

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 pleasure of your company for a much longer time. It is a pleasant spot when you have been here some years and eat 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

fornic, 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 Ferinchi," 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 stop to tell me a lie."

"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, cringing 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 pletchers that follows a full flesh meal, watched us without stirring.

and by my father's son, 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 mustache 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.

1. Bowl of a brier wood pipe, scratched at the edge, much worn and blackened, bound with string at the screw.

2. Two patent lever keys, wards of both broken.

3. Tortoise shell handled penknife, silver or nickel main plate, marked with monogram "B. K."

4. Envelope, postmark undecipherable, bearing a Victorian stamp, addressed to "Miss Mon"—(rest illegible)—"ham"—"nt."

5. Imitation crocodile skin notebook with pencil. First 45 pages blank, 4 1/2 illegible, 15 other filled with private memoranda relating chiefly to three persons—a Mrs. L. Singleton, abbreviated several times to "Lot Single," "Mrs. S. May" and "Garrison," referred to in places as "Jerry" or "Jack."

6. Handle of small sized hunting knife. Blade snapped short. Buck's horn, diamond cut, with swivel and ring on the butt; fragment of cotton cord attached.

It must not be supposed that I inventoried all these things on the spot as fully as I have here written them down. The notebook first attracted my attention, and I put it in my pocket with a view to studying it later on. The rest of the articles I conveyed to my burrow for safety's sake, and there, being a methodical man, I inventoried them.

I then returned to the corpse and ordered Gunga Dass to help me to carry it out to the river front. While we were engaged in this the exploded shell of an old brown cartridge dropped out of one of the pockets and rolled at my feet. Gunga Dass had not seen it, and I fell to thinking that a man does not carry exploded cartridge cases, especially "browns," which will not bear loading twice, about with him when shooting. In other words, that cartridge case had been fired inside the crater. Consequently there must be a gun somewhere.

I was on the verge of asking Gunga Dass, but checked myself, knowing that he would lie. We laid the body down on the edge of the quicksand by the tussocks. It was my intention to push it out and let it be swallowed up, the only possible mode of burial that I could think of. I ordered Gunga Dass to go away.

Then I gingerly put the corpse out on the quicksand. In doing so—it was lying face downward—I tore the frail and rotten khaki shooting coat open, disclosing a hideous cavity in the back. I have already told you that the dry sand had, as it were, mummified the body. A moment's glance showed that the gaping hole had been caused by a gunshot wound. The gun must have been fired with the muzzle almost touching the back. The shooting coat, being intact, had been drawn over the body after death, which must have been instantaneous. The secret of the poor wretch's death was plain to me in a flash. Some one of the crater, presumably Gunga Dass, must have shot him with his own gun—the shot that fitted the brown cartridges. He had never attempted to escape in the face of the rifle fire from the boat.

I pushed the corpse out hastily and saw it sink from sight literally in a few seconds. I shuddered as I watched. In a dazed, half-conscious way I turned to peruse the notebook. A stained and discolored slip of paper had been inserted between the binding and the back and dropped out as I opened the pages. This is what it contained: "Four out from crow clump; 3 left; 9 out; 2 right; 3 back; 2 left; 14 out; 2 left; 7 out; 1 left; 9 back; 2 right; 6 back; 4 right; 7 back." The paper had been burned and charred at the edges. What it meant I could not understand. I sat down on the dried bents, turning it over and over between my fingers until I was aware of Gunga Dass standing immediately behind me with glowing eyes and outstretched hands.

"Have you got it?" he panted.

"Will you not let me look at it also? I swear that I will return it."

"Got what? Return what?" I asked.

"That which you have in your hands. It will help us both." He stretched out his long, birdlike talons, trembling with eagerness.

"I could never find it," he continued.

"He had secreted it about his person. Therefore I shot him, but nevertheless I was unable to obtain it."

Gunga Dass had quite forgotten his little fiction about the rifle bullet. I received the information perfectly calmly. Morality is blunted by consorting with the dead who are alive.

"What on earth are you raving about? What is it you want me to give you?"

"The piece of paper in the notebook. It will help us both. Oh, you fool! You fool! Can you not see what it will do for us? We shall escape."

His voice rose almost to a scream, and he danced with excitement before me. I own I was moved at the chance of getting away.

"Don't skip! Explain yourself. Do you mean to say that this slip of paper will help us? What does it mean?"

"Read it aloud! Read it aloud! I beg and I pray to you to read it aloud."

