

THE DIAMOND OF THE NAWAB OF JUBBULPORE.

LEAVES FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF MATTHEW QUIN, WRITING TRAINER.

By WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

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"Though nine weeks have passed since the loss of the nabob of Jubbulpore's large and famous diamond, no clue to the mystery has yet been found. The stone, it will be remembered, was plucked out of the nabob's turban, which he had left exposed in his bed chamber after wearing it at a state ball. The theft, which occurred in the early hours of the morning, and suspicion fell on his body servant, Dada Khan, who slept in an adjoining apartment. The Hindoo—could not have left the palace that night—was closely confined in a room and watched for the space of a week. He was then dismissed on the morning of the following night and the following night he was seen in the native bazaar in company with an Englishman named Blunt, who has long been known to the police as a dissolute adventurer and swindler. It is said that Blunt is missing from his old haunts. The diamond was valued at \$25,000, and was noted for its size and beauty. The affair has gained widespread notoriety.—Reuter.

"At 2 o'clock this afternoon the fine mansion known as the Pines, on Putney Heath, with all its furniture and gems of art, will be sold at public auction. The Pines, which is owned by Mr. Vernon Fulke, stock broker, of Broad street, whose suicide, after being ruined by a sudden and disastrous turn of the market, caused a painful sensation a fortnight ago. Among the articles to be offered to bidders is a rare and beautiful snow leopard of the Himalayas, to which a history attached. The creature was formerly in the private menageries of the nabob of Jubbulpore, who presented it to Mr. Vernon Fulke when the latter was traveling in India several months ago. It was shipped to England at once, and a week later the unfortunate broker was summoned home by cablegram. The leopard is said to have been devotedly attached to the nabob's valet, who has recently fallen into disgrace through the well known theft of the Jubbulpore diamond.

The above paragraphs, as many readers may remember, appeared in the Times on a certain October morning in the year 189—. That the one could have any direct bearing on the other was a possibility which escaped even the astute officials of Scotland Yard, for they knew about as much of India as of Timbuctoo. But Matthew Quin was learned in the ways and tricks of the nabob Hindoo, and he looked at the matter from a point of view suggested by his oriental experiences.

The Times was his invariable companion at breakfast, and after skimming over the rest of the contents he turned for the second time to the two paragraphs. He digested them slowly and with an air of increasing attention. He forgot his fourth piece of toast and left his third cup of tea untasted. He resorted to his favorite stimulus, strong tobacco, and smoked several pipes with his chair tilted back and his feet on the table.

The public sale of so rare an animal as a snow leopard would have roused his interest at any time, but he was not thinking of that now; his mind was running in a vastly different and more problematical groove. Finally he picked up the paper again, turned to the shipping news and rubbed a finger slowly down the column. He found what he was looking for, and it brought a twinkle of satisfaction to his pursed lips. It was an item of but two lines, stating that the steamship Rameses, from Calcutta for London, had reached the Royal Albert docks on the previous afternoon. He made a hasty calculation on the back of an envelope and rose to his feet with brisk decision.

"I may be all at sea," he said to himself, "but it's worth having a try at. They have had plenty of time to pick up the trail if they are, and I don't believe they are. There's a chance of a double haul, and I'll say my cards for it. It's four years since I saw Mr. Wilfred Blunt at Allahabad, but I'll know him among a thousand. Shall I look up the passenger list of the Rameses? No, it would only be a waste of time. As for the leopard, I'll bet my coat that it's outside business not to be neglected."

From his Bloomsbury lodgings Quin took a cab to the office of Karl Hamrach & Co., near Lower Thames street. He had an interview of several hours' duration with his employer, and later they lunched together in the city. Then Quin cabbed it to Waterloo, caught a train to Putney, and trudged leisurely up the quaint old High street to Putney Heath. He stopped at the Green Man for a cooling pewter, and the landlord directed him to the late Mr. Vernon Fulke's residence, which was a large, detached mansion, secluded by ivied walls, approached by a driveway and with fine grounds front and rear—one of that procession of stately detached houses which border the eastern edge of Putney Heath and reminded common folk of the old-fashioned mansions of the heights of Richmond Park. The safe had just opened when Quin arrived and he found to his satisfaction that the outdoor goods and chattels were to be disposed of first.

He chose a point of vantage in the stable yard where the auctioneer commenced operations. The bidding was spirited and the family carriage, a brougham and several traps quickly changed hands.

