

# Youth's Department.

## THE LOST OPAL OF MYSTERY, OR THE SECRET OF THE GHANTS.

By William Murray Graydon.

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### CHAPTER II.

#### IN THE RAJA'S DUNGEONS.

The fortress was simply a walled quadrangle, with massive gates of teakwood, and gun-mounted bastions at each angle. It was under the direct control of the rajah, and was garrisoned by a regiment of irregular native troops, mostly recruited from Mysore.

Half the quadrangle was taken up by the rajah's palace—an ancient edifice of hard woods, stone and enameled plaster, with two wings that formed a three-sided court. The other half was a beautiful garden, containing fountains, shrubbery and a deep tank of water.

On reaching the avenue Myles and his companions saw that the fire was really at the palace. They hurried on with the crowd, and managed to slip through the main gate of the fortress behind an English fire engine. They were just in time, for the fierce looking guards at once blocked the way to all new comers.

As it was the quadrangle contained a score of natives, civilians and British officers, who had entered during the panic and excitement.

One wing of the palace was blazing fiercely from the ground floor upward. The general alarm had not been given until the chemical grenades and small hand engines were found powerless to arrest the flames.

No one paid any attention to the boys, except to jostle them in and thrust them on their feet. The tumult was deafening and the lurid flames made the scene as light as day.

"Not much chance of saving the palace," said Myles. "Look, they are carrying furniture and stuff into the court."

"Can't we do anything?" asked Jack. "I'd like to see the inside."

"They would throw us out right away," Myles replied. "We're lucky to be this near. Hullo, what's coming?"

"The men that shoot water, sahibs," cried Patu, jumping to one side.

With hoarse shouts a group of firemen dashed by, dragging a long hose. A second steamer had meanwhile arrived, and the throbbing and puffing of the engines as they sucked water out of the tank rose loudly above the din. Two streams soon began to play upon the burning building, but their only noticeable effect was to send up volumes of smoke and hissing steam.

The boys wandered about, seeking the best and safest place from which to view the fire. Suddenly a section of the crowd burst somewhere in front of them, and a flood of water in all directions. The crowd scattered and fled, and Myles and Jack ran blindly with the rest. They checked themselves with difficulty on the edge of the tank.

"We pretty near took a bath," cried Jack. "Hullo! where's Patu?"

"We've lost him," exclaimed Myles. "He can't be far away."

Just then a shrill scream was heard and the boys saw Patu struggling in the water. A dozen feet farther up the tank. He had probably been shoved in by the rush of the crowd.

Plenty of men were standing by, but they seemed incapable of action. They called for ropes, and shouted absurd directions.

The little Hindoo was in great danger. He could not swim, and he was four or five feet from the sloping side of the tank. His frantic splashing brought him no nearer, and even had he succeeded there was no hold for him on the slimy granite slabs.

Myles and Jack were thunderstruck when they saw that no one was trying to rescue the lad. They did endeavor to reach the spot, but the crowd was wedged too tightly.

"Cowards!" cried Myles, indignantly. "He turned aside and cleared the sloping stones by a flying leap that landed him in deep water. He went under, shot to the surface and swam forward with long strokes. He clutched Patu's dripping hair just as the lad was going down, and struggled with him toward the bank."

The spectators were active enough now. A dozen men from the hands and formed a chain that reached to the water's edge. In brief time Patu and his rescuer were hauled safely up.

A fierce-looking, bearded Hindoo in the picturesque dress of the rajah's body guard had just reached the scene. He immediately pounced on Myles, and in broken English poured out a flood of gratitude. Then, with a few stern words to Patu, he hastened away.

"Who was that excitable old fellow?" asked Jack.

"Motee Mal, Patu's father," Myles replied. "He hadn't made so much fuss over a little thing like that. What did he tell you, Patu? To go home, I'll bet."

Patu nodded. "My stay watch fire," he said. "You save my life, Sahib Chetty. Me nearly go under."

"It was a close shave," admitted Myles. "Those cowards would have let you drown. Well, we're none the worse for it except a wetting, and that can't hurt us if we move about. We'll swim, and see them through."

