

THE TALISMAN

By CLARENCE L. LOWER

PART I.

The Story of Doctor Dare, as Told to the Scribe.

"It was in the bazaar at Calcutta that a light tap touched my shoulder. Turning, I saw the wrinkled visage of Mohand Ben Ali, a merchant whose acquaintance I had made the day before.

"Sahib, a word with you," he said. "I saw you buying curios in the shop opposite mine. Will you come with me for a few moments? I have a rare box I would like to sell you."

"Nothing loth, I went with the old man to his shop, where with an air of great secrecy he produced this box for my inspection. It was about six inches square and contained a few tablets with some cabalistic figures engraved on them.

"It is very pretty," I said, admiring its workmanship.

"True," assented the merchant. "But it has another value than its beauty."

"What?"

"It is believed by the Brahmans to hold a talisman, which for seven years brings fortune and prosperity to the possessor. But if he retains it to the completion of that period, evil befalls him."

"Pshaw!" I cried contemptuously.

"I'm not a Brahmin, Sahib, but a true follower of the Prophet, and therefore no more a believer in the superstition than yourself. I bought it yesterday from a conscientious trader who by some means had stolen it from the Brahmin temple in which it had been kept for years. I wish to get rid of it not because of the superstition attached to it, but because of an assassination at the hands of the priests of the temple should it become known that it is in my possession. If you wish it you may buy it at your own price, providing you promise secrecy as to where you got it."

"Accordingly I bought it, partly to test the truth of the superstition, but more particularly because of the price.

"Whether or not it was owing to the talisman being in my keeping, I will not say, but certain it is, from that time forth, for the following two years, I succeeded wonderfully in everything I undertook. My fame as a successful medical practitioner, and of the difficult cures I had effected, rapidly extended over a great part of Bengal. I soon found myself growing rich, which is ever an agreeable discovery to make. My practice was very large, and I numbered among my patients many of the wealthy native princes, as well as a large share of the upper class of the European quarter.

"A month after the talisman came into my possession I began to notice that I was being shadowed by an evil-looking fakir, who hung around my residence and dogged my footsteps wherever I went.

"I gave the matter no thought until late one night I received a call to visit a patient. As he lived near I set out on foot. My way led thru a narrow, dimly lighted street. While passing down it was suddenly set upon by an unknown thug who leaped at me from a doorway and aimed a vicious blow at me with a knife, which I only just escaped by a quick move of my body. I replied with my assailant, who, however, slipped from my hold and ran off down the street; but as he passed under the light I recognized in him the fakir who had been haunting my house.

"The next day the fakir was nowhere to be seen. This awoke within me the suspicion that by some means the Brahmans had become acquainted with the fact that I had the talisman, and that the fakir was employed by them to effect my death and restore the box to its niche in the temple. But this made me all the more determined to retain possession of it. I kept it stored away under lock and key in a strong safe built in the wall of my private office. Believing myself to be a marked man I went armed and took care not to go out at night any more than I could help.

"However, as time passed without any similar occurrence, I began to think I was wrong in my surmise, and relaxing my watchful care of the talisman, used frequently to remove it from my safe to show to friends and expatiate upon its virtues.

"One evening, two years after purchasing it from the merchant, I was at the house of a friend, who had with him a number of old and trusted native servants, who apparently paid no heed to our talk, but passed unobtrusively in and out of the room attending to his duties.

"The conversation turned upon the talisman, I promised to bring it with me the next night and show it to my friend. Accordingly, the following evening I stowed it safely in my pocket and set out for my friend's house, but I had not gone far when four thugs sprang upon me at a preconcerted signal. I was taken entirely off my guard, and the whole scene of resistance, I was knocked down and beaten into insensibility. On recovering I discovered that I had been robbed of the talisman—and that I immediately offered a large reward for its recovery, and employed several of the shrewdest detectives to ferret it out, no trace of it could be discovered.

"Soon after, my good luck took a turn. I lost large sums of money in speculations which had heretofore proved very successful. A number of my most wealthy patients died on my hands; I lost prestige, and in four months was comparatively a poor man.

"So I resolved to leave Calcutta, and went to British Burma in the hope of bettering my fortunes. But in vain—I

fell into worse luck than ever, and heaven knows what I might ultimately have done—gone to the dogs utterly. I guess—had not chance or destiny at the end of a year, directed my wandering footsteps back again to India and Calcutta.

"One day, passing along a street, I chanced to come face to face with an old Hindoo woman, whom my husband had been my servant in Calcutta during the days of my prosperity. Our recognition was mutual. She fell upon her knees, and seizing my hand showered tears and kisses upon it.

"Praised be Vishnu, that I see thee again!" she cried; "for now am I saved!"

"I inquired the cause of her agitation. "My husband lies sick unto death of a fever," she replied, "and there is none who can cure him but thou, of that I am convinced; so I pray thee come with me and attend him. Should he die, I, as his widow, must be burnt alive beside his dead body on the ghaut!"