Meanwhile Quin pretended to pay attention to the offers, though a close observer might have noticed that his interest was entirely with the auctioneer. He scanned each of the two score or more of faces—elderly men in frock coats, sporting gentlemen in gaiters and brown bowlers, a few horsey individuals, a sprinkling of shabby dealers and hook-nosed Jews in quest of a bargain—until he had drawn them through by curiosity. But in all the throng he could not locate the two persons for whom he was looking and he reluctantly concluded that they were not present.

He watched the sale of a part of the deceased stockbroker's horses and then stepped around to one side of the stable. The first thing that met his eye here was the Nabob of Jubbulpore's present to Mr. Vernon Fulke. In an iron-barred cage placed against the wall the snow leopard was pacing restlessly. It was a magnificent brute, superbly formed and large, its rich coloring of stripes and spots on an opalescent background of cream and silver would have defied the brush of an artist.

see before you the famous snow leopard of the Himalayas, a beast that is scarcer than a white elephant. And 'e's an uncommon specimen at that. 'E belonged to the private menagerie of 'is ighness the Nabob of Jubbulpore. 'E'll do nicely as a pet for the children, or you can put 'im in a kennel for a watch dog. And 'e'll look jolly nice being lezzed along peacefully by a chain and muzzle. Come, gentlemen, what am I offered for this fine critter? It's a chance of your lives!"

A titter of laughter ran through the crowd, and a shabby individual shouted facetiously: "Why don't you sell 'im to the butcher, Scraggs?" "I'll give 10 bob," cried another voice. "Twenty!" cried a third. "Ah, that's better!" exclaimed the auctioneer. "But it's too low for such a prize. Come, run it up to a decent figure—" "Fifteen pounds!" The speaker was a hard-featured man who looked as though he might be an agent from the Zoo. "Eighteen!" said Quin. "Twenty!" "Twenty-two!"

The auctioneer's face beamed with pleasure. The crowd took a keen interest in



THE TAWNY BRUTE LEAPED FAIRLY UPON BLUNT'S BACK.

the competition, but there were no more bidders. Quin and the hard-featured man had it all to themselves and they promptly ran up the amount to £35—which was by no means under the leopard's commercial value. It was Quin's bid, and a brief silence followed it.

"Thirty-six!" said his rival. "Thirty-seven!" cried Quin. The hard-featured man had plainly reached his limit; he edged back into the crowd, who greeted him with remarks that were more irritating than soothing.

"Oh, 'E?" for this fine animal!" exclaimed the auctioneer. "It's dirt cheap! Will no gentleman bid higher? Once—twice—going!" "Forty pounds!"

The offer came loudly and eagerly, with a foreign accent, from the rear of the throng. The man who made it—a new arrival—pushed quickly to the front. And at sight of him Quin's eyes twinkled with satisfaction; for the stranger was an unmistakable Hindoo—a tall, slim fellow, with a moustache and a slick beard, but wearing the conventional European top hat and frock coat.

"It's a blooming nigger!" muttered a derisive voice. "Forty pounds I'm offered!" shouted the auctioneer. "Forty-five!" Quin cried without hesitation. "Fifty!" said the Hindoo as quickly, with a keen glance at the expressionless face of his rival.

The delighted auctioneer shouted something, but his words were drowned by the leopard, who just then rose up against the bars of his cage, and gave a prolonged howl that sounded like a mixture of grief and pleasure. The Hindoo, looking slightly disconcerted, slipped back a few feet into the crowd; the leopard dropped on all fours and whined. Quin had noticed both, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes as he called out: "Fifty-five pounds!" "Sixty!" cried his rival. "Sixty-five!" said Quin. The Hindoo's lips worked, but he was silent; his complexion turned a sickly hue. He glared with Oriental fierceness at Quin, and then looked anxiously over his shoulder. "Going! going!" the auctioneer howled, reluctantly. "Any more bids? Once, twice, gone! Yours, sir, for £65!"

thought they might be needed," replied the auctioneer. "There's a small-sized one that'll do nicely."

"Fetch it at once," said Quin. The clerk hurried off and in a couple of minutes a two-horse covered van appeared, driven by one of the auctioneer's men. With the assistance of some of the bystanders the cage was hoisted into it and pushed back, after first being draped with a packing cloth. Quin closed the van door—it fastened only by a bolt on the outside—and dropped into his pocket the key of a padlock with which he had secured the sliding door of the leopard's cage. He was perfectly aware that the Hindoo and his companion were close behind him.

