



Devout priests frequently mortify their flesh and voluntarily force themselves to undergo great bodily hardships and deprivation. They are enabled to do this and escape serious injury to their health by reason of the purity of their lives and the fact that they deny themselves the pleasures of the table. An ordinary man who lives in the ordinary way cannot long endure hardship, deprivation or overwork, unless he takes the right remedy to reinforce nature. The average man when he is in good health eats too much. When he gets a little out of sorts he pays no heed and keeps right on "making a pig of himself."

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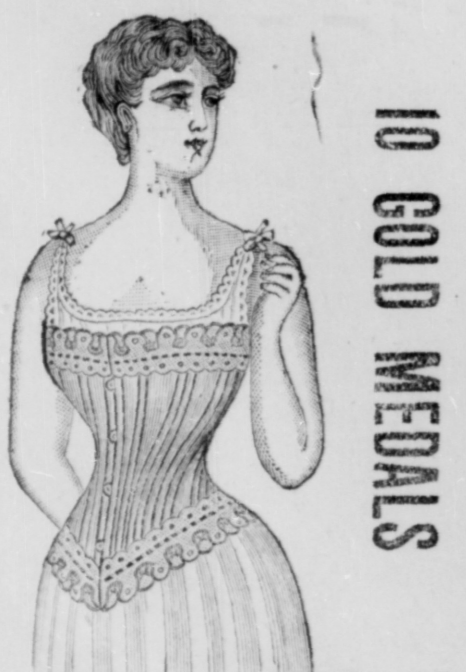
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LOVE'S COMMAND
BY JOHN A. STEWART.

"I answered in the affirmative, getting ever deeper involved in the mysteries surrounding this strange woman. "And didst thou see one there like thyself? Hush, hush!" Baruk came again, saying he would risk his life for us no longer. "Good Baruk, thou wilt not die," said my companion. "One turn more—one little turn. That is it. The night is cool. Thy mind will be at ease." "Thou wilt have me speared like a goat," he demurred. Nevertheless he left us once more. "There is another caravan coming," pursued my companion, breathlessly. "I heard it from Baruk. Let us join it. Trust Baruk for his love of gold. I will trust thee in honour of thy people." And she was lost in the darkness like a shadow. I returned to my place and presently got a word with Baruk. "What is this strange thing that the Indian princess sayeth?" I asked, turning my mouth close to his ear, for there was need of dead secrecy. "Nay, I am not a magician," he answered, with the oily evasiveness of the Oriental, who is chary about committing himself. "Let us have no pretence of ignorance," I said, feigning anger. "What do they mean?"

"My lord frighteneth me." The voice of Suleiman was heard calling for someone, and in the same instant the fires leaped up, shedding a fitful, lurid light on the scene. If we were caught consulting, our lives would not be worth ten minutes' purchase. "Look here, Baruk," I said, "I am thy friend. What is the state of affairs? Tell it clearly." "May I never be in such a position again," groaned Baruk. "Hark you, we deal with treachery and cruel lances. What is our blood? Nothing. What is the spoil and the price of these women? Everything. Yet we talk of that which, were it known, would make us dead on the spot." My thoughts were exactly like his, but a woman had asked my aid, and I could not refuse it. "Freedom is more than life," I said, with an audacity that was not entirely genuine. "We must not be timorous. Now, look you, I am a stranger. Thinkest thou I came here to rob? We help ourselves, good Baruk, in helping the Indian princess." "She hath untold riches; she can recompense," murmured Baruk. "Yet perchance when she was safe she would forget us."

