King of the Khyber Rifles

A Thrilling Story of German Intrigue Among the Fierce Hillmen of India During the War

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KING FACES THE BIGGEST ADVENTURE OF HIS CAREER SO FAR WHEN HE COMES TO THE ENTRANCE OF KHINJAN CAVES AND PROVES HIM-SELF A MURDERER.

Synopsis .- At the beginning of the world war Capt. Athelstan King of the British Indian army and of its secret service, is ordered to Delhi to meet Yasmini, a dancer, and go with her to Kinjan to meet the outlaws there who are said by spies to be preparing for a jihad or holy war. On his way to Delhi King quietly folls a plan to assassinate him and gets evidence that Yasmini is after him. He meets Rewa Gunga, Yasmini's man, who says she has already gone north, and at her town house witnesses queer dances. Ismail, an Afridi, becomes his body servant and protector. He rescues some of Yasmini's hillmen and takes them north with him, tricking the Rangar into going ahead. The Rangar deserts him at a dangerous time. He meets his brother at All Masjid fort. The disguise he assumes there fools even the sharp-eyed cutthroats composing his guard.

"Come with me, then."

"Nay, I am her man. She waits for

"I imagine she waits for me!"

It was ten of a blazing forenoon, and

jan's walls, across a mile-wide rock

that has no other human habitation

It was midday when at last they

mud-and-stone walls that faced them,

a mile away. They were nearly across

none was to be found, when a shotted

salute brought them up all-standing in

bullets spattered on the rocks close by.

and one so narrowly missed King that

Up went all their hands together,

and they held them so until they ached.

Nothing whatever happened, Their

They advanced another two hundred

yards and another volley rattled among

and fell and had to be helped up again.

begun to exercise its sway. One of

"Who are ye?" howled a human be-

ing, whose voice was so like a wolf's

He peered over the parapet, a hundred

feet above, with his head so swathed

"What will ye? Who comes unin-

King bethought him of Yasimini's

could be recognized at that angle, and

suggested itself to him. He turned his

head and caught Ismail in the act of

"Ye may come!" howled the watch-

King trembled-perhaps as a race-

horse trembles at the starting gate,

though he was weary enough to trem-

ble from fatigue. But that passed. He

was all in hand when he led his men

up over a rough stone causeway to a

door in the bottom of a high battle-

mented wall and waited for somebody

The great teak door looked as if it

had been stolen from some Hindu tem-

ple, and he wendered how on I when

they could have brought it there across

those savage intervening miles. High

above the door was a ledge of rock

that crossed like a bridge from wall to

wall, with a parapet of stone built

As they approached a Rangar tur-

ban, not unlike King's own, appeared

voice he recognized hailed him good-

"And upon thee be peace!" King an-

swered in the Pashtu tongue, for the

"Hills" are polite, whatever the other

Rewn Gunga's face beamed down on

him, wreathed in smiles that seemed to

Looking up at him at an angle that

made his neck ache and dazzled his

"By jove!" he chuckled. "She ex-

upon it, pierced for riflc-fire.

"Salaam aleikoum!"

man on the parapet, disappearing in-

signaling with both hands.

to open 14.

humoredly.

principles.

the men was half delirious.

vited into Khinjan?"

arms ceased aching and grew numb.

he could feel its wind.

CHAPTER X.

Even with the man with the stom- me!" ach ache mounted on the spare horse for the sake of extra speed (and he laughed King. "Forward! We have was not suffering one-fifth so much as rested in this place long enough!" be pretended); with Ismail to urge, and King to coax, and the fear of the sun had heated up the rocks until mountain death on every side of them, It was pain to walk on them and agony they were the part of a night and a to sit, when they topped the last esfay and a night and a part of another | carpment and came in sight of Khinday in reaching Khinjan.

