AN INCIDENT of the SEPOY MUTINY

The old man looked up sharply. "There comes to every human being under the sun," said he, "in one shape or another the 'tide in his affairs' which, though it may not lead on to fortune, nor yet down to ruin, proves him, shows what is in him, brings out anything worth counting that may be latent in him, and exposes his weaknesses, too, often enough. That tide came to me in the Terrible Year—in '57—which found us English folk, little handfuls of us, isolated, almost defenceless, facing the brown millions who for once were banded together against us by hate and wrath. I was an assistant deputy commissioner in a God-forsaken district in India, and had been so long alone among the natives that I could not speak half a dozen sentences of my own language without slipping in a word or two of Persian or Hindustani. I prided myself upon having my fingers on the pulse of native life in that district. Things were going forward of which I could not get the hang. There was mystery in the air; you felt it, yet could find to it no key.

"During those months I knew what it is to be possessed by a demon of fear. I told myself that it was all fancy, that Asia was playing the devil with me, that I was losing my nerve.

"I was in the deepest folds of the Dark Valley when Harold came up into my district to shoot, bringing his wife and sister with him. I did not know him from Adam, and I had not seen a European lady for over three years, so I was a bit bothered by the intrusion. I felt shy and awkward in the company of ladies. I was only too glad to ship the party off into a corner of the district where game was plentiful as soon as I could contrive to make the necessary arrangements. I did not care much for Harold, nor yet for his sister, but Mrs. Harold charmed and fascinated me. Harold was a crank y sort of beggar and his sister turned up her nose at most things, including me. Mrs. Harold was—well, just everything that a woman can be! Beautiful, with a sort of glory of beauty that yet had in it a certain dainty dignity that held her worlds above you, and good—you could see the goodness looking out of her eyes—and kind, in thought and deed.

"The Harolds had been gone a matter of some three weeks when the news reached me of the outbreak down country. I was sitting on my veranda, smoking my pipe and dreaming, when Haji Muhammad Akhbar, one of the leading natives of the place, came to me suddenly out of the luminous darkness of the night. He was shaking with excitement as he told me of the mutiny of our troops down south and of the rapidity with which the disaffection was spreading.

"'The disaffection spreadeth fast. This very night it is known in our bazaars; to-morrow the villages also will know. Then, perhaps—who knoweth save Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate?—the Raj of the Sahib-log will have its ending in blood, as in blood it also had its beginning, nor will it be the turn of our women folk to be made chattels for the pleasure of new husbands.'

"At that word fear left me and a great wrath alone remained. I rose from my chair and in an instant I had him by the throat.

"'Have a care, dog!' I cried, as I shook him to and fro while he gasped and whined and struggled. 'The Raj of the Sahib-log is not yet ended, and if blood is to be let, see that it be not thine! In this district I am the Raj of the English.'

"I threw him from me, half strangled, and in a moment he was all abjectness and entreaty.

"'Be gone!' I cried, spurning him with my foot. He gathered himself together and, whining excuses, dropped back into the darkness.

"When he had gone I stood for an instant dazed in a world that had of a sudden been shattered about my head. I realized the disproportion of the white man's numbers in India to those of the people of the soil.

"The words which Haji Mu'ammad Akhbar had spoken, hinting of the fate that awaited English women in India, flashed across my mind, and with [illegible] the thought of the one woman in India who mattered—of Mrs. Harold. With that thought came also the necessity for action, and when a man is called upon to act he is relieved from the curse of thinking.

"Harold's camp lay some thirty miles to the north of my station. As soon as the news spread the lives of Harold and his wife and sister would not be worth a minute's purchase.

"I slipped out of the bungalow, went to the stables, found and saddled my mare, locked the stables securely behind me and rode out into the darkness. I took a path which soon led me clear of the town, and directly I was in the open country I put the mare into a hard canter and headed for the Harolds' camp. The time for dreaming and for fear was ended, and I knew it. The time for action had come and with it a sort of intoxication of recklessness that filled me with a fierce joy and pride.

"It was only a little after midnight that I reached my destination. I contrived, not without difficulty, to arouse Harold. I led him away from the tents, and told him the news that had come in.

