

# 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 equitrian who has been dismounted by her horse becoming frightened at the sudden appearance in the road of a burly Hindu. He declares he is Ephraim Lal Chatterji. The appalling mouthpiece of the Bell, addresses Amber as a man of high rank and pressing mysterious little bronze box. "The Token," into his hand, disappears in the wood. 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. He wanders about, finally reaches a cabin and recognizes as its occupant an old friend named Rutton, whom he last met in England, and who appears to be in hiding. When Miss Farrell is mentioned Rutton is strangely agitated. Chatterji appears and summons Rutton to a meeting of a mysterious body. Rutton seizes a revolver and dashes after Chatterji. He returns wildly excited, says he has killed the Hindu, takes possession of the bronze box and asks Amber to go to India on a mysterious errand. Amber decides to leave at once for India. On the way he sends a letter to Mr. Labertouche, a scientific friend in Calcutta, by a quicker route. Upon arriving he finds a note awaiting him. It directs Amber to meet his friend at a certain place. The latter tells him he knows his mission is to get Miss Farrell out of the country. Amber attempts to dispose of the Token to a money-lender, is mistaken for Rutton and barely escapes being mobbed.

## CHAPTER X. (Continued).

"Pardon, hazoor, but is this worth thy while? I am no child; what I know I know. If thou art indeed not Har Dyal Rutton, how is it that thou dost wear upon thy finger the signet of thy house"—Salig Singh indicated the emerald which Amber had forgotten—"the Token sent thee by the Bell? If thou are not my lord the rightful Maharana of Khandawar, how is it that thou hast answered the summons of the Bell? Are the servants of the Body fools who have followed thee hither, losing trace of thee no single instant since thou didst slay the Bengali who bore the Token to thee? Am I blind—I, Salig Singh, thy childhood's playmate, the grand vizier of thy too-brief rule, to whom thou didst surrender the reins of government of Khandawar? I know thee; thou canst not deceive me. True it is that thou art changed—sadly changed, my lord; and the years have not worn upon thee as they might—I had thought to find thee an older man and, by thy grace, a wiser. But even as I am Salig Singh, thou are none other than my lord, Har Dyal Rutton."

Salig Singh put his shoulders against the wall and, leaning so with arms folded, regarded Amber with a triumph not unmixed with contempt. It was plain that he considered his argument final, his case complete, the verdict his. While Amber found no words with which to combat his false impression, and could only stare, open-mouthed and fascinated. But at length he recollected himself and called his wits together.

"That's all very pretty," he admitted fairly, "but it won't hold water. I don't suppose these faithful servants of the Bell you mentioned happened to tell you that Chatterji himself mistook me for Rutton, to begin with, and just found out his mistake in time to recover the Token. Did they?"

The man shook his head wearily. "Nothing to that import hath come to mine ears," he said.

"All right. And of course they didn't tell you that Rutton committed suicide down there on Long Island, just after he had killed the babu?"

Again Salig Singh replied by making a negative movement of his head.

"Well, all I've got to say is that your infernal 'Body' employs a giddy lot of incompetents to run its errands."

Salig Singh said nothing, and Amber pondered the situation briefly. He understood now how the babu's companion had fallen into error; how Chatterji, possessing sufficient intelligence to recognize his initial mistake, had, having rectified it, saved his face by saying nothing to his companion of the incident; and how the latter had remained in ignorance of Rutton's death after the slaying of Chatterji, and had pardonably mistaken Amber for the man he had been sent to spy upon. The prologue was plain enough, but how to deal with this, its sequel, was a problem that taxed his ingenuity. A single solution seemed practicable, of the many he debated: to get in touch with Labertouche and leave the rest to him.

He stood for so long in meditation that the Rajput began to show traces of impatience. He moved restlessly, yawned, and at length spoke.

"Is not my lord content? Can he not see, the dice are cast? What profit can he think to win through furtherance of this farce?"

"Well," curiously prompted Amber to ask, "what do you want of me, then?"

"Is there need to ask? Through the Mouthpiece, the Bengali, Behari Lal Chatterji, whom thou didst slay, the message of the Bell was brought to thee. Thou hast been called! It is for thee to answer."