At night and at noon they slept fit- ravine-Khinjan the unregenerate, fully at the chance-met shrine of some boly man. The "Hills" are full of within a march because none dare them, marked by fluttering rags that build. can be seen for miles away; and though the Quran's meaning must be stood on bottom and swayed like men stretched to find excuse, and hillmen ere adept at stretching things and hold scarcely able for the heat haze to see self. Men who would almost rather cut throats than gamble regard them as sanctuaries. So a man may rest the valley, hunting for shadow where in temporary peace even on the road to Khinjan, although Khinjan and peace have nothing whatever in com-

It was at such a shrine, surrounded by tattered rags tied to sticks, that duttered in the wind three or four thousand feet above Khyber level, that King drew Ismail into conversation, and deftly forced on him the role of

"How can'st thou see the caves!" he asked, for King had hinted at his intention; and for answer King gave him a glimpse of the gold bracelet.

"Aye! Well and good! But even she dare not disobey the rule, Khinjan | rule was there from the beginning, when the first men found the caves! some-hundreds-have gained admission, lacking the right. But who ever waw them again? Allah! I, for one, would not chance it!"

"Thou and I are two men!" answered | that the words at first had no meaning. King. "I shall see the caves."

"Aye! But listen! How many In-Jinn servants of the British Raj have in dirty linen that he looked like a set out to see the caves? Many, many bandaged corpse. -- aye, very many! Some, having got by Khinjan, entered the caves. None ever came out again !"

"Then, what is my case to thee?" Ling asked him, "If I cannot come out | band glinted in the sun. Yet, although



"Who Are You?" Howled a Human Being, Whose Voice Was So Like a Wolf's That the Words at First Had

sgain and there is a secret, then the weeret will be kept, and what is the

"I love thee," the Afridi answered supply. "Thou art a man after mine own heart. Turn! Go back before it include mockery as well as triumph. too late!"

King shook his head.

friend! I know the rule! I failed to seemed to him that the smile said, reach the caves that other time be- "Here you are, my man, and gren't you cause I had no witnesses to swear they in for it?" He more than half sus- mosque is public resting place for had seen me slay a man in the teeth of pected he was intended to understand homeless ones, and all the "faithful" written law. I know!"

"Who saw thee this time?" Ismail took another lire. asked, and began to eackle with the eruel humor of the "Hills," that sees warned and go back!"

wind out of her snils!" King made no answer. For one thing, the word "hound," even in English, is

not essentially a compliment. But he had a better reason than that. "Did you find the way easily?" the

Itangar asked; but King kept silence. "Is he parched? Have they cut his ongue out on the road?" That question was in Pashtu, direct-

answered it. "Oh, as for that," he said, salnaming again in the fastidious manner of a na-

tongue than Pashtu and my own Ra-Jasthani. My name is Kurram Khan. I sk admittance." He held up his wrist to show the

gold bracelet, and high over his head

tive gentleman, "I know no other

the Rangar laughed like a bell. "Shabash!" he laughed, "Well done! Enter, Kurram Khan, and be welcome, thou and thy men. Be welcome in her

Somebody pulled a rope and the loor_yawned wide, giving on a kind of courtyard whose high walls allowed no view of anything but not blue sky. Through a gap under an arch in a far corner of the courtyard came a oneeyed, lenn-looking villaln in Afridi dress who leaned on a long gun and stared at them under his hand. After a leisurely consideration of them he rubbed his nose slowly with one finger, spat contemptuously, and then used the finger to beckon them, crooking it queerly and turning on his heel. He did not say one word.

King led the way after him on foot, for even in the "Hills" where cruelty in a dream fingering their bruises and is a virtue, a man may be excused, on economic grounds, for showing mercy those shrines as sacred as the book it- the tangled mass of stone towers and to his beast. His men tugged the weary animals along behind him, through the gap under the arch and along an almost interminable, smelly maze of alleys whose sides were the walls of square stone towers, or somea cluster. Six or eight nickel-coated times of mud-and-stone-walled compounds, and here and there of sheer. slab-sided cliff. Like Old Jerusalem, the place could have contained a civil war of a hundred factions, and still have opposed stout resistance to an

