

VOL XXVII

PROFESSIONAL CARDS

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EVERY ONE FINDS A NEW USE.

Strange Ride of Morrow's Jokes.

BY EDWARD KIPPLING. (Continued from last week.)

Whereat, to his great delight, I winced once more and hastily contained the conversation:—And how do you live from day to day? What do you do? The question elicited exactly the same answer as before, coupled with the information that "this place is like your European heaven; there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

"Gunga Dass had been educated at a mission school, and as he himself admitted, had only changed his religion "like a wise man," might have avoided the living grave, which was now his portion. But as long as I was with him I fancy he was happy.

Here was a Sahib, a representative of the dominant race, helpless as a child and completely at the mercy of his native neighbors. In a delicate, lacy way he would devote a rapt hour to watching the agonies of an impaled beetle, or as a ferret in a blind burrow might gaze himself comfortably to the neck of a rabbit.

The burden of his conversation was that there was no "kink" to "kink" what, "and that I should say here till I died and was "thrown on the sand." If it were possible to forgo the conversation of the damned on the advent of a new soul in this world, I should have been glad to speak as Gunga Dass did to me throughout that long afternoon. I was powerless to protest or answer: all my energies being devoted to a struggle against the insupportable heat that threatened to overtake me again and again.

As the day wore on the inhabitants began to appear in full strength to catch the rays of the afternoon sun, which were now sloping in at the mouth of the crater. They assembled in little knots, and talked among themselves without ever throwing a glance in my direction. About four o'clock, as far as I could judge, Gunga Dass rose and diverged into his lair for a moment, emerging with a live crow in his hands. The wretched bird was in a most degraded and deplorable condition, but seemed to be in no way afraid of its master.

Advancing cautiously to the river front, Gunga Dass stepped from tussack to tussack until he had reached a smooth patch of sand directly in the line of the boat's bow. The occupant of the boat was a woman. Here he stopped, and with a notice of dexterous turns of the wrists pegged the bird on its back with outstretched wings.

As was only natural, the crow began to shriek at once and beat the air with its claws. In a few seconds the clamor had attracted the attention of a bevy of wild crows on a shoal a few hundred yards away, where they were discussing something that looked like a corpse. Half a dozen or so flew over at once to see what was going on, and, as if afterward proved, to attack the pinnacled bird.

Gunga Dass, who had lain down on a tussack, motioned me to be quiet, though I fancy I was a needless precaution. In a moment, and before I could see how it happened, a wild crow, who had grappled with the shrieking and helpless bird, was entangled in the latter's claws, swiftly disengaged by Gunga Dass, and pegged down beside its companion in adversity. Curiously, it seemed, overpowered the rest of the flock, and almost before Gunga Dass and I had time to withdraw to the tussack, two more captives were struggling in the upturned claws of the decedent. So the chase—if I can give it the dignified name—continued until Gunga Dass had captured seven crows. Five of them he trotted at once, reserving two for further operations another day. It was a good deal impressed by this, to me, novel method of securing food, and complimented Gunga Dass on his skill.

"It is nothing to do," said he, "to-morrow you must do it for me. You are stronger than I am." This calm assumption of superiority upset me a little, and I answered promptly:—"Indeed, you are old ruffian! What do you think I have given you money for?" "Very well," was the unmoved reply. "Perhaps not to-morrow, nor the day after, nor subsequently, but in the end, and for many years, you will catch crows and eat crows, and you will thank your European God that you have crows to catch and eat. I could have cheerfully strangled him for this, but judged it best under the circumstances to smother my resentment. As I have now caught seven crows, and as Gunga Dass had said, thanking my God that I had crows to eat.

Never so long as I live shall I forget that evening meal. The whole population were squatting on the hard sand platform opposite their dens, looking on as we ate. I refused and dried rashes. Death, before and forborne to laid his hand upon these men and women, and seemed to stand aloof from them; for most of our company were old men, bent and worn and twisted with years, and women who had seen their faces as the Fates themselves. They sat together in knots and talked—God only knows what they found to discuss—in low, equal tones, curiously in contrast to the riotous babble with which natives are accustomed to make their hideous. Now and then an access of that sudden fury which had possessed me in the morning would hold on a man or woman, and with yells and imprecations the sufferer would attack the steep slope until, baffled and bleeding, he fell back on the platform incapable of moving a limb. The others would never raise their eyes when this happened, as men too well aware of the futility of the fellow's attempts and weary of their noise, would never raise their eyes when this happened, as men too well aware of the futility of the fellow's attempts and weary of their noise.

THE MURKED CORPSE.

BY EDWARD KIPPLING. (Continued from last week.)

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

"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 some thirty feet from the left of my own. "I have shot for yourself. It died in the burrow as you will die and I will die, and all these men and women and the one child will die also."

"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 looked 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 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 and I was as anxious to prevent him. He was shot here." Gunga Dass laid his hand on his lean stomach and bowed to the earth.

"Well, and what then? Go on." "Your Honor, you carried him into his house and gave him water and put wet cloths on the wound, and he laid down in his house and gave up the ghost."

"How long in how long?" "I could not say how long," he continued. "I 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 to lead you to the body of the man." "What? Return what?" I asked. "That which you have in your hands. It will help me both." He stretched out his long, bird-like talons, trembling with eagerness.

"I could not refuse him," he continued. "I had secreted it about his person. Therefore I shot him, but nevertheless I was unable to obtain it."

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