"Called—" "To the Gateway of Swords, hazoor."

"Oh, yes; to be sure. But where in thunderation is it?"

"That my lord doth know."  
"You think so? Well, have it your own way. But suppose I decline the invitation?"

Salig Singh looked bored. "Since thou hast come so far," he said, "thou wilt go farther, hazoor."  
"Meaning—by force?"  
"Of thine own will. Those whom the Voice calleth are not led to the Gateway by their noses."  
"But," Amber persisted, "suppose they won't go?"  
"Then, hazoor, doth the Council of the Hand sit in judgment upon them?"

The significance was savagely obvious, but Amber merely laughed. "And the Hand strikes, I presume?" Salig Singh nodded. "Bless your heart, I'm not afraid of your 'Hand'! But am I to understand that compulsion is not to be used in order to get me to the Gateway—wherever that is? I mean, I'm free to exercise my judgment, whether or not I shall go—free to leave this place and return to my hotel?"

Gravely the Rajput inclined his head. "Even so," he assented. "I caused thee to be brought thither solely to make certain what thou hast out of thine own mouth confirmed—the report that thou hadst become altogether traitor to the Bell. So be it. There remains but the warning that for four days more, and four days only, the Gateway remains open to those summoned. On the fifth it closes."

"And to those who remain in the outer darkness on the fifth day, Salig Singh—?"  
"God is merciful," said the Rajput pleasantly.

"Very well. If that is all, I think I will now leave you, Salig Singh," said Amber, fondling his pistol meaningly.

"One word more," Salig Singh interposed, very much alive to Amber's attitude: "I were unfaithful to the trust thou didst once repose in me were I not to warn thee that whither thou goest, the Eye will see; the words thou shalt utter, the Ear will hear. To all things there is an end, also—even to the patience of the Body, Shabash!"

"Thank you 'most to death, Salig Singh. Now will you be good enough to order a ghari to take me back to the Great Eastern?"

"My lord's will is his servant's," Salig Singh started for the door the least trace too eagerly.

"One moment," said Amber sharply. "Not so fast, my friend." He tapped his palm with the barrel of the pistol to add weight to his peremptory manner. "I think if you will lift your voice and call, some one will answer. I've taken a great fancy to you, if you don't know it, and I don't purpose letting you out of my sight until I'm safely out of this house."

With a sullen air the Rajput yielded. From his expression Amber would have wagered much that there was a bad quarter of an hour in store for those who had neglected to disarm him when the opportunity was theirs.

"As you will," conceded Salig Singh; and he clapped his hands smartly, crying: "Ohe, Moto!"

Almost instantly the iron door swung open and the lamp-bearer appeared, salaaming.

"Tell him," ordered Amber, "to bring me a cloak of some sort—not too conspicuous. I've no fancy to kick up a scandal at the hotel by returning with these duds visible. You can charge it up to profit and loss; if it hadn't been for the tender treatment your assassins gave me, I'd be less disreputable."

A faint smile flickered in Salig Singh's eyes—a look that was not wholly devoid of admiration for the man who had turned the tables on him with such ease. "Indeed," he said, "I was lacking in courtesy did I refuse thee that." And turning to the servant he issued instructions in accordance with Amber's demands, adding gratuitously an order that the way of exit should be kept clear.

As the man bowed and withdrew Amber grinned cheerfully. "It wasn't a bad afterthought, Salig Singh," he observed; "precautions like that relieve the mind wonderfully sometimes."

But the humor of the situation seemed to be lost upon the Rajput.

Without undue delay the servant returned with a light cloak and the announcement that the ghari was in waiting.

His offer to help the American don the garment was graciously declined. "I've a fancy to have my arms free for the present," Amber explained; "I can get it on by myself in the ghari." He took the cloak over his left arm. "I'm ready; lead on!" he said, and with a graceful wave of the pistol bowed Salig Singh out of the cellar.

Amber civilly insisted that both the servant and his master, leave the house before him, but, once outside, he made a wary detour and got between them and the waiting conveyance. Then, "It's kind of you, Salig Singh," he said; "I'm properly grateful. I'll say this for you; you play the game fairly when anybody calls your attention to the rules. Good

night to you—and, I say, be kind enough to shut the door as you go in. I'll just wait until you do."