So the three lads squirmed once more to the front of the crowd. The situation now bordered on a panic. The wing of the palace was wrapped in flames from top to bottom, and the whole building seemed doomed. A string of servants poured incessantly out, bearing costly furniture. More fire engines arrived and got to work amid great excitement. The town bell kept up a harsh jangling.

"There comes the rajah's golden throne," cried Myles, as that priceless article was deposited in the court by a dozen servants.

"My, don't it shine!" gasped Jack. "I wish I had its value in money."

At that instant two Hindoo soldiers ran toward the crowd, waving their swords warningly and shouting in loud tones. What they said was unintelligible, owing to the tumult. They are going to attack us," cried Jack, in alarm.

"No, it's something about powder and danger," replied Myles. "Look, everybody's running. Come on, quick!"

But before the boys could seek safety in flight they were surrounded by a madly struggling mob. Then came a fearful explosion that seemed to rend the very earth apart. Myles and Patu were dashed violently against Jack, and all three went down together.

For a few seconds they lay there while a rain of stones, cement and charred timbers descended on all sides. They staggered to their feet, stunned and dizzy. They were sorely bruised, too, for not a few of the stones had ruthlessly trampled over them.

At first all they saw was a curtain of pungent smoke. This slowly lifted, revealing where the burning wing of the palace

been, a blackened excavation filled with debris. Groans and cries rose on the air, adding to the terror of the lads. They hurried a few yards to one side, and then curiosity impelled them to step to the edge.

"Where! that was a close call," said Jack. "The explosion must have been under the wing."

"It was," replied Myles. "There are dungeons beneath the whole palace. The fire seems to be out, anyway."

"Many people hurt, sahibs," exclaimed Patu, pointing a group of men who were bearing ghastly burdens away from the scene. Among the victims was one of the Hindoo soldiers who had given the alarm.

"They were likely hit by falling stones," said Myles. "We had a lucky escape, I tell you."

A few feet behind the lads were two English officers, half concealed by the curling smoke.

"They say the rajah blew up the wing on purpose to save the rest of the building," remarked one. "It was clever of him if he did."

"I have my doubts," answered his companion. "It looks as though he had powder or other explosives stored in the dungeons. The men who were likely to be investigated."

Here the officers moved off, and after briefly commenting on what they had just heard the boys ventured nearer the scene of the explosion.

They had taken but a few steps when the mass of debris blazed up in a dozen places. The lurid flames showed how complete was the destruction. The end of the palace gaped open, and through the shattered and tattered walls the interior of many apartments on the second and third floors could be seen.

Far back in the excavation, and below the level of the ground, a section of one of the dungeon walls was visible. The burning timbers were stacked around it, but not high enough to conceal a part of a massive brazen door. In this was set a square wicket, and behind it Myles suddenly espied a ghastly white face, and a pair of hands clutching the bars.

"Look!" he cried shrilly, "who's that?"

"Good gracious, it's Pink Triscot," yelled Jack, and the startling words had barely left his lips when the brazen door was deeply buffed under an avalanche of beams and masonry that thundered down overhead.

For a moment the lads were dazed and horrified. Had they seen aright, or was it only an illusion? Before they could fully realize the reality they were swept aside by the noisy rush of the firemen and the crowd, and an instant later streams of water were playing on the blazing flames and sending up clouds of steam.

Jack found himself under the shadow of the fortress wall, with his companions at his side.

"Look!" he cried savagely, as Myles held him. "Pink is dead or dying down there! That awful place. I must give the alarm. There are English officers here, and they will help me save him. Let go, I say."

But Myles only clung the tighter. "Don't be a fool, Jack," he pleaded. "If you give an alarm Pink is lost. We've got to wait till the rajah and I think I can do it. I was in the palace once with my father, and I know a secret way to the dungeons."

"Quick, then!" cried Jack. "I'll trust you. Oh! the rajah shall pay dear for this outrage."

"I rather think he will," muttered Myles. "Where, it seems like a fairy tale. I can hardly believe it."

"Don't stop to talk," Jack protested. "How about Patu?"