Alley gave on to courtyard, and filthy square to alley, until unexpectedly at last a seemingly blind passage turned one's first opinions confirmed. the rocks on either hand, frightening sharply and opened on a straight one of the mules so that it stumbled street, of fair width, and more than door slammed shut behind them, for half a mile long. It is marked "Street | that was another most unusual circum-When that was done, and the mule of the Dwellings" on the secret army was there before she came, and the stood trembling, they all faced the maps, and it has been burned so often wall. But they were too weary to hold by Khinjan rioters, as well as by expetheir hands up any more. Thirst had ditions out of India, that a man who goes on a long journey never expects

to find it the same on his return. It was lined on either hand with motley dwellings, out of which a motlier crowd of people swarmed to stare at King and his men. There were Hindus-sycophants, keepers of accounts and writers to the chiefs (since literacy is at a premium in these parts). In proof of Khinjan's catholic taste and indiscriminate villainy, there were women of nearly every Indian breed talisman. He held it up, and the gold and caste, many of them stolen into shameful slavery, but some of them a Hillman's eyes are keener than an there from choice. And there were litcagle's, he did not believe the thing tie children-little naked brats with round drum tummles, who squenled from that distance. Another thought and shrilled and stared with bold eyes

Perhaps a thousand souls came out to watch, all told. Not an eye of them all missed the government marks on King's trappings, or the government brand on the mules, and after a minute or two, when the procession was half-way down the street, a man reproved a child who had thrown a stone, and he was backed up by the others. They classified King correctly, exactly as he meant they should. As a hakim-a man of medicine-he could on his accoutrements he walked an openly avowed robber, and that made him a brother in crime. Somebody cuffed the next child who picked up a

He knew the street of old, although It had changed perhaps a dozen times since he had seen it. It was a cul-desac, and at the end of it, just as on his previous visit, there stood a stone mosque, whose roof leaned back at a steep angle against the mountainside. above the parapet on the ledge and a It was a famous mosque in its way, for the bed sheet of the Prophet is known to hang in it, preserved against the ravages of time and the touch of infidels by priceless Afghan rugs before and behind, so that it hangs like a great thin sandwich before the rear stone wall. King had seen it.

Toward the mosque the one-eyed ruffian led the way, with the long, leisurely-seeming gait of a mountaineer. At the door, in the middle of the end of the street, he paused and struck on the "I was in Khinjan once before, my eyes, King could not be sure, but it lintel three times with his gun butt. And that was a strange proceeding, to say the least, in a land where the that. But the Rangar's conversation have a right to enter.

A mullah, shaven like a mummy for some unaccountable reason-even his pected you. She guessed you are a cycbrows and eyelashes had been reamusement in a man's undoing, or in bound who can bent well on a dry moved-pushed his bare head through the destruction of his plans, "Be seent, and she dared bet you will come the door and blinked at them. There

love! You folly well will take the back.

The door slammed. The one-eyed guide grounded his gun-butt on the stone, and the procession waited, watched by the crowd that had lost its interest sufficiently to talk and joke.

In two minutes the mullah returned and threw a mat over the threshold. It turned out to be the end of a long narrow strip that he kicked and unrolled in front of him all across the floor of d at Ismall and the others, but King the mosque. After that it was not so were allowed to enter.

"Which proves I was right after all!" murmured King to himself,

In a steel box at Simla is a memorandum, made after his former visit to the place, to the effect that the entrance into Khinjan caves might possibly be inside the mosque. No-



"I Slew an Englishman!"

body had believed it likely, and he had not more than half favored it himself; but it is good, even when the next step may lead into a death-trap, to see

He nodded to himself as the outer

A faint light shone through slitlike windows, changing darkness into hinting at the Prophet's bed sheet. But for a section of white wall to either side of it, the relic might have seemed part of the shadows. The mullah stood nearer. He approached until he could see the pattern on the covering rugs, and the pink rims round the mullah's lashless eyes.

"What is thy desire?" the mullah asked-as a wolf might ask what a

"Audience with her!" King answered, and showed the gold bracelet on his wrist.

The red eye-rims of the mullah blinked a time or two, and though he did not salute the bracelet, as others had invariably done, his manner underwent a perceptible change. "That is proof that she knows thee.

What is thy name?"

"Kurram Khan, hakim." "We need thee in Khinjan caves! But none enter who have not earned right to enter! There is but one key. Name it!"

King drew in his breath. He had hoped Yasmini's talisman would prove to be key enough. The nails of his fill a long-felt want; but by the brand | left hand nearly pierced the palm, but he smiled pleasantly.

