

DO YOU KNOW WHY --- You Don't Need to Worry About the War Prices?

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Drawn for this paper By Frank Leeb



KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES

A Romance of Adventure
By TALBOT MUNDY

SYNOPSIS.

Chapter I.—At the beginning of the world war Capt. Athelstan King of the British Indian Army and of his secret service, is ordered to Delhi to meet Yasmin, a dancer, and go with her to Khyber to quiet the outlaws there who are said by spies to be preparing for a Jihad or holy war.

CHAPTER II.—On his way to Delhi King quietly foils a plan to assassinate him and gets evidence that Yasmin is after him.

Chapter III.—In Delhi he is met by Rewa Gunga, Yasmin's man, who tells him that she has already gone North and that he, the Rangar, has been left to score King.

Chapter IV.—In Yasmin's house the Rangar attempts to outwit King, but fails. Ismail, an Atridi belonging to Yasmin, is given to King for a servant.

Chapter V.—King rescues some of Yasmin's men and takes them North with him, tricking the Rangar into going ahead of him.

Chapter VI.—Rejoined by the Rangar at the mouth of the Khyber pass, King and party start through the pass for Khyber.

Chapter VII.—The Rangar deceives King and Ismail, with three others, in the pass.

Chapter VIII.—King sends to his brother at All Masjid fort, meets him alone in the pass, and with his aid transforms himself into a native hakim, or man of medicine.

Chapter IX.—Calling Ismail and the men back to his puzzles and then astonishes and delights them by his transformation. Ismail grows friendly and seems appalled at the thought that Yasmin may love King.

Chapter X.—In Khyber King is taken into the mosque and Ismail and another falsely witnessing for him that he has slain an Englishman, he is admitted thru the mosque wall into the celebrated caves.

Chapter XI.—He holds a clinic for the cave's inhabitants, and hears of a lashkar by Bull-With-a-Beard's men.

Chapter XII.—Next night Ismail takes him to a vast cave through which an underground river pours—"Earth's Drink"—and finds gathered there thousands of men, among whom he has pointed out to his mullah Muhammad Anim, or Bull-With-a-Beard.

Ismail seemed obsessed by the spirit of hates let loose—drawn by it, as by a magnet, although subsequent events proved him not to have been altogether without a plan. He got up, with his eyes fixed on the dance, and thrust himself and King next to some Orakzai Pathans, elbowing savagely to right and left to make room. And patience proved scarce. The nearest man reached for the ever-ready Pathan knife, but paused in the instant that his knife licked clear. From a swift side glance at King's face he chanced to a full stare, his scowl slowly giving place to a grin as he recognized him.

"Allah!" He drove the long blade back again.

"Well met, hakim! See—the wound heals finely!"

Baring his shoulder under the smelly sheepskin coat, he lifted a bandage gingerly to show the clean opening out of which King had coaxed a bullet the day before. It looked wholesome and ready to heal.

"Name thy reward, hakim! We Orakzai Pathans forget no favors!" (Now that boast was a true one.)

King nodded more to himself than to the other man. He needed, for instance, very much to know who was planning a Jihad, and who "Bull-with-a-beard" might be; but it was not safe to confide just yet in a chance-made acquaintance. A very fair acquaintance

with some phases of the East had taught him that names such as Bull-with-a-beard are often almost photographically descriptive. He rose to his feet to look. A blind man can talk, but it takes trained eyes to gather information.

The din had increased, and it was safe to stand up and stare, because all eyes were on the madness in the middle. There were plenty besides himself who stood to get a better view, and he had to dodge from side to side to see between them.

"I'm not to doctor his men. Therefore it's a fair guess that he and I are to be kept apart. Therefore he'll be as far away from me now as possible, supposing he's here."

Reasoning along that line, he tried to see the faces on the far side, but the problem was to see over the dancers' heads. He succeeded presently, for the Orakzai Pathan saw what he wanted, and in his anxiety to be agreeable, reached forward to pull back a box from between the ranks in front. Its owners offered instant fight, but made no further objection when they saw who wanted it and why. King wondered at their sudden change of mind.

He found a man soon who was not interested in the dancing, but who had eyes and ears apparently for everything and everybody else. He watched him for ten minutes, until at last their eyes met. Then he sat down and kicked the box back to its owners. He touched the Pathan's broad shoulder. The man smiled and bent his turbaned head to listen.

"Opposite," said King, "nearly exactly opposite—three rows from the front, counting the front row as one—there sits a man with a black beard, whose shoulders are like a bull's. As he sits he hangs his head between them. Look! See! Tell me truly what his name is?"

The Pathan got up and strode forward to stand on the box, kicking aside the elbows that leaned on it and laughing when the owners cursed him. He stood on it and stared for five minutes, counting deliberately three times over, striking a finger on the palm of his hand to check himself.

"Bull-with-a-beard!" he announced at last, dropping back into place beside King. "Muhammad Anim. The mullah Muhammad Anim."

