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THE STRANGE RIDE OF MORROWBIE JUKES.

BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

(Continued)

Personally I am not of an imaginative temperament—very few engineers are—but on that occasion I was as completely prostrated with nervous terror as any woman. After half an hour or so, however, I was able once more to calmly review my chances of escape. Any exit by the steep sand walls was of course impracticable. I had been thoroughly convinced of this some time before. It was possible, just possible, that I might in the uncertain moonlight safely run the gantlet of the rifle shots. The place was so full of terror for me that I was prepared to undergo any risk in leaving it. Imagine my delight, then, when after creeping stealthily to the river front I found that the infernal boat was not there. My freedom lay before me in the next few steps!

By walking out to the first shallow pool that lay at the foot of the projecting left horn of the horseshoe I could wade across, turn the flank of the crater and make my way inland. Without a moment's hesitation I marched briskly past the tussocks where Gunga Dass had snared the crows and out in the direction of the smooth white sand beyond. My first step from the tufts of dried grass showed me how utterly futile was any hope of escape, for as I put my foot down I felt an indescribable drawing, sucking motion of the sand below. Another moment and my leg was swallowed up nearly to the knee. In the moonlight the whole surface of the sand seemed to be shaken with devilish delight at my disappointment. I struggled clear, sweating with terror and exertion, back to the tussocks behind me and fell on my face.

My only means of escape from the semicircle was protected with a quicksand! How long I lay I have not the faintest idea, but I was roused at last by the malevolent chuckle of Gunga Dass at my ear. "I would advise you, protector of the poor" (the ruffian was speaking English), "to return to your house. It is unhealthy to lie down here. Moreover, when the boat returns, you will most certainly be rifled at." He stood over me in the dim light of the dawn chuckling and laughing to himself. Suppressing my first impulse to catch the man by the neck and throw him on to the quicksand, I rose sullenly and followed him to the platform below the burrows.

Suddenly and futilely, as I thought while I spoke, I asked, "Gunga Dass, what is the good of the boat if I can't get out anyhow?" I recollect that even in my deepest trouble I had been speculating vaguely on the waste of ammunition in guarding an already well protected foreshore.

Gunga Dass laughed again and made answer "They have the boat only in daytime. It is for the reason that there is a way. I hope we shall have the



The soldier who dies on the battlefield with the arrow of a savage enemy stinging in his vitals suffers horrible, untold agonies. Even the story of his sufferings as told by his surviving comrades causes the hearer to shudder with pity and horror. There are tens of thousands slowly dying every day with the arrow of some insidious disease poisoning their vitals, and no one stops to pity or to alleviate. Where death comes to one man on the battlefield it comes to tens of thousands in their homes, through the agency of man's most relentless enemy—consumption. There is a widespread idea for which ignorant physicians are responsible, that consumption is an incurable disease. This is a mistake. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery cures 98 per cent. of all cases. It is the great blood-maker and flesh-builder. It gives zest to the appetite, makes the digestion and assimilation perfect, renders the liver active, makes the blood pure and fills it with life-giving elements of the food, and acts directly on the lungs, driving out all impurities and disease germs. Thousands who had been given up by doctors and lost all hope, are to-day healthy and robust as the result of the use of this great medicine. It is the discovery of an eminent and skillful physician, Dr. R. V. Pierce, for thirty years chief consulting physician to the Invalids' Hotel and Surgical Institute at Buffalo, N. Y. In writing to Dr. Pierce for advice the sufferer consults a physician whom his townspeople honored by making him their representative in congress but whose love for his profession caused him to resign that position that he might give his whole time to the sick and afflicted. He will personally answer all letters from sufferers without charge. His "Golden Medical Discovery" is sold by all good medicine dealers. Stomach and liver troubles with sluggish action of the bowels are cured by Doctor Pierce's Pleasant Pellets.

pleasure of your company for a much longer time. It is a pleasant spot when you have been here some years and eaten roast crow long enough."

I staggered, numbed and helpless, toward the fetid burrow allotted to me and fell asleep. An hour or so later I was awakened by a piercing scream—the shrill, high pitched scream of a horse in pain. Those who have once heard that will never forget the sound. I found some little difficulty in scrambling out of the burrow. When I was in the open, I saw Pornic, my poor old Pornic, lying dead on the sandy soil. How they had killed him I cannot guess. Gunga Dass explained that horse was better than crow, and "greatest good of greatest number is political maxim. We are now republic, Mr. Jukes, and you are entitled to a fair share of the beast. If you like, we will pass a vote of thanks. Shall I propose?"