"It's safer to take him with us," said Myles. "He's all right, anyhow. Eh, Patu?"

"Me help save poor sahib," stoutly replied the little Hindoo.

"Good for you," whispered Myles. "Come on, now, while no one is looking."

He quickly led his companions into the gloomy space between the side of the palace and the fortress. They were too excited to give thought to the perils of the mad and foolhardy enterprise on which they were embarking. Under cover of the shrubbery they rounded the angle of the building and found one of the rear entrances open and unguarded.

Myles had counted on this, feeling satisfied that every one would be in the dark. With fast-beating hearts they entered the palace and passed hurriedly through a hall and two vast rooms—a dense with smoke and stripped of most of their furniture. They found one of the rear entrances open and unguarded.

"Do you know where you are going?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"Yes, I'm on the right track," whispered Myles. "Ah, here we are."

He opened a door, revealing a narrow corridor hung with costly paintings and curtains. A silver lamp burned dimly on a bronze table.

He jerked one of the curtains aside and ran his fingers over the beautifully enameled wall. Suddenly an invisible panel slid back and a yawning black hole was seen. A draft of cool air blew into the corridor.

"Jove!" howl did you do it?" exclaimed Jack.

"The rajah touched the spring accidentally when he was showing father and me the decorated walls," Myles answered. "Looky, wasn't it? Come on, we're off right now."

He snatched the lamp and led the way into the secret passage. Jack came last and drew the panel shut. A winding staircase descended the lads, and they quickly descended between the massive walls of granite. The tumult outside could no longer be heard. The silence was intense and unbroken.

At the bottom of the stairs was a long gallery with diverging corridors on both sides. The boys halted in perplexity. They had lost their bearings completely, and knew not which way to turn. The air was full of a pungent powder smoke that made breathing difficult and painful.

Suddenly they heard a dull pounding noise. "That's Pink!" cried Jack. "Thank God he's alive."

"This way," said Myles. "We'll find him. They dashed off at full speed in the direction of the sound. It led them to the end of the main corridor, and then sharply to the left between black walls of masonry. At the bottom of this passage they were checked by a pyramid of loose stones and mortar. The explosion had caved in the roof and sides.

"No use," said Myles, in despair. "We might have remembered that the dungeon could only have one door, and you know we saw that choked up by the fall of stones. I'm afraid."

"Hark! Sahibs, the noise again," interrupted Patu.

Just then a head and pair of shoulders

appeared at a narrow slit in the mass of debris which the boys had failed to notice before.

"Is that you, Pink?" cried Jack.

"Aye, my lad," was the husky reply. "Come a'hand, quick, till I get out of this beastly hole."

Myles put down the lamp, and the three lads tore with might and main at the rubbish. In a few minutes the hole was sufficiently enlarged for the prisoner to crawl through.

With a burst of tears Jack threw his arms round his friend, and said: "You saved me again, Pink!" he cried. "Are you hurt?"

"Not a scratch, my boy," replied Triscot. "That fire was a lucky thing, for these 'dungeon dogs' were going to head me in the morning. Who are your friends, and 'ow did you ever get in 'ere?"

Jack hastily explained, and gave a brief account of the events of the evening.

"Wonderful!" muttered Pink, as he warmly shook hands with Myles and Patu. "You've got a secret mission to perform. But this ain't the place to talk. We must get away from 'ere at once. When we're in safe quarters I'll tell you a tale that'll make your air stand on end. My 'ead swims to think of it. Do you know 'ow to get out?"

"Come on," replied Myles, picking up the lamp and leading the way forward. They hurried toward the main corridor, turned the angle and came face to face with one of the palace guards, a stalwart, wicked looking Hindoo.

The fellow was armed, but before he could use his weapons or make an outcry Jack had him by the throat. There was a brief scuffle and down they went. The Hindoo's head struck the stone floor with terrific force.

"That settles 'im," muttered Jack; "he's 'elpless. Tear 'is kummerbund off, Jack."

Though badly frightened the boys were able to lend assistance, and in a minute or two the captive was securely bound and gagged with his own sash. He was then dragged into one of the side passages.

Myles again took the lead and the little party hurried on.