"He who would enter must slay a man before witnesses in the teeth of written law!" he said. "And thou?"

"I slew an Englishman!" The boast made his blood run cold, but his expression was one of sinful pride.

"Whom? When? Where?" sent on his way to these 'Hills' to

It was like having spells cast on himself to order!

"Where is his body?"

"Ask the vultures! Ask the kites!" "And thy witnesses?" Hoping against hope, King turned and waved his hand. As he did so, being quick-eyed, he saw Ismail drive an elbow home into Darya Khan's ribs,

and caught a quick interchange of

whispers. "These men are all known to me," said the mullah. "They have right to enter here. They have right to testify. Did ye see him slay his man?" "Aye!" lied Ismail, prompt as

friend can be. "Aye!' lied Darya Khan, fearful of

Ismail's elbow. "Then enter!" said the priest resignedly, as one who admits a communicant against his better judgment | feet below them, there poured down He turned his back on them so as

expect you in Rangar dress! No, by | ing, and at last the mullah turned his | hairy hand gripped King's arm from behind, and Ismail's voice hissed hotbreathed in his ear.

> "Ready of tongue! Ready of wit! Who told thee I would lie to save thy skin? Be thy kismet as thy courage, then-but I am hers, not thy man! Hers, thou light of life-though God knows I love thee!"

The mullah seized the Prophet's bed sheet and its covering rugs in both hands, with about as much reverence as salesmen show for what they keep astonishing that the horses and mules in stock. The whole lot slid to one side by means of noisy rings on a rod. and a wall lay bare, built of crudely cut but well laid blocks. It appeared to reach unbroken across the whole width of the mosque's interior.

On the floor lay a mallet, a peculiar thing of bronze, cast in one piece, handle and all. The muliah took it in his hand and struck the stone floor sharply once—then twice again—then three times-then a dozen times in quick succession. The floor rang holow at that spot.

After about a minute there came one answering hammer stroke from beyond the wall. Then the mullah laid the mallet down and though King ached to pick it up and examine it he dld not dare. His business was to attract as little attention to himself as shedding blood. possible; and to that end he folded his hands and looked reverent, as if entering some Mecca of his dreams. Through his horn-rimmed spectacles his eyes looked far away and dreamy. But it would have been a mistake to suppose that a detail was escaping half-wondering at such eloquence,

The irregular lines in the masonry began to be more pronounced. All at hand, turned on his heel and stalked once the wall shook and they gaped out of the cavern. It was the last by an inch or two, as happens when King ever saw of him. an earthquake has shaken buildings without bringing anything down. Then an irregular section of wall began to right and left. Judging by the angle of the two divisions they became one again before going very far.

The mullah stood aside and motioned King to enter. But the oneeyed thrust himself between Darya Khan and Ismail, pushed King aside have dared expect. and took the lead.

"Nay!" he said, "I am responsible

It was the first time he had spoken of words.

The tunnel was pierced in twenty places in the roof for rifle fire; a score gloom, and little more than vaguely of men with enough ammunition could have held it forever against an army. The guide led, and King followed him. filled with curiosity.

"Many have entered!" sang the with his back to it and beckoned King lashless mullah in a sing-song chant. "More have sought to enter! Some who remained without were wisest I count them! I keep count! Many went in! Not all came out again by this rond!"

"Lend along, Charon!" King grinned. He needed some sort of pleasantry to steady his nerves. But, even so, he wondered what the nerves of India would be like if her millions knew of this place.

CHAPTER XI.

The gap closed up behind them and the tunnel began to echo weirdiy. Over their heads, at irregular intervals, there were holes that if they led as King presumed into caves above, left not an inch of all the long passage that could not have been swept by rifle fire. It was impregnable; for no artillery heavy enough to pound the mountain into pieces could ever be dragged within range. Whatever hiding place this entrance guarded could be held forever, given food and cartridges!

The tunnel wound to right and left like a snake, growing lighter and lighter after each bend; and soon their own din began to be swallowed in a greater one that entered from the farther end. After two sharp turns they came out unexpectedly into the glaze of blue day, nearly stunned by light and sound. A "Athelstan King-a British arrficer roar came up from below like that of an ocean in the grip of a typhoon.

