupted Rutton, consulting his watch. "It's after nine—and there's a heavy surf breaking over the bar now. By ten it'll be impassable, and you couldn't reach it before 11. Be content, David; you're powerless."

"You're right—I know that," groaned Amber, his head in his hands. "I was afraid it was hopeless, but—"

"I know, dear boy, I know!"

With a gesture of despair Amber resumed his seat. For some time he remained deep sunk in dejection. At length, mastering his emotion, he looked up. "How did you know about Quain—that we were together?" he asked.

"Doggott saw you land this morning, and I've been watching you all day with my field-glasses, prepared to take cover the minute you turned my way. Don't be angry with me, David; it wasn't that I didn't yearn to see you face to face again, but that . . . I didn't dare."

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Amber with an exasperated fling of his hand. "Between the two of you—you and Quain—you'll drive me mad with worry."

"I'm sorry, David. I only wish I might say more. It hurts a bit to have you doubt me—"

"I don't doubt," Amber declared in desperation; "at least, I mean I won't if you'll be sensible and let me stand by and see you through this trouble—whatever it is."

Rutton turned to the fire, his head drooping despondently. "That may not be," he said heavily. "The greatest service you can do me is to forget my existence, now and henceforth, erase our friendship from the tablets of your memory, pass me as a stranger should our ways ever cross again." He flicked the stub of a cigarette into the flames. "Kismet!"

"I mean that, David, from my heart. Won't you do this for me—once last favor, old friend?"

Amber nodded.

"Then . . ." Rutton attempted to divert the subject. "I think you said Quain? Any relation to Quain's 'Aryan Invasion of India'?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Ideals Always Important.

It is by believing in, loving and following illimitable ideals that a man grows great. Their very impossibility is their highest virtue. They live before us as the image of that which we are to grow for ever.—Stopford Brooke.

Height of Meanness.

"Our new neighbor must be a very suspicious character." "Why so?" "She employs a maid who is deaf and dumb, the mean thing!"

MORE EXCELLENT REPORTS FROM WESTERN CANADA

Grains Are Heading Out Rapidly and Harvest Is Now Approaching With a Great Demand for Harvest Help.

Last week it was pointed out in these columns that there would be a yield of about 200,000,000 bushels of wheat throughout Western Canada, an increase of about 100,000,000 over the previous year, and that the demand for farm help was very great. Confirmation of this news is to hand and the cry still is for more help. The Canadian authorities are hopeful that the friends of the 400,000 or 500,000 Americans who have gone to Canada, during the last few years will come to the help of those people and induce as many able-bodied men as they possibly can to take advantage of the low rate which is being offered from all points on the Canadian Boundary, and particulars of which can be had from any of the following Agents of the Canadian Government: M. V. McInnes, 176 Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, Mich.; C. A. Laurier, Marquette, Mich.; J. S. Crawford, Syracuse, N. Y.; Thos. Hetherington, Room 202, 73 Tremont Street, Boston, Mass.; H. M. Williams, 413 Gardner Bldg., Toledo, Ohio; Geo. Afrd, 216 Traction Terminal Bldg., Indianapolis, Indiana; C. J. Broughton, Room 412, M. L. & T. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.; Geo. A. Hall, 2nd Floor, 125 Second Street, Milwaukee, Wis.; E. T. Holmes, 315 Jackson Street, St. Paul, Minn.; Chas. Pilling, Clifford Block, Grand Forks, N. D.; J. B. Caribonneau, Jr., 217 Main Street, Blidder, Me.; J. M. MacLachlan, Box 197, Watertown, S. D.; W. V. Bennett, Room 4, Bee Bldg., Omaha, Neb.; W. H. Rogers, 125 West 9th Street, Kansas City, Mo.; Beal Davies, Room 6, Dunn Block, Great Falls, Montana; J. N. Grievie, Auditorium Building, Spokane, Wash.

Every facility will be afforded men of the right stamp to secure advantage of these low rates. To those who propose to go, it may be said that they will have this splendid opportunity of securing first hand information as to the excellent producing character of the lands in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. They will have the opportunity of seeing some of the greatest wheat fields in the world and probably the largest yield of wheat, oats and barley that has ever been grown on the Continent. And all this on land some of which cost the settler only the \$10.00 necessary to enter for his homestead, or, if he purchased, in some cases, costing him from \$7.00 to \$10.00 per acre, but which is now worth from \$15.00 to \$20.00 per acre. Even at these prices the land is remarkably cheap as will be realized when the statement is made that from 20 to 25 bushels per acre and over of wheat are grown, netting the farmer from \$8.00 to \$10.00 per acre; and this on land that he got for nothing or paid merely a nominal price. In fact the production shows that \$18.00 to \$20.00 per acre would be a nominal price for land that would produce as these lands produce.

Rifle for Under Water Action.

When he is working in water infested by sharks and other sea monsters likely to do him harm, the diver has at present to rely for his safety on the use of the knife, or, falling that, on a quick return to the surface. Now comes the invention of Captain Grobi, a German diving instructor, who has constructed a rifle which can be fired under water, and is designed for the better arming of the diver. The most remarkable thing about this is that it fires, not bullets, but water, which is propelled with such force that it has an extraordinary power of penetration. Indeed, he inventor himself has pierced armor plate of medium thickness with the water jet from his weapon. The rifle has a stout barrel and is loaded with a cartridge cased in India rubber.

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