"An Afghan?" King asked.

"He says he is an Afghan. But unless he lies he is from Ishtambul (Constantinople)."

"Itching to ask more questions, King—the hakim Kurram Khan—blinked mildly behind his spectacles and looked like one to whom a savage might safely ease his mind.

"He bade me go to Sikaram where my village is and bring him a hundred men for his lashkar. He says he has her special favor. Wait and watch, I say!"

"Has he money?" asked King, apparently drawing a bow at a venture for conversation's sake. But there is an art in asking artless questions.

"Aye! The liar says the Germans gave it to him. He swears they will send more—who are the Germans? Who is a man who talks of a Jihad that is to be, that he should have gold given him by unbelievers? I saw a German once, at Nukla. He ate pigment and washed it down with wine. Are such men sons of the Prophet?"

"Wait and watch, say I!"

"Money?" said King. "And should no more money come?"

"This was courteous conversation and received as such—many a long league removed from curiosity.

"Who am I to foretell a man's kismet? I know what I know, and I think what I think! I know thee, hakim, for a gentle fellow, who hurt me almost not at all in the drawing of a bullet out of my flesh. What knowest thou about me?"

"That I will dress the wound for thee again!"

Artless statements are as useful in their way as artless questions. Let the guile lie deep, that is all.

"Nay, nay! For she said nay! Shall I fall foul of her, for the sake of a new bandage?"

The temptation was terrific to ask why she had given that order, but King resisted it, and presently it occurred to the Pathan that his own theories on the subject might be of interest.

"She will use thee for a reward," he said. "The who shall win and keep her favor may have his hurts dressed and his belly dosed. Her enemies may rot."

"Does she call the mullah Muhammad Anim enemy?" King asked him.

"Nay, she never mentions him by name."

CHAPTER XIII.

The dance went on for fifty minutes yet, but then—quite unexpectedly—all the arena guards together fired a volley at the roof, and the dance stopped as if every dancer had been hit. Panting—foaming at the mouth, some of them—the dancers ran to their seats and set the crowd surging again, leaving the arena empty of all but the guards.

Now a man stood up near the edge of the crowd whom King recognized; and recognition brought no joy with it. The mullah without hair or eyelashes, who had admitted him and his party through the mosque into the caves, strode out to the middle of the arena all alone, strutting and swaggering. He recalled the man's last words and drew no consolation from them, either.

"Many have entered! Some went out by a different road!"

Cold chills went down his back. All at once Ismail's manner became unencouraging. He ceased to make a fuss over the dancer and began to eye King sidewise, until at last he seemed unable to contain the malice that would well forth.

"At the gate there were only words," he whispered. "Here in this cavern men wait for proof!"

He licked his teeth suggestively, as a wolf does when he contemplates a meal. Then, as an afterthought, as though ashamed, "I love thee! Thou art a man after my own heart! But I am her man! Wait and see!"

The mullah in the arena, blinking with his lashless eyes, held both arms up for silence in the attitude of a Christian priest blessing a congregation. The great cavern grew still, and only the river could be heard sucking hungrily between the smooth stone banks.

"God is great!" the mullah howled. The crowd thundered in echo to him; and then the vault took up the echoes. "And Muhammad is his prophet!" howled the mullah. Instantly they answered him again. "His prophet—is his prophet—is his prophet!" said the staccatoes, in loud barks—then in murmurs—then in awestruck whispers.

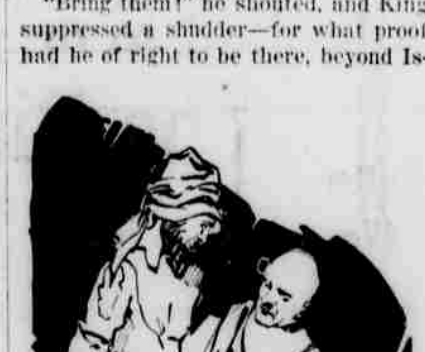
That seemed to be all the religious ritual Khyber remembered or could tolerate. Considering that the mullah, too, must have killed his man in cold blood before earning the right to be there, perhaps it was enough—too much. There were men not far from King who shuddered.

"There are strangers!" announced the mullah, as a man might say, "I smell a rat!" But he did not look at anybody in particular; he blinked at the crowd.

"Bring them!" he shouted, and King suppressed a shudder—for what proof had he of right to be there, beyond Is-

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A Wretched-Looking Beluchi Was Thrust Forward at a Run, With Arms Lashed to His Sides.

mullah's verbal corroboration of a lie? Would Ismail lie for him again? he wondered. And if so, would the lie be any use?

Not far from where King sat there was an immediate disturbance in the crowd, and a wretched-looking Beluchi was thrust forward at a run, with arms lashed to his sides and a pitiful look of terror on his face. Two more Beluchis were hustled along after him, protesting a little, but looking almost as hopeless.