When his wits recovered from the shock, King struggled with a wild desire to yell, for before him was what no servant of British India had ever seen and lived to tell about, and that is an experience more potent than unbroken rum.

They had emerged from a roundmouthed tunnel-it looked already like a rabbit-hole, so huge was the cliff be hind-on to a ledge of rock that formed a sort of road along one side of a mile-wide chasm. Above him, it seemed a mile up, was blue sky, to which limestone walls ran sheer, with scarcely a foothold that could be seen. Beneath, so deep that eyes could not guess how deep, yawned the stained gorge of the underworld, many-colored, smooth and wet.

And out of a great, jagged slit in the side of the cliff, perhaps a thousand into thunderous dimness a waterfall to face the Prophet's bed sheet and whose breadth seconed not less than in spite of all odds! But she didn't was some whispering and more star- the rear wall, and in that minute a half a mile. It spouted seventy or

eighty yards before it began to curve, and its din was like the voice of all cre-

Ismail came and stood by King in illence, taking his hand, as a little child might. Presently he stooped and

picked up a stone and tossed it over. "Gone!" he said simply. "That down

there is Earth's Drink!'

"And this is the 'Heart of the Hills' men boast about?"

"Nay! It is not!" snapped Ismail. "Then, where-

But the one-eyed guide beckoned impatiently, and King led the way after him, staring as hakim or prisoner or any man had right to do on first admission to such wonders. Not to have stared would have been to proclaim himself an idiot.

They soon began to pass the mouths of caves. Some were above the road, now and then at crazy heights above it, reached by artificial steps hewn out of the stone. Others were below, reached from the road by means of ladders, that trembled and swayed over the dizzying waterfall. Most of the caves were inhabited, for armed men and sullen women came to their entrances to stare.

Ears grow accustomed to the sound of water sooner than to almost anything. It was not long before King's ears could catch the patter of his men's feet following, and the shod clink of the mule. He could hear when Ismail whispered:

"Be brave, little hakim! She loves fearless men!'

At last the guide halted, in the middle of a short steep slope where the path was less than six feet wide and a narrow cave mouth gave directly onto

"Be content to rest here!" he said, pointing.

"Thy cave?" asked King. "Nay. God's! I am the caretaker!" The "Hills" are very plous and po-

lite, between the acts of robbing and "Allah, then, reward thee, brother!" answered King, "Allah give sight to

thy blind eye! Allah give thee children! Allah give thee peace, and to all thy house!" The guide salaamed, half-mockingly, paused in the passage to point into

the side caves that debouched to either King turned back and looked into

the other caves-saw the weary horse and mule fed, watered and bedded move quite smoothly away from in down-took note of the running water front of him, leaving a gap through that rushed out of a rock fissure and which eight men abreast could have gurgled out of sight down another one marched—a tunnel, split in two to -examined the servants' cave and saw that they had been amply provided with blankets. There was nothing lacking that the most exacting traveler could have demanded at such a distance from civilization. There was more than the most exacting would "Ismail!" he shouted, and jumped at

the revolver-cracklike echo of his voice. Ismail came running.

"Make the men carry the mule's and he appeared to resent the waste packs into this cave. You and Darya Khan stay here and help me open them. Remember, ye are both assistants of Kurram Khan, the hakim!"

"They will laugh at us! They will laugh at us!" clucked Ismail, but he hurried to obey, while King wondered who would laugh.

Within an hour a delegation came from no less a person than Yasmini herself, bearing her compliments, and hot food savory enough to make a brass idol's mouth water. By this time King had his sets of surgical instruments and drugs and bandages all laid out on one of the beds and covered from view by a blanket.

It was only one more proof of the British army's everlasting luck that one of the men, who set the great brass dish of food on the floor near King, had a swollen cheek, and that he should touch the swelling clumsily as



'Does It Pain Thee, Brother?" Asked Kurram Khan, the Hakim.

he lifted his hand to shake back a lock of greasy hair. There followed an oath like flint struck on steel ten times in rapid succession.

"Does it pain thee, brother?" asked Kurram Khan the hakim.

As a famous medicine man, King holds his first clinic among the suffering natives of the Khin-Jan country, and hears some important news.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)