The Rajput found no answer; conceivably, his charin was intense. With a curt nod he turned and re-entered the house, Moto following. The door closed and Amber jumped briskly into the ghari.

"Home, James," he told the ghari-wallah, in great conceit with himself. "I mean, the Great Eastern hotel—and Juldee jao!"

The driver wrapped a whiplash round the corrugated flanks of his horse and the ghari turned the corner with gratifying speed. In half a minute they were in the Chitpur road. In 15 they drew up before the hotel.

A Bengali drifted listlessly past, a bored and blasé babu in a suit of pink satin, wandering home and interested in nothing save his own bland self and the native cigarette that drooped languidly from his lips. He passed within a foot of Amber, and from somewhere a voice spoke—the Virginia could have taken an oath that the babu's lips did not move—in a clear, yet discreet whisper.

"Tomorrow," it said: "Darjeeling."

Amber hitched his cloak round him and entered the hotel.

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Tonga.

"Badshah Junction, Mr. Amber—Badshah Junction. We'll be there in 'alf an hour."

Inexorably the voice droned on, repeating the admonition over and over. Mutinous, Amber stirred and grumbled in his sleep; stirred and grumbling awakened to another day. Doggott stood over him, doggedly insistent.

"Not much time to dress, sir; we're due in less than 'alf an hour."  
"Even a tonga will be a relief after

shah Junction, Rajputana Route. . . Then tonga to Kuttarpur. . . Farrell's there and his daughter. . . That's right, my man, throw me out!"

His downfall was spectacular. In his enthusiasm for the part he played, he had erred to the extent of delivering a blow in Doggott's face, more forcible, probably, than he had intended it to be. Promptly he landed sprawling on the station platform.

And the train continued on its appointed way, bearing both Amber and the injured Doggott.

Thus they came to the heart of Rajputana.

In the chill of dawn they were deposited at Badshah Junction. A scanty length of rude platform received them and their two small traveling bags.

They stood, then, forlorn in a howling desolation. For signs of life they had the station, a flimsy shelter roofed with corrugated iron, a beaten track that wandered off northwards and disappeared over a grassless swell, a handful of mud huts at a distance, and the ticket agent. The latter, a sleepy, surly Eurasian in pyjamas, surveyed them listlessly from the threshold of the station, and without a sign either of interest or contempt turned and locked himself in.

Amber sat down on his upturned silt case and laughed and lit a cigarette. Doggott growled.

Presently the sun rose in glory and sent its burning level rays to cast a shadow several rods long of an enraged American beating frantically with clenched fists upon the door of an unresponsive railway station.

He hammered until he was a-weary, then deputized his task to Doggott, who resourcefully found him a stone of size and proceeded to make dents in the door. This method elicited the Eurasian. He came out, listened at

wink deliberately at Amber the while he broadly sketched for him his ancestry and the manner of his life at home and abroad.

Thunderstruck, Amber caught himself just as he was on the point of attempting to drag the driver from his seat and beat him into a more endurable frame of mind. He swallowed the hint and gave up the contest.

"Oh, very well," he conceded. "I presume you're trying to say there isn't another tonga to be had and it can't be helped; but I don't like your tone. However, there doesn't seem to be anything to do but take you. How much for the two of us?"

"Your servant, sahib? He cannot ride in this tonga," asserted the driver impressively.

"He can't. Why not?"  
"You can see there is room for but two, and I have yet another passenger."

"Where?"  
"At the first dak-bungalow, sahib, where the mail tonga broke down last night. This tonga, which I say is an excellent tonga, an aram tonga, a tonga for ease, is sent to take its place. More than this, I am bidden to go in haste; therefore there is little time for you to decide whether or not you will go with me alone. As for your servant, he can follow by this afternoon's mail tonga."

Upon this ultimatum he stood, immovable; neither threats nor bribery availed. It was an order, he said; he had no choice other than to obey. Shabash! Would the sahib be pleased to make up his mind quickly? Perforce, the sahib yielded. "It'll be Labertouche; he's arranged this," he told himself. "That loafer said he'd gone on ahead of us." And comforted he issued his orders to Doggott, who received and acceded to them with all the ill-grace imaginable. He was to remain and follow to Kuttarpur by the afternoon's tonga.