"I at once accompanied the old woman to her bungalow. I found her husband lying very low with a fever which in a few days would have ended him had it not been permitted to run its course unchecked. I gave him some medicine and visited him from time to time, and in a little while had brought him around all right.

"On the occasion of my last visit I was utterly astounded at beholding the silver box of the talisman reposing on the window ledge. I had not seen it there at any time of my former visits, and so I judged it to have come into the possession of the old couple since my previous visit, two days before, but by what means of course I knew not. I recognized it at a glance, and determined to regain possession of it. But I said nothing, and suppressing my excitement, soon pronounced the old man out of danger, whereupon his wife, seizing my hand, in her gratitude fell upon her knees, exclaiming:

"Name thy reward, sahib, and it is thine. Nought shall be used there."

"Then give me that little silver box you have there," said I, pointing to it.

"But at this both looked blank. "I would to heaven, sahib, you had asked for anything but this," said the old woman. "However, since I promised whatever you asked, you shall have it," and rising, she brought the box to me.

"It is yours," she said. "It was left in our keeping yesternight by a strange Hindoo, who bore every indication of being a wealthy merchant, saying he was about to go on a journey, but that he would return for it at the end of seven days, and threatening us with instant death if we had it not when he came for it. But we will trust in the guardianship of the gods, and fear not his wrath."

"I assured the old couple they had nothing to fear on that account, and that I then and there reinstated them in my service, a piece of news which they heard with great joy. Thus with the talisman in my custody, I returned to my lodging.

"Two days later the three of us set out for Madras, for I dreaded the return of the Hindoo merchant, and wished to be as far away as possible against the time he came back.

"In Madras, strange to say, I speedily retrieved my fallen fortunes, and in a few years had risen to the eminence I had formerly attained in Calcutta.

"When I had been there four years, and while in the zenith of my good fortune, one day I made the alarming discovery that I was again being haunted by a fakir.

"This gave me great uneasiness, and all my old-time caution returned. "But three months had passed, and no occurrence, and at the end of that period the fakir disappeared as mysteriously as he came.

"I remained at Madras six years, at the end of which time I had amassed a fortune sufficiently large to enable me to retire from my practice and devote the remainder of my life to pleasure, which I have done. During the past year I have traveled extensively, bringing up at last here in old smoky London, where I intend remaining for a little time before going elsewhere.

"But there are two things connected with it which I confess cause me greater uneasiness than I care to say.

"The first is, that during all my travels I have been unable to shake that infernal fakir, who has turned up at odd intervals in whatever clime or country I have visited. He has never offered me violence, but, after shadowing me for a few weeks, has mysteriously disappeared, only to turn up unexpectedly at some other time or place. The other thing is, that there is a tradition concerning the casket which says that upon the conclusion of seven years of unbroken possession of it evil is certain to befall the owner. Now, whether the fakir is aware of this legend, and is working until the seven years are up, or not he is a paid assassin of the Hindoo merchant, or of the priests of the temple, I have been in England but three days, and have not yet seen him, but as he has followed me wherever I have gone, it will not surprise me to behold him here as well. One thing is certain, nothing as I have had the talisman. The seven years of my unbroken possession of it will expire at 12 o'clock to-night; and, as you see, consulting his watch, "it wants but five minutes of that time now."

"Five minutes will decide the superstition of the talisman! If evil is to befall me, it will happen now or not at all!" And with a harsh laugh Dare filled his glass and tossed it off at a swallow.

PART II.

Conclusion of the Story, as Told by the Scribe.

Just then there came a rap on the door. Investigation showed a bell boy on the threshold.

"A gentleman wishes to see Mr. L.—in the rotunda at once on urgent business," said he.

Wondering what was wanted of me at that unseasonable hour, I rose, and, bidding Dare await my return, descended to the rotunda.

"To my surprise, I found no one awaiting me, and I applied to the clerk for information.

"There was a blackmoor came in a few minutes ago and asked for you," said the clerk; "but he concluded he wouldn't wait for you here, and so he went upstairs just after I sent up the boy to tell you. You must have passed each other on the stairs. He looked like an Indian."

A blackmoor and an Indian! Like a flash it came to me! I started to hear no more, but wheezing instantly, made up stairs three steps at a bound, to the unqualified amazement of the clerk.

I encountered not a soul on my way, and speedily reached Dare's apartment. But too late! He had been gone barely five minutes, as the clock on the mantle showed, the assassin had had ample time in which to perform his work.

On the floor lay Dr. Dare, his eyes wide open, fixed with a ghastly look of horror, his lips drawn back into a ghastly grin, his tongue swollen and protruding from his mouth—strangled to death at the hands of a thug, as the thin cord twisted tightly about his neck testified!

I glanced mechanically from the corpse to the table, which the box containing the talisman had reposed.

It was gone!

No one in the hotel had seen the Indian depart, and yet he had most completely disappeared.

The shrewdest detectives in Scotland Yard were put upon the case, no trace of the talisman was ever discovered. To this day I share in the doubt expressed by Dare, as to whether the fakir who had so persistently shadowed him

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THE "JOINT HIGH"

Secretary Hay Takes Interest in Canadian Questions.