"Stop! you're going past the stairs," whispered Jack.

"I know it," Myles answered. "The panel may not open from this side. There must be a safer exit, anyhow."

"There is," declared Pink. "That's 'ow I

brought in 'ere the first time. It opens the main hall close to the court."

"Then we've got to find it," said Myles, as he pushed on more rapidly. "It won't be hard."

This assertion sounded very cheering, but unfortunately it was not realized. After wandering through a maze of corridors for nearly ten minutes the fugitives began to despair. The underground world of the palace was evidently a labyrinth to which none but an experienced guide could find a clue.

"We must keep on," exclaimed Myles. "It's the only chance."

"And a deuced slim one, lad," added Jack. "If we're found down 'ere our 'eads will go on the spot."

The boys exchanged frightened glances. For ten minutes longer they followed Pink, who now undertook to lead. Then, to their fear and amazement, they found themselves back at the scene of the struggle with the guard. The latter's ulnar and spear lay on the floor, marking the spot.

"We've been traveling in a circle," exclaimed Pink. "Now we must begin over again. These may come 'andy."

He picked up the weapons, keeping the spear for himself and giving the ulnar, which was a covered sword, to Jack.

"Let's try the stairway," suggested Myles. "It's the last chance."

They hurried in that direction, but before the distance was half covered they heard an uproar straight ahead—voices, and shuffling steps, and the clatter of arms.

"It's the guards coming to look for me," Pink muttered hoarsely.

"Then we're lost," gasped Jack. "What shall we do?"

At this critical moment Myles observed an iron door in the side of the corridor. He threw himself against it, and to his relief it grated inward.

"The guards don't see us yet," he whispered. "Let's hide here until they get past. Then we will take the stairs."

An instant later the fugitives were in the friendly shelter of a cell, little dreaming that they had exchanged one peril for another.

Just as Pink extinguished the lamp and closed the door, a low, bloodcurdling snarl rang out of the darkness.

(To be Continued.)

## HOW A BISHOP CUT WOOD.

Have you ever heard of the Great Waplekin, who built the cathedral at Winchester, and how he got the timber which is still on the roof of the cathedral? It is rather an odd story and I will tell it to you, as it was told to me by the verger when I was at Winchester—and told, indeed, while we walked in the loft among the beams and rafters in question.

William the Conqueror was a king who loved his trees, and would hardly part with any of his timber. When the bishop was building the cathedral he came to the king and asked leave to cut wood from the forest of Hempage to finish the noble work he had carried on for many years.

"Wood from my forest of Hempage? Nay, that you cannot have," said the king, in an aggressive tone.

"But, sire, how can I make a roof for my cathedral without timber? Will your majesty forbear those days were formidable snarls, before whom a king had trembled. The bishop urged his claims and may even grudge the trees of the forest to the house of God."

The king did not intend to yield, but he used threats until at length King William said, "Go, then, my lord bishop, and take as many trees as you can fell in a day—but no more." The bishop went gladly and coming to his domain, which was like a little kingdom, over which he had absolute power, he mustered his liegemen and retainers for a grand woodcutting expedition. At the bishop's palace hundreds of men were daily fed, and he could bring thousands to the field in time of war, for every one in his age was subject to him—in mind, body and arms.

He must have summoned all his subjects that day, for never was such a woodcutting known in England. To the forest they went in an array and chopped from the rising of the sun till night descended—and at the end of the day not a tree was left standing in Hempage wood! Not a tree? Yes, one was kept sacred from the marauding axe, because under its

boughs St. Augustine had preached to the Britons in days long gone by even then. The Gospel Oak, as it was called, still stands, protected by an iron railing, the sole relic of the ancient forest which the bishop of Winchester laid low "for the house of God." Truly, the bishop was a "muscular Christian"—for all I know he laid aside his robes and mitre, and wielded the axe that day himself. He was a firm believer in exercise, as another tale will prove.