Once in the arena, the guards took charge of all three of them and lined them up facing the mullah, clubbing them with their rifle-butts to get quicker obedience. The crowd began to be

nousy again, but the mullah signed for silence.

"These are traitors!" he howled, and his voice was like a wolf's at hunting time. "Hear, and be warned!"

The crowd grew very still, but King saw that some men licked their lips, as if they well knew what was coming. "These three men came, and one was a new man!" the mullah howled. "The other two were his witnesses! All three swore that the first man came from slaying an unbeliever in the teeth of written law. They said he ran from the law. So, as the custom is, I let all three enter!"

"Good!" said the crowd. "Good!"

They might have been five thousand judges, judging in equity, so grave they were. Yet they licked their lips.

"But later, word came to me saying they are liars. So—again as the custom is—I ordered them bound and held! Does any speak for them?"

"Speak for them?" said the roof.

There was silence. Then there was a murmur of astonishment. Over opposite to where King sat the mullah stood up, who the Pathan had said was "Bull-with-a-beard"—Muhammad Anim.

"The men are mine!" he growled. His voice was like a bear's at bay; it was low, but it carried strangely. And as he spoke he swung his great head between his shoulders, like a bear that means to charge. "The proof they brought has been stolen! They had good proof! I speak for them! The men are mine!"

The Pathan nudged King in the ribs with an elbow like a club and tickled his ear with hot breath.

"Bull-with-a-beard speaks truth!" he growled. "Truth and a lie together! Good may it do him and them! They die, they three Bahuchis!"

"Proof?" howled the mullah who had no hair or eyelashes.

"Proof! Show us proof!" yelled the crowd.

The Pathan next King leaned over to whisper to him again, but stiffened in the act. There was a great gasp the same instant, as the whole crowd caught its breath all together. The mullah in the middle froze into immobility. Bull-with-a-beard stood unmoving, swaying his great head from side to side, no longer suggestive of a bear about to charge, but of one who hesitates.

The crowd was staring at the end of the bridge. King stared, too, and caught his own breath. For Yasmin stood there, smiling on them all as the new moon smiles down on the Khyber! She had come among them like a spirit, all unheralded.

So much more beautiful than the one likeness King had seen of her that for a second he doubted who she was, she stood there, human and warm and real, who had begun to seem a myth, clad in gauzy silk transparent stuff that made no secret of sylphlike shapeliness and looking nearly light enough to blow away. Her feet—and they were the most marvelously modeled things he had ever seen—were naked and played restlessly on the naked stone. Not one part of her was still for a fraction of a second; yet the whole effect was of insolently lazy ease.

Her eyes blazed brighter than the little jewels stitched to her gossamer dress, and when a man once looked at them he did not find it easy to look away again. Even mullah Muhammad Anim seemed transfixed, like a great foolish animal.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Advertisements will be inserted in this column not exceeding five lines, three times, 25c; one week 60c. Each line over five, 10c per week additional. All advertisements in this column must be paid in advance. No advertisement will be inserted in this column for less than 25c.

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NOTICE TO PROVE CLAIMS.

James J. Conway, Attorney,
Estate of BRIDGET DOUGHERTY, deceased.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, administratrix of the estate of Bridget Dougherty, late of the county of La Salle and state of Illinois, deceased, will appear before the Probate Court of said county, on the first Monday (being the 7th day) of January, 1918, at the Probate Court room in Ottawa, in said county, when and where all persons having claims or demands against said estate are notified to attend and present the same in writing for adjustment.

Dated the 5th day of November, A. D. 1917.

ELIZABETH PELLOUCHOUD,
Administratrix.

FINAL SETTLEMENT.

George P. Hillis, Attorney,
Estate of WILLIAM R. MAXWELL, deceased.

Notice is hereby given to all persons interested in said estate, that the undersigned, administrator of the estate of said William R. Maxwell, deceased, will appear before the Probate Court of the County of La Salle and State of Illinois, at the County Court House, in Ottawa, in said county, on Monday, the 10th day of December, A. D. 1917, for the purpose of rendering an account of his proceedings in the administration of said estate for the final settlement, when and where any and all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any there be, why such account should not be approved by the Court.

Dated at Ottawa, this 26th day of October, 1917.

CHARLES E. HOOK,
Administrator.

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M. N. ARMSTRONG,
Attorney at law, 210-211 Moloney Bldg., Ottawa, Illinois. Telephone: Office, 375-W. Residence, 312-Y.

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Cars arrive from the west at 1:00 a. m., 8:45 a. m., 12:50 p. m., 6:50 p. m., 11:35 p. m.

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Southbound cars leave Ottawa station for McKinley Park, Grand Ridge and Streator, in A. M.—5:50, 6:50h, 7:50, 9:50, 11:50. P. M.—1:50, 3:50, 5:50, 8:00, 11:35. A Marseilles and intermediate points. B Marseilles, Morris, Seneca and intermediate points. C Princeton and intermediate points. D Ladd and intermediate points. E Princeton-Ladd and intermediate points.

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