Yes, we were a republic indeed—a republic of wild beasts penned at the bottom of a pit, to eat and fight and sleep till we died! I attempted no protest of any kind, but sat down and stared at the hideous sight in front of me. In less time almost than it takes me to write this Pornic's body was divided, in some unclean way or other. The men and women had dragged the fragments on to the platform and were preparing their morning meal. Gunga Dass cooked mine. The almost irresistible impulse to fly at the sand walls until I was wearied laid hold of me afresh, and I had to struggle against it with all my might. Gunga Dass was offensively jocular till I told him that if he addressed another remark of any kind whatever to me I should strangle him where he sat. This silenced him till silence became insupportable and I bade him say something.

"You will live here till you die like the other Feringhi," he said coolly watching me over the fragment of gristle that he was gnawing.

"What other sahib, you swine? Speak at once, and don't step to tell me lies."

"He is over there," answered Gunga Dass, pointing to a burrow mouth about four doors to the left of my own. "You can see for yourself. He died in the burrow as you will die and I will die and as all these men and women and the old child will also die."

"For pity's sake, tell me all you know about him. Who was he? When did he come, and when did he die?"

This appeal was a weak step on my part. Gunga Dass only leered and replied, "I will not—unless you give me something first."

Then I recollected where I was and struck the man between the eyes, partially stunning him. He stepped down from the platform at once and, cowering and fawning and weeping and attempting to embrace my feet, led me round to the burrow which he had indicated.

"I know nothing whatever about the gentleman. Your God be my witness that I do not. He was as anxious to escape as you were, and he was shot from the boat, though we all did all things to prevent him from attempting. He was shot here. Gunga Dass laid his hand on his lean stomach and bowed to the earth.

"Well and what then? Go on!"

"And then—and then, your honor, we carried him into his house and gave him water and put wet cloths on the wound, and he lay down in his house and gave up the ghost."

"In how long? In how long?"

"About half an hour after he received his wound. I call Vishnu to witness," yelled the wretched man, "that I did everything for him. Everything which was possible, that I did!"

He threw himself down on the ground and clasped my ankles. But I had my doubts about Gunga Dass' benevolence and kicked him off as he lay protesting.

"I believe you robbed him of everything he had. But I can find out in a minute or two. How long was the sahib here?"

"Nearly a year and a half. I think he must have gone mad. But hear me swear, protector of the poor! Won't your honor hear me swear that I never touched an article that belonged to him? What is your worship going to do?"

I had taken Gunga Dass by the waist and had hauled him on to the platform opposite the deserted burrow. As I did so I thought of my wretched fellow prisoner's unspeakable misery among all these horrors for 18 months and the final agony of dying like a rat in a hole with a bullet wound in the stomach. Gunga Dass fancied I was going to kill him and howled pitifully. The rest of the population, in the plethora that follows a full flesh meal, watched us without stirring.

"Go inside, Gunga Dass," said I, "and fetch it out."

I was feeling sick and faint with horror now Gunga Dass nearly rolled off the platform and howled aloud.

"But I am Brahman, sahib—a high caste Brahman. By your soul, by your father's soul, do not make me do this thing!"

"Brahman or no Brahman, by my soul and by my father's soul, in you go!" I said, and, seizing him by the shoulders, I crammed his head into the mouth of the burrow, kicked the rest of him in, and, sitting down, covered my face with my hands.

At the end of a few minutes I heard a rustle and a creak, then Gunga Dass in a sobbing, choking whisper speaking to himself, then a soft thud—and I uncovered my eyes.

The dry sand had turned the corpse intrusted to its keeping into a yellow brown mummy. I told Gunga Dass to stand off while I examined it. The body—clad in an olive green hunting suit much stained and worn, with leather pads on the shoulders—was that of a man between 30 and 40, above middle height, with light, sandy hair, long moustache and a rough, unkempt beard. The left canine of the upper jaw was missing, and a portion of the lobe of the right ear was gone. On the second finger of the left hand was a ring—a shield shaped bloodstone set in gold, with a monogram that might have been either "B. K." or "B. L." On the third finger of the right hand was a silver ring in the shape of a coiled cobra, much worn and tarnished. Gunga Dass deposited a handful of trifles he had picked out of the burrow at my feet, and, covering the face of the body with my handkerchief, I turned to examine these. I give the full list in the hope that it may lead to the identification of the unfortunate man.

(Continued on page 8.)



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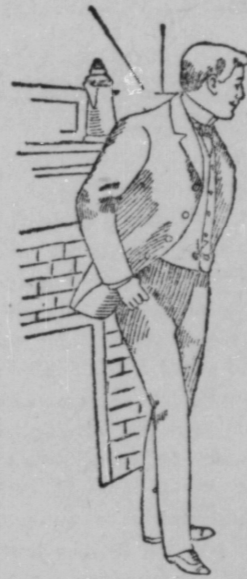
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