I did so. Gunga Dass listened delightedly and drew an irregular line in the sand with his fingers.

"See now! It was the length of his gun barrels without the stock. I have those barrels. Four gun barrels out from the place where I caught crows—straight out, do you follow me? Then three left. Ah, how well I remember when that man worked it out night after night! Then nine out, and so on. Out is always straight before you across the quicksand. He told me so before I killed him."

"But if you knew all this why didn't you get out before?"

"I did not know it. He told me that he was working it out a year and a half ago, and how he was working it out night after night when the boat had gone away and he could get out near the quicksand safely. Then he said that we would get away together. But I was afraid that he would leave me behind one night when he had worked it all out, and so I shot him. Besides, it is not advisable that the men who once get in here should escape. Only I, and I am a Brahman."

The prospect of escape had brought Gunga Dass' caste back to him. He stood up, walked about and gesticulated violently. Eventually I managed to make him talk soberly, and he told me how this Englishman had spent six months night after night in exploring, inch by inch, the passage across the quicksand; how he had declared it to be simplicity itself up to within about 20 yards of the river bank after turning the flank of the left horn of the horseshoe. This much he had evidently not completed when Gunga Dass shot him with his own gun.

In my frenzy of delight at the possibilities of escape I recollect shaking hands effusively with Gunga Dass after we had decided that we were to make an attempt to get away that very night. It was weary work waiting throughout the afternoon.

About 10 o'clock, as far as I could judge, when the moon had just risen above the lip of the crater, Gunga Dass made a move for his burrow to bring out the gun barrels whereby to measure our path. All the other wretched inhabitants had retired to their lairs long ago. The guardian boat drifted down stream some hours before, and we were utterly alone by the crow clump. Gunga Dass, while carrying the gun barrels, let slip the piece of paper which was to be our guide. I stooped down hastily to recover it, and as I did so I was aware that the diabolical Brahman was aiming a violent blow at the back of my head with the gun barrel. It was too late to turn round. I must have received the blow somewhere on the nape of my neck. A hundred thousand fiery stars danced before my eyes, and I fell forward senseless at the edge of the quicksand.

When I recovered consciousness, the moon was going down, and I was sensible of intolerable pain in the back of my head. Gunga Dass had disappeared, and my mouth was full of blood. I lay down again and prayed that I might die without more ado. Then the unreasoning fury which I have before mentioned laid hold upon me, and I staggered inland toward the walls of the crater. It seemed that some one was calling to me in a whisper, "Sahib! Sahib! Sahib!" exactly as my bearer used to call me in the mornings.

I fancied that I was delirious until a handful of sand fell at my feet. Then I looked up and saw a head peering down into the amphitheater—the head of Dnunoo, my dog boy, who attended to my collies. As soon as he had attracted my attention he held up his hand and showed a rope. I motioned, staggering to and fro the while, that he should throw it down. It was a couple of leather punkah ropes knotted together, with a loop at one end. I slipped the loop over my head and under my arms; heard Dnunoo urge something forward; was conscious that I was being dragged, face downward, up the steep sand slope, and the next instant found myself, choked and half fainting, on the sand hills overlooking the crater. Dnunoo, with his face ashy gray in the moonlight, implored me not to stay, but to get back to my tent at once.

It seems that he had tracked Pornic's footprints 14 miles across the sands to the crater; had returned and told my servants, who flatly refused to meddle with any one, white or black, once fallen into the hideous village of the dead, whereupon Dnunoo had taken one of my ponies and a couple of punkah ropes, returned to the crater and hauled me out, as I have described.

To cut a long story short, Dnunoo is now my personal servant on a gold mohr a month, a sun which I still think far too little for the services he has rendered. Nothing on earth will induce me to go near that devilish spot again or to reveal its whereabouts more clearly than I have done. Of Gunga Dass I have never found a trace, nor do I wish to do so. My sole motive in giving this to be published is the hope that some one may possibly identify, from the details and the inventory which I have given above, the corpse of the man in the olive green hunting suit.

Windstorm at Hastings.

HASTINGS, Neb., May 26.—A heavy windstorm struck Hastings last night and did considerable damage. One whole row of sheds just south of the St. Joseph and Grand Island track was completely demolished and several small buildings were blown over.

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Windstorm at Hastings.

HASTINGS, Neb., May 26.—A heavy windstorm struck Hastings last night and did considerable damage. One whole row of sheds just south of the St. Joseph and Grand Island track was completely demolished and several small buildings were blown over.

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