Washington, June 9.—The active interest displayed among the people of the northwest in the movement for another joint high commission meeting this summer has been noted by the Canadian government. A lively correspondence is in progress between Senator Fairbanks, chairman of the American commission, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier of the dominion commission, but nothing definite has been determined.

Secretary Hay admits the deep interest he feels and asserts that notwithstanding the failure of congress to provide funds to pay the expenses of the American commission, this will not be permitted to stand in the way of a meeting.

Secretary Hay asserts there are at least eight reciprocity treaties of importance which should be taken up, chief among which he names the reciprocity problem, the fisheries, arming on the lakes, the Lake of the Woods boundary, etc. But it is admitted that the outlook is not encouraging for reciprocity with Canada or with any other countries.

"We have sent to the senate at least ten reciprocity treaties," said an official of the department, "none of which has been ratified. It begins to look as if any industry in the country that feels aggrieved, or has objections to specific provisions of a reciprocity treaty can find one or more senators to oppose the treaty and one such objecting senator seems to be quite sufficient for the purpose."

It is not disguised that the friends of the Canadian reciprocity are disturbed by the possible effect of Chamberlain's course in England with respect to British foreign trade agreements, and especially the trade of the mother country with her colonies. It is feared that the Chamberlain policy may be established with far-reaching effects upon Canadian trade before any arrangements can be effected for reciprocity in trade relations between the United States and Canada.

Failure of Submarine Boats.

From the amount of money spent and the articles written on submarine boats one would think they had been a great success, but really they have been a complete failure. The crews of submarine boats have been subjected to tortures which would have been considered inhuman a half century ago. The boats have proven unmanageable, without defensive qualities and of no great danger to an enemy. For the good of the nation less attention should be given to submarine boats and more to golden grain belt beer. This delicious tonic makes men strong and healthy, fit for the work of Americans. You will enjoy it in your home.

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CAPITAL CULLINGS

King Victor Emmanuel has sent to President Roosevelt gift of books of rare value. Senator Nelson will accompany the subcommittee on territories to Alaska, which leaves about June 20.

Stanford Newell, at present American minister to the Netherlands, has also been made minister to Luxembourg.

John Henry C. Caldwell of the United States circuit court, retires under the age limit. His home is at Little Rock.

John D. Jackson, at present American minister to Greece, Rumania and Serbia, has also been designated American diplomatic agent to Bulgaria.

Wayne MacVeagh will represent only the United States and Venezuela in the Hague arbitration and not all the precedencing nations which have claims to present.

Next Monday has been set by the president for the reception of the delegates appointed by the B'ral B'ritih to ask him to call Russia to account for the slaughter of Jews.

Postmaster General Payne offers the suggestion that William H. Taft, now governor of the Philippines, receive consideration by the republicans as a vice presidential candidate.

John C. Ingersoll, United States consul at Cartagena, Colombia, died at Colon on Saturday. Mr. Ingersoll was a native of Illinois and a nephew of the late Robert G. Ingersoll.

The saloons have been closed at Bremerton, Wash., and it is probable that several of the ships of the Pacific squadron now at San Francisco will go there for docking and repairs.

E. W. Stanton, acting president of the Iowa agricultural college, conferred upon Frank B. Armstrong, assistant secretary of the treasury, the honorary degree of master of philosophy.

At the request of the British government the navy department has ordered the South Atlantic squadron to proceed to Valparaiso to protect the American and British interests during labor troubles.

General Bristol, fourth assistant postmaster, is making a study of rural free delivery. He is not yet ready to announce his plans further than to say that there would be no serious interruption in the extension of the service.

The place on the civil service commission which the president offered to W. W. Heggelinger, will soon be given to a Massachusetts man, Harvard graduate and a supporter of Senator Lodge. The name has not been announced, but the appointment has been agreed upon.

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We Know What

Is going to happen to the little boy who is stuffing himself with green apples. A grown man couldn't be induced to try that experiment; and yet the grown man will overload himself with indigestible food for which he will pay a greater penalty than colic. It is this careless and thoughtless eating which is the beginning of stomach trouble and all its painful consequences.

Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery cures dyspepsia and other forms of "stomach trouble." It restores the weak and run-down man or woman to sound health.

"Some time has elapsed since I have written you in regard to the treatment I have been taking under your instructions," says Mr. E. F. Clingman, Minneapolis, Minn. "When first I commenced taking your medicine I was under treatment of a well-known specialist in this city (and had been for four months), for catarrh, and especially stomach trouble, and I was rapidly getting worse, so bad that I could not eat anything that did not taste me terribly, and I was obliged to quit taking the doctor's treatment entirely, as was greatly reduced in flesh. As a last resort I wrote to you and stated my case, and after receiving your instructions I followed them closely. After taking five bottles of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and one vial of his 'Pleasant Pellets' I commenced to improve, and I decided to continue the medicine and observe your instructions regarding hygienic treatment. It is now nearly three months since I commenced your treatment and I can say that I am well and never feel better in my life. Am very grateful to you for what your medicine has done for me."



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