The cathedral is not the only monument to this great man. With his enormous revenues he founded and built a college at Oxford, called the "New College." It was built before America was discovered. He also endowed the famous boys' school at Winchester, and made rules whereby the safety and health of the scholars were to be secured. One of these was that the boys should walk to the top of a high hill, some distance from the school, three times every day! There in a worthy cook living near the foot of this hill who until recently, when the rule was abolished, used to go up the steep path after the boys were free of his wares and no doubt had a good market among the tired little fellows! How they put the walk in three times I cannot imagine—think of it, girls and boys, sometimes when you are disposed to grumble at errands around the block!

## THE LION OF THE NORTH.

The Romantic Boyhood of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden.

Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden in the seventeenth century, is a Norse hero of high renown. He was not a peace-maker, as we of this day would want our kings to be, but you must remember that in those times every king had to fight to keep peace, which sounds odd, but is correct, for if he was not always well armed one of the other treacherous nations would steal upon him and take away his kingship and make his people their captives. In the great thirty years' war, of which every boy and girl has read, it was impossible to be peaceful; every one was snarling at every one else.

But Gustavus Adolphus was the great central figure in all this era. He was brave and gentle, kind yet dauntless. He was fearless of danger and sometimes he would rush out on the field and engage in single combat with the leader of the opposing forces.

He was born in the royal palace at Stockholm in 1594, at a time when great religious controversy was stirring up the whole known world. To quote Gustavus' father, "War and gospel were the true business of a king of Sweden."

To his father, therefore, the young king owed the benefits of an excellent education.

The young lion of the north (as he grew to be called), had his education looked after by a tutor and not a few court ladies. John Skytte, who taught the prince, was a man who had traveled for ten years over the known world and had seen every place worth seeing. It was to him probably that Gustavus owed that broad diplomacy which showed to such advantage later on.

When the young lion was 17 he could speak seven languages. He used to write the funniest letters. Knowing languages so perfectly, he would mix into one letter Latin, German, French and Swedish, using the shortest and readiest word in each language that expressed his thought. Even to decipher one of his letters now is worse than the fifteen puzzle to a good linguist.

When his horoscope was cast—for those nations were mostly superstitious—a glorious career and violent death were predicted—but that was an easy thing to prophesy in those warring days. Every one knew it would be the young king's duty to protect his faith, so he was also nicknamed the "Protestant Prince."

Two stories are told of him when he was quite a little boy that serve to show how fearless he was. Once his father, King Charles, took him down to Kalmar to see a fleet of warships.

"Which of the ships does your highness like best?" an officer asked the boy.

"That one," he answered, "because she has more guns on board than the others." In after life he proved that guns were the essentials of his trade.

His nurse said to him one day when they were out walking, "You must not go into that wood; there are great big serpents there."

The young lion, without becoming the least disturbed, said, "Well, give me a big stick then; I'll soon kill them," and he walked right on into the wood. It was the manner in which he treated his enemies.

He was taught all kinds of athletics naturally, for that race were the most muscular and vigorous in the world.

When King Charles died he gave his son this wise bit of advice which is worth repeating, for it can do as much good if carried out by every boy and girl as by the king of Sweden: "Don't thy father and mother, be tender to thy sisters, be gracious to thy inferiors, treat all men fairly, but only entirely when thou hast learned to know them."

There was no need of instruction in soldiering to the 17-year-old king, for Gustavus used to steal away from sleep and read all the books he could find on the art of war. A prince (of 16) he was hurt and mortified, because they wouldn't let him serve in the war against Russia. Imagine then how hated he was when a little later he solemnly knighted and allowed to lead his own troops. He was successful in the beginning and yet he was only a stripling, some-

thing over 16 years old. The sword once in his hand, he showed the blood of the old Norsemen and no one could stop him; fight he would and die until people began to look at him in awe.

Even as a boy he was honest and God-fearing; true to himself and the world, and his constant remark was "may I never blush for my deeds."

When at 17 he was made king his boyhood had always been such a splendid one that the old king dying said contentedly: "I leave all things in better shape than mine."