Climbing aboard, the Virginian settled himself against the endless discomforts of the ride which he foresaw; the tonga was anything but "an aram tonga—a tonga for ease"; there was no shade and no breeze, and the face of the land crawled with heat-bred haze.

To a crisp crackling of the whiplash over the backs of the two sturdy, shaggy, flea-bitten ponies, the tonga swept away from the station, swift as a hunted fox with a dusty plume.

Amber leaned forward, watching the driver's face. "Your name, tonga-wallah?" he enquired.

"Ram Nath, sahib." The man spoke without moving his head, attending diligently to the management of his ponies.

"And this other passenger, who awaits us at the dak-bungalow, Ram Nath—is he, perchance, one known both to you and to me?"

Ram Nath flicked the flagging ponies. "How should I know?" he returned brusquely.

"One," persisted Amber, "who might be known by such a name as, say, Pink Satin?"

"What manner of talk is this?" demanded Ram Nath. "I am no child to be amused by a riddle. I know naught of your 'Pink Satin.'" He bent forward, shortening his grasp upon the reins, as if to signify that the interview was at an end.

Amber sat back, annoyed by the fellow's impudence yet sensitive to a suspicion that Ram Nath was playing his part better than his passenger, that the rebuke was merited by one who had ventured to speak of secret things in a land whose very stones have ears. For all that he could say their every move was watched by invisible spies, of whom the rock-strewn waste through which they sped might well harbor a hidden legion. . . . But perhaps, after all, Ram Nath had nothing whatever to do with Labertouche. Undeniable as had been his wink, it might well have been nothing more than an impertinence.

Meanwhile the tonga rocked and bounded feebly over an infamous parody of a road, turning and twisting between huge boulders and in and out of pebbly nullahs, Ram Nath tooling it along with the hand of a master. But all his attention was of necessity centered upon the ponies, and presently his tulwar slipped from his knees and clattered upon the floor of the tonga. Amber saw his chance and put his foot upon it.

"Ram Nath," he asked gently, "have you no other arms?"

"I were a fool had I not." The man did not deign to glance round. "He hath need of weapons who doth traffic with the Chosen of the Voice, sahib."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**By-Product From Smelter Acid.**  
It is announced by the geological survey that the discovery of phosphate rock in Montana is likely to have an important effect in providing an outlet for the sulphuric acid that might be manufactured by the big smelters there, but which is now allowed to go to waste and pollute the range within a radius of thirty miles from the smelter works. The withdrawal of the phosphate lands from homestead entry was announced some weeks ago after the fields were reported by Hoyt Dale, one of the field geologists. These deposits are extensive and are considered of great potential value. The smelter trouble with the production of sulphuric acid fumes has been investigated by the bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture. There have been a number of suits against the smelters, but they have allowed the acid fumes to go to waste for lack of some profitable way to employ them. With the combination of cheap sulphuric acid and phosphate rock in close proximity, the officers of the geological survey say cheap phosphate fertilizers are a possibility.



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## MEAN MAN.



"Now, John, if I were to die you would weep over me and tell everybody what a good wife I was."  
"No, I wouldn't, believe me."  
"Well, I would for you, just for decency's sake. And that shows I'm not half as mean as you are."

## Up-to-Date.

Uncle Mose, a plantatio, negro, was being asked about his religious affiliations.  
"Ise a preacher, sah," he said.  
"Do you mean," asked the astonished questioner, "that you preach the Gospel?"  
Mose felt himself getting into deep water.  
"No, sah," he said. "Ah touches that subject very light."—Success Magazine.

## New Disappointment.

First Summer Girl—So you thought a man was coming?  
Second Summer Girl—Yes; but as we got a closer view we saw it was only a bird.—Puck.

## Where It Points.

"For whom is she wearing black—her late husband?"  
"No, for her next. She knows she looks well in it."—Judge.

**Try For Breakfast—**

Scramble two eggs. When nearly cooked, mix in about a half a cup of

# Post Toasties

and serve at once—seasoning to taste.  
It's immense!

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