"Do you happen to know Hamrach and company's emporium, my man?" he asked of the driver. "Well, take the leopard straight there. You'll find plenty of men to help you unload the creature in the warehouse. And you might leave word that I don't return today. Here is my card—hand it in at the office. Be sure you don't collide with anything on the way."

"Trust me for that, sir," the man answered, tucking the card in a gony pocket. "I'll deliver this ere package right side up with care."

A moment later the van rumbled heavily out of the stable yard. The auctioneer turned in the opposite direction, announcing the sale of some rare plants in the hot-houses, and the Hindoo and the man in tweeds followed on the skirts of the crowd. Quin knew that they were watching him and he regulated his movements accordingly.

Locked tightly together, they polled toward the rear of the building, each trying his best to overpower the other. They were pretty evenly matched, and Quin was by no means sanguine of victory; he could not release one hand long enough to reach for his pistol. He saved his breath, making no outcry, but twice Blunt gave a shrill whistle. Meanwhile the struggle raged on, and excited the caged beasts, and they filled the room with discordant noises. An old lion roared, and the snow leopard howled dimly.

"It's no use," exclaimed Quin; "you'd better yield!" "I'll kill you first, curse you!" panted Blunt. With that he whistled a third time, and at once an answer came from overhead. Looking up briefly while he fought, Quin saw a dark figure drop from the open skylight to a tier of packing cases ten feet beneath, and then begin the further descent to the floor. The man was Dada Khan, and the leopard, scenting the presence of its old and beloved attendant, bounded with rasping cries against the cracking bars of its cage.

The arrival of the second rogue, instead of disheartening Quin, spurred him to a final effort. He threw all his strength into it, hit his adversary hard between the eyes, and broke away from him. But he was no longer on his feet; the Hindoo confronted him, a gleaming knife in hand. And as quickly Blunt was up again, ready for the fray.

"Surrender, or we'll kill you!" he cried. Just then, the pair of Indians crouched nearer, a startling thing happened. Above the roaring of the animals was heard a rending noise, followed by the clatter of falling bars—the leopard had broken out of its cage. Instantly the tawny brute bounded forward, and with a horrible yell it leapt toward Quin's back. Down the two went, the man yelling for help and the leopard screeching with rage.

Dada Khan, thrown off his guard, made an imprudent movement to assist his confederate. In a flash Quin snatched the knife from his grasp, tackled him boldly and bore him to the floor. At this exciting moment there was a thunderous crash on the rear door, and two more blows sent it reeling inwards, torn from its fastenings. The tawny brute entered the room, and he flung aside a heavy wooden bar which he must have brought from the outer gates.

"Here, take this fellow!" shouted Quin. "Be quick!" The Hindoo knew that the game was up; he yielded sullenly when the officer bent over him and slapped the muzzle of a revolver to his forehead. Quin ran for a net that was hanging close by, and threw it skillfully over the leopard. An instant later the brute had been dragged to the top of the body of its victim, and he helplessly entangled in the stout meshes. Blunt lay in a pool of blood, moaning with pain. He was badly mauled on the back and shoulders, but not fatally, as Quin saw by a brief examination.

"You'll do for the present, my man," he said, grimly. With that he turned to Dada Khan, hastily searched his clothing and with a smile of triumph produced a tiny phial filled with some dark liquid. "I know what I should find, you rascal," he exclaimed. "And now, if you are sensible, you will do as I tell you. Here is the drug and the knife, and yonder lies your pet leopard. Cut out the diamond!" "The sahib is surely mad!" gasped the Hindoo, with feigned astonishment. "Not at all," Quin said, smiling cheerfully. "I know all. Come, get to work!" "And if I refuse, sahib?" "That won't benefit you any. I'll have the leopard killed and skinned before your eyes."

pleasant surprise. He sprang to his feet, looked to the right, and saw by the dim light a revolver leveled at him within three paces. And behind the weapon was the man who had reached the sale too late—the big, ruddy-faced fellow in the tan tweeds. Quin was taken foul; he was empty-handed, and his pistol was gone. "I've got the drop on you, my friend," the man said quietly. "Don't make a sound, and don't be foolish enough to resist. You are armed, of course. I'll trouble you first to place your shooter on that box. And at the least treacherous move I'll put a bullet into your brain, quick!"

"And if I obey you, Quin asked, coolly, "what then, Mr. Wilfred Blunt?" "Ah, you know me!" said the man. "Well, so much the better—we understand each other. Put the weapon down, and then step into yonder empty cage. I shall lock the door, and see you never open until—" "Until the arrival of Dada Khan," supplemented Quin.