"'You mustn't lose a second,' I said. 'The one chance of safety lies in Mrs. Harold and your sister getting to the fort as soon as may be.'

"'And do you seriously believe all this rubbish?' Harold inquired, standing there in his pajamas, his face unnaturally white in the moonlight.

"'I do,' I said.

"'On no better grounds than mere native gup?'

"'On that and on a hundred and one things that have gone before and that now have a new meaning,' I replied.

"'Well, I don't believe a word of it,' he said sneeringly. 'We'll talk it over in the morning,' he said with a yawn, stretching himself insolently.

"'You will do nothing of the sort,' I said, and I could hear my voice vibrating with anger. 'You may think I am a coward, if you like. I'm responsible for what happens in this district, and by God, man, you have got to do what I say.'

"'Well, I do think that you are a rather nervous person, but we'll see what my wife says.'

"'Let me speak to her, please,' I said. 'As you will,' he answered with a shrug.

"We walked back to the tent in silence, and presently Mrs. Harold came out to us, her tall, slim figure wrapped in a white dressing gown.

"'Your husband thinks that I am an alarmist,' I said, 'but I have information of a general mutiny of our troops down country, and I know that the news is true. I have left my post in a moment of extreme emergency in order to bring you all in to my fort, which is the nearest approach to safety that I have it in my power to offer you. Everything depends upon my getting back before daybreak and before the natives know that I have left the place; but I won't go without you. Will you come—now, at once?'

"'Yes,' she said simply, bending those grave, true eyes steadily upon me. 'We will come, of course. And thank you. You have risked a great deal to come to us, we understand that, and we are grateful.'

"'Of course,' chimed in Harold, grudgingly. 'No doubt you did what you thought right.'

"Miss Harold joined her brother in his scoffings at the news and at its bearer, but I cared little enough for that. I knew the event would prove me right; Mrs. Harold had thanked me and had shown that she understood. I asked for nothing more.

"I rode at her side during the whole of the remainder of that night. The sense of my proximity to her, and my knowledge of the fact that her safety must largely depend upon me, upon my efforts, upon my wits, upon my courage, infused into me a new enthusiasm and energy, and fixed my determination to come out on top or die, solid as a rock.

"Just after daybreak we came to the outskirts of the town. A Muhammadan mendicant in a long green gown was exhorting the people. His face, livid with excitement and contorted with enthusiasm, was straining heavenward, and his long white beard flew back over his shoulder as he poured out a stream of fierce words and jibs that bit deep into the hearts of his hearers. He was foretelling the downfall of the British Raj.

"I glanced over my shoulder at Harold, and I saw that he had grown white, white to the lips, and that his bridle-hand was trembling.

"A native in the crowd yelled something in a raucous, falsetto voice, and I caught the words at once.

"'Your fellows down country have mutinied and killed their officers,' I cried to Harold. 'Did you hear what that man said?'

"'God help us, God help us,' he exclaimed in that same hoarse, tense voice. 'Let us get on—to the fort—to the fort.'

"A great strapping Muhammadan, a butcher in a red turban, leaped from the crowd and seized the rein of Mrs. Harold's horse with one hand. The other held a meat chopper. The horse reared. I rose in my stirrups, raised my loaded riding crop and brought the butt down full between the fellow's eyes. He dropped like a log.

"'Get on to the fort, Harold, in God's name, and take the ladies with you,' I cried breathlessly, for now I was laying about me with that heavy butt, and the people, screaming with fear, were tumbling over one another in their eagerness to get beyond the reach of my arm.

"I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Harold's face, flushed with excitement, her eyes flashing with enthusiasm and a sort of fierce delight.

"'Oh, how splendid of you!' she cried. 'How splendid!' and then she and Harold and his sister were off, at a gallop up the hill toward the fort, Harold leading.

"The crowd had fallen back before me, and I rode straight at the Muhammadan preacher. I hit him, as I had hit the butcher, full between the eyes, and I felt the bone shatter beneath the blow.