"And if thou remainest here, art not thou a bondsman forever? Nay, who is to hinder these fellows from taking thee out into the desert and stripping thee naked and leaving thee, so that when the wolves were done with thy bones they would be the sport of the winds?" "There is much in what thou sayest," Suleiman was calling again and more impatiently than before. "I will speak with thee again," whispered Baruk, hurriedly. "It is not safe now." And he disappeared. Sauntering carelessly back to the fires, which burned red and low now, I threw myself on the ground to ruminate on all I had just heard. We were riotously merry. There was an abundance, indeed a superabundance, of food; wine flowed like water in the rainy season, and the coffee and tobacco were the best on earth. Suleiman, rising presently, went to see that the ladies were being properly attended, and came back praising the wondrous docility of the Indian princess. I smoked, looking up at the brightness of Orion, and said nothing. But in my heart was the quivering exultation of the schemer who has important business on hand and knows that failure is death. My next move was to enlighten Tabal. It was done in a few words, for now that the heavens were bright, the chance of private talk was small. But Tabal quickly understood all, and fervently swore a vow of fealty. To Tabal's mind there was but one serious difficulty in our project of escape. "We go with the caravan to Mecca," he said. "Assuredly; it will do us all good." "But thou art not of our religion. Think what that meaneth." "I am a better Mohammedan than thyself, good Tabal. There will not be in the great mosque a more devout hajji than him whom thou callest Christian. Are we not brothers? Did not thy father put the light of the Koran into my soul? Dost thou think I am careless about getting to Heaven as a follower of the prophet?" Tabal was convinced, and we parted, to ignore each other very studiously for the rest of the night. Near the dawn, when the world was black and men were heavy, Baruk returned to me. He had got over his wavering and was ready for the most desperate exploit. "We will put on the green turban (the badge or sign of such as have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca) together, Baruk," I said, joyfully, after listening to his promise to help. "Now, tell me the name of our prince."

"They call her Ranees." "A pretty name," I remarked. "Let us make her happy." Therefore as briefly and minutely as was possible with words I gave myself instructions both for Ranees and for himself. Fortunately the simplicity of the plan of attack enabled us to make our arrangements with confidence and tolerable accuracy. With the first blink of light we were on the lookout for the caravan, but the day had worn well into the afternoon before our scouts brought word it was at the mouth of the defile. At the intelligence that it was coming we settled down in our hiding-place as still as dead men, the horses being

kept some distance behind lest they should neigh and betray us. Tabal and I had many unsuspected thoughts, but as it would be unwise to express them and it was impossible to communicate with either Ranees or Baruk we could only wait in silent eagerness and faith.

The pilgrims sent forward a party of half a dozen horsemen, and we were ordered further back. Suleiman himself, with one companion to act as messenger, remained to observe their place of vantage being the hollow top of a great rock which projected, causing a curve in the path below. Lying there flat they had an almost uninterrupted view of the pass, and by deft clambering the messenger could reach our ambush without fear of detection. To keep us keen and in touch with what was going on Suleiman sent frequently to tell us of the movements of the horsemen. We learned that, passing right beneath his hiding-place, they rode to the head of the gorge, looked dutifully about among the rocks, and discovering nothing returned light-heartedly to report the way clear. Then the caravan, wishing no doubt to get to open ground again as speedily as might be, swung its huge length into the defile and came trailing on like an endless serpent. Suleiman, watching it closely, sent back word to look to our horses and arms, as the prospect was glorious beyond his expectation.

A little later the order for action made the blood tingle in our veins. Half of us were to go to the foot of the gorge and half to the head, so that the pilgrimage might be harassed simultaneously in front and rear, and so the reader induced to relinquish a part of their abounding riches. The response was as prompt as might be expected of men whose notion of Heaven is eternal plundering. Almost before the words of command were out of the messenger's mouth we were clattering off at a breakneck pace into sunless chasms and by beetling archways and up and down dizzy steps that only robbers with no souls to save would have faced. Tabal and I were of those who went to the foot, and fervently we prayed the pilgrims might have a good courage and firearms for distressed strangers. In the course of a racking ride we came often into violent contact, and in one of the collisions, while pretending vehement anger at the rough usage, I managed to get a word in Tabal's ear.

(To be Continued.)

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30th, 1898

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Monday 15th August	Monday 8th Aug.
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