"Just so," replied Blunt. "What a clever detective you would make! But we have talked enough—do as I told you!" Quin was brief instant Quin hesitated, outwardly calm, but inwardly he was writhing with rage and mortification. He had weighed the chances, and he knew that he was in the power of a merciless and determined ruffian. But a ruse might gain him the upper hand, and a daring and doubtful one flashed into his mind.

"You fool, it is you who are trapped," he said scornfully. "You are covered by two weapons—look behind you!" He spoke so calmly, with such assurance, that Blunt could not but believe. With a muttered oath he glanced over his shoulder, and that quickly he saw the muzzle of a pistol striking up his right arm and sending the pistol flying ten feet away. The two grappled fiercely, swayed for a moment, and then fell.

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Dada Khan scowled and swore softly under his breath. Quin, who had been behind a cage, intending to admit the Hindoo when the coast was clear, and now however, extended to us by the ever-thirsty mosquitoes, and the busy movements of a train of driver ants across our path told us that rain was not far off.

We left the main track for a narrower one and then dismounted, as we were close to our destination and on uncertain riding ground. Here my friend pointed out a broad, deep fissure, like the rent caused by a severe earthquake, and declared by the Devil's Woodyard. It was a large circular spot of level mud flooring eighty yards in diameter, without a vestige of living vegetation, strewn all around its edge with dry fallen and falling trees and boughs, and dotted about with little volcanic cones from six inches to three feet in height. Some of these cones that were in operation belched forth bluish mud containing small, smooth red stones, or baked clay, that seemed to have passed through the action of fire. There are tracks of game across the Devil's Woodyard, but the most intrepid hunter will not shoot over it after nightfall. And, indeed, it must be an uncanny place at dusk or by moonlight, for the dense and entangling belt of living ferns contrasts so markedly with its barren desolation, and the gurgling, spouting sound of the unseen subterranean forces finding their way to the surface is so suggestive of the helpless plight that might at any moment overtake a curious visitor.

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THE DEVIL'S WOODYARD. A Strange Mud Volcano on Trinidad Island. It was at after-dinner coffee one night in the wet season, says a writer in Chambers' Journal, that I first heard of "a queer place in the big woods that goes by the name of the Devil's Woodyard," and, prompted by curiosity, I consented to visit it with a planter friend.

"It is only about six miles from us as the crow flies," he said, but we had to struggle up and down steep and slippery hills, through seas of mud of varying depths, tacking backward and forward in a vain search for terra firma, with showers of warm, muddy water squirting up from our animals' feet, and with the constant fear that we should have to wade away and leave the horses hopelessly buried in a deep, miry hole.

Thus we worked our passage for two solid hours under a scorching sun before we reached the grateful shade of the forest and commenced to thread our way over a network of roots, round huge towering tree-trunks like cathedral arches, passing a varied panorama of palms, creepers and orchids. There was little animal life visible, or even

audible, at that midday hour; only now and then the mysterious stillness was broken by the beaten track to look for the volcano, for its charmed circle of death and havoc had widened to a diameter of at least 120 yards. A few seconds of violent upheaval had raised its surface twelve feet above the surrounding forest, uprooting armor trees that were still standing at all conceivable angles, and enveloping the spurs of the larger leafy monarchs that alone stood upright in the track of the invading flood. Wishing to get a bird's-eye view of the scene, I climbed a tree, from which the appearance of the volcano was that of a huge overrolled pudding that had collapsed without breaking up.

Sixty yards from the circumference of the Woodyard there were several wide, deep chasms in the earth, and only a few feet from one of these was a crooked but the owner was an East Indian, who had been tempted by the richness of the soil to buy a piece of land in that strange place from the crown. The poor fellow had had a bad time of it. Suddenly awakened by a severe earthquake, and deafened by the roar of the explosion, he could not tell which way to run in the darkness, and waited for the morning light with feelings that can be more easily imagined than described. When I saw him he had some what recovered his composure, and, pointing to a spot where the overflow had swallowed up his garden of maize, he said, "Queen must give um more garden, massa; dehbil no mindum pikeet!" (that is, has no regard for boundary marks).

In three weeks the crust of the earth had hardened to such an extent as to enable me to walk all over the volcano, and fresh cones were rising in every direction. There can be no reasonable doubt, I think, that most of the hills in these West India islands, where not the work of coral insects, are raised after the pattern of and with the same volcanic agency as the Devil's Woodyard.

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