"'You dogs!' I cried. 'You dogs who dare to bark because fools tell you that the Raj of the British is ended, get to your kennels like the whipped curs you are. And when sense returneth to you, come to me at the fort craving pardon, lest I send word to the government of the wickedness in your hearts, and the hide be stripped from you in punishment. Go!'

"And then, why then, and it brings tears to my eyes when I recall it, for they are men, these Muhammadans of India, though like children they be easily led astray or aright as a man may chance to lead them—the crowd set up a throaty shout, not of rage or defiance, but of approval and admiration.

"'It is well done!' cried many voices. 'It is well done, and behold our Sahib is a man. Let the Raj stand or fall elsewhere, here the Raj and our Sahib are one; and see, the Sahib stands while the fool who spoke vain things lies yonder in the dust. It is in truth well done.'

"I turned my horse slowly and walked him up the hill to the fort. For me at that moment the world held only one thing—Mrs. Harold's face—and that too said, 'It is well done,' and I think also 'thank you.'

"After that there came some anxious times, but in the end mine was one of the districts that had no mutiny history. Harold's nerve had been shaken by that scene in the town, and the worst of it was that he couldn't get it back and that his wife saw it.

"At last it was safe for them to leave, and I thanked God for it, though life didn't seem to offer much to me when she had gone out of it. Anyhow, I knew it was the only thing for me, if I was to avoid making a fool of myself, and she—well, she was everything that a woman ought to be.

"The evening before they were to go away I came upon her sitting in the veranda of my bungalow—we had moved out of the fort ages before, in spite of Harold's frenzied protests—and she began to speak of all, she was pleased to say, they owed to me.

"'Don't,' I said. 'It is I who owe a debt—to you. It is you who have helped me, helped me to play the man.'

"'I don't think you wanted much help to do that,' she said very seriously.

"In a moment we were on our feet, facing one another, and her hands were in mine. I knew then, I know now, that I might have kissed her. But—it would have hurt her.

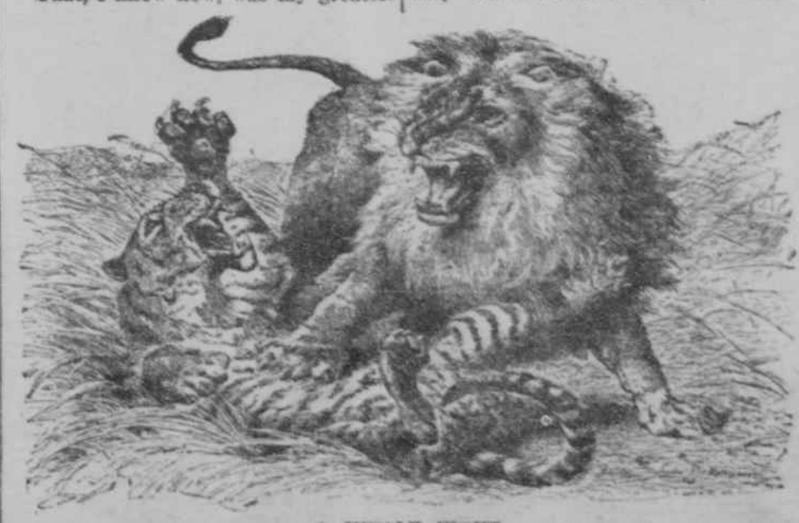
"Instead I stooped and kissed her hands.

"'Goodbye and God keep you,' I said, and turning, left her.

"That, I know now, was my greatest moment of all—a moment that might so easily have been spoiled for her, for me.

"So now instead I have my memories—memories of things done, and one priceless memory of a thing left undone; and now, as I sit here waiting for the end, they give me all I ask of happiness and of contentment."—Cornhill Magazine.

A MUHAMMADAN BUTCHER SEIZED THE REIN.



A JUNGLE FIGHT.

Never Wore Pajamas.

At a function on Main street a bashful young lady was taken in to dinner by an elderly professor who was a bit deaf. To start conversation, she said: "Professor, do you like bananas?" "Yes, my dear lady," he answered, "but I think I prefer the old fashioned night shirt."

Had a Strong Breath.