As to his personal appearance, there is a letter preserved written by a Dutch ambassador who was present when the Lion of the North was crowned, in which he gives his subjects, and I will quote it:

"His majesty," he wrote, "stood before his throne to receive with head uncovered, dressed in satin robe with black fur, and with black silk, cloak on his shoulder (his badge of mourning). There was a canopy over his head to his right hand the regalia of Sweden on a marble table with silver feet; he is slender of figure, well set up, with rather a pale complexion, a long face and cropped from the rising of the ears, an excellent speaker and courteous with all men; from a youth of such promise great things are expected."

He died "with his boots on," shot to death on the battlefield when a glorious victory was in sight. As his enemies rode up to him when he was falling from his white charger, they asked: "Who are you?" And he answered: "I am the king of Sweden, who do seal the liberty and religion of the nation with my blood."

So died the great Lion of the North, who lived and fought, and died—gloriously—that his faith in God and right should become the faith of all men.

CLARE CLAXTON.

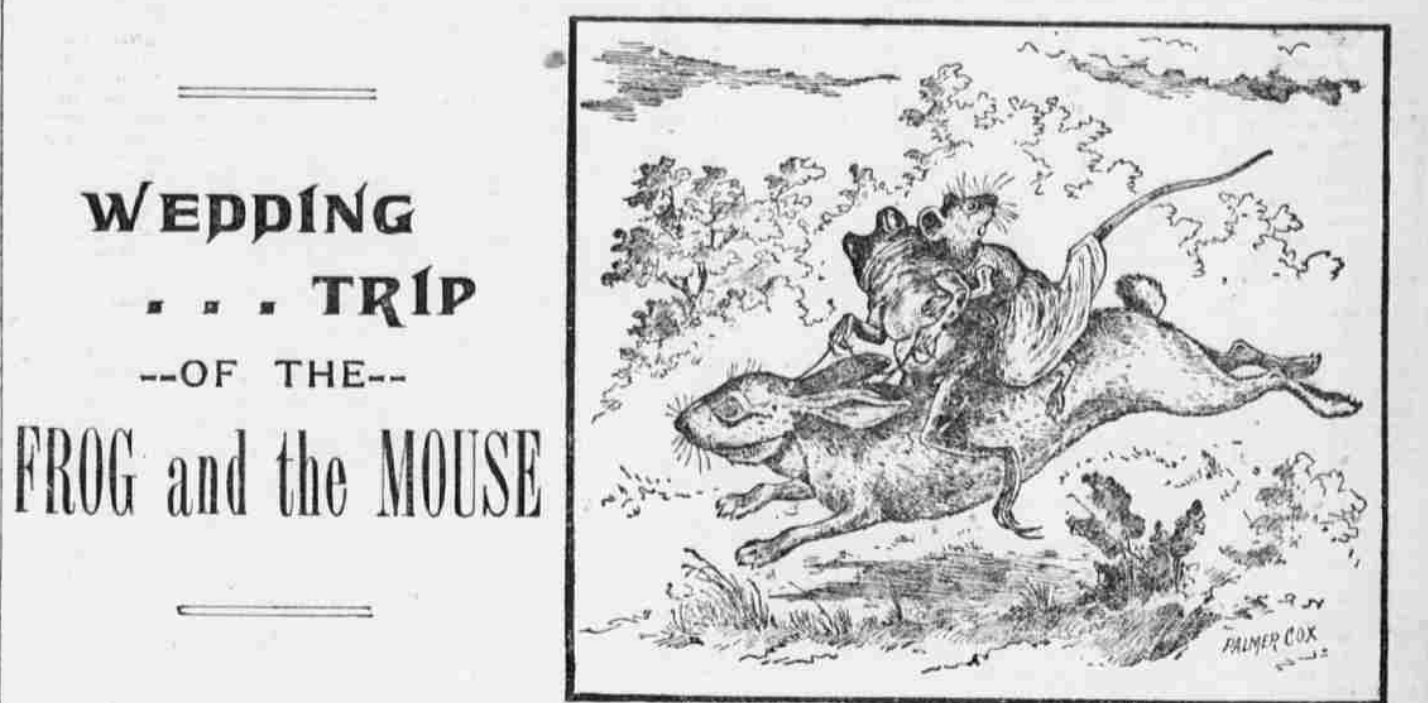
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