An Irishman leaned over the counter in a jewelry store and said to the clerk, "Give me one of your best wedding rings." "Eighteen karats?" he was asked. "No, ating onions, but is it any of your internal business?"

AMONG WILD BEASTS.

Crocodiles, Lions and Hippopotami Endanger Lives of Railway Builders in Africa.

The building of the bridge at Victoria Falls and the Cape to Cairo Railway has suddenly and necessarily brought a great many people together at this spot, where there was previously but an occasional traveler or hunter. Besides the birds and the butterflies and the fish, the chief living animals were lions, elephants, hippopotami, crocodiles, jackals and hyenas.

The crocodiles were found to be so numerous—as many as thirty being seen together sometimes—that they have had to be killed in great numbers for the safety of the people at work. One giant saurian killed a man and a woman, and was itself killed only after seizing another man. A native woman was taking water from the river when the crocodile knocked her in with its tail, seized her in its horrid mouth and dragged her away. Her husband was close by, but was powerless to save her. He determined to be avenged, however, and for several nights waited in a canoe with a loaded gun. He, too, disappeared, and it is thought the crocodile knocked him out of the canoe as it had knocked his wife off the bank, and taken him to its hole.

A week later it got another man, but instead of taking him into its hole, it carried him to an island. Here its victim got hold of the reeds and strong grass, and held on so tightly that the crocodile could not get away with him. Of course he screamed with all his might, and a gang of men with crowbars went to rescue him. This they succeeded in doing, and also in slaying the dangerous monster. These crocodiles are so ravenous that it is not possible even to keep dogs with safety, and parents living near the river are in constant dread of losing their children.

A Lion Terror.

One of the lions killed had also filled up the measure of its iniquity ere it met its doom. The scene of its depredations was a native village some distance north of the Falls. The native huts are very slender, being built mainly of reeds. In such a hut a woman was sitting when the lion pushed aside the door, walked in and seized her, carrying her away to his lair in the dense bush. Then he had an ox. This was in the enclosure with other cattle and donkeys.

The lion, failing to get into the enclosure, so frightened the animals with his attempts that they rushed in a huddled, terrified mass from end to end, and their weight upon the palisading broke it down. They rushed out through the opening, which was just what the lion wanted, for he had now nothing to do but to take his choice. After the ox, he selected a donkey on his next visit, and then a sheep, and finally another ox. At last the natives became panic stricken until some white men reassured them, telling them they would sit up all night for the lion and shoot him. The lion came and got away with another ox, for the white men, tired with the watch, had fallen asleep. However, they were able to track him.

It was important that having promised to kill the lion they should do so, for that is the secret of the white man's power over the native—never to break his word. So they set off to the thick bush half a mile away, whither the lion's tracks led them. There they came upon him and killed him with one bullet, that entered the right nostril. This was what big game hunters consider a good kill, as the bullet did not disfigure the lion nor injure his skin. Near by was the carcass of an ox, and a little further in the bush, in a sort of tunnel of impenetrable thorn, were the gnawed bones—the remains of some of his former victims.

Tame Baby Hippopotamus.

A young hippopotamus, riding on its mothers' back when she was shot, was saved and cared for by one of the men. These animals are very dangerous to canoe men, for in returning to the surface to blow they often come up right under the canoe and upset it. Sometimes they give chase to canoes, and then the native paddlers do all they can to reach the bank, unless a white man with a rifle is with them. The baby was thriving very well when last heard of. He escaped from his enclosure once, but came back very hungry, as was evident from the ravenous way in which he applied himself to his food.

A Literary Kicker.

Charles Lamb once heard a burglar breaking in his house. He drew on his heavy hunting boots and with a candle went down stairs and confronted him in the act of putting the silver from the breakfast table into his bag. "What are you doing?" demanded the author. "I am hungry and was just getting something to eat," hesitatingly replied the thief. "T-take a l-leg of l-lamb," stuttered the author, as he kicked him down the cellar stairs.

Another Version.

Mary had a little mule,
It followed her one day to school,
The teacher got behind that mule
And hit it with a rule,
Like a fool—
And after that—no school!