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The Indian Doctor

Written for The Western Home Monthly by W. R. Gilbert

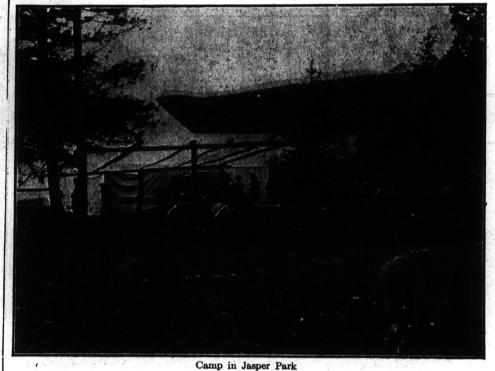
days when the west wind blows keen and cold. A pale, yellow sunset cast a curious light up the driving clouds. I stopped and looked back at the Hindoo after he had passed me, for one so rarely sees an Oriental in tramp guise in London. The little green sprig that he had held caught my attention, too. It was a week later, on just such an

evening, that I saw the Indian again. He held an identical green twig, and his lips moved continuously. Suddenly he clasped the plant he carried to his chest, and gazed at a well-dressed lady who walked along the pavement opposite. She merely glanced round, and perhaps accelerated her pace. She was extraordinarily fair, a vision of cream and gold. The man watched her out of sight and then turned, shaken by

T WAS a raw, wet day-one of those | making her ill. I knew that. I went nearly mad, and taxed my father with the crime. He only smiled and said, You will never be loved by the girlshe will never look at you-she will die, and you will come back to take up my duties when I am dead.' I swore by all the Gods and by the Cross that I would not. He gave me the choice of Lily's life or death. 'Come back to us, and she lives; go on as you are, and she dies-veree slowly."

Winnipeg, January, 1914.

"I went to Mr. Jenkins and confessed to him all that had happened. He suspected that the Brahmins had found means to poison Lily. He did not, of course, believe in magic. He said that the doctor had insisted that Lily must go to England. This was misery to me, but I determined all the more to resist the Brahmins. I knew that I must coma cough. He recovered, waved his green sprig, and spoke aloud. And then he saw me looking at him. He slouched up and, in a whining voice, begged for a copper like any old cadger. I answered him kindly, and asked him bat them with their own weapons.



what he did with his little sprig, which ask me to go to see him. . . . His I now saw was covered with tiny green daughter was very ill; in fact, she was leaves and buds. "It is arbor vitæ-it is the tree of life," he said, and began to weep.

When he had eaten and drunk at my invitation, he began to talk. He said:

dying. "A short time before, I had heard from pardon me if I would go back and in-herit the priestship if I would renounce "I am a doctor of medicine. I fam M.D. of London and Calcutta. Listen, I am a Brahmin, and thrice born. My Fathers were obeyed by princes. When I was past all that. I had almost for-gotten my little queen. I was already a doctor of Calcutta, and ready to take my M.D. of London. How could I go schoolboy, I used to see a beautiful girl back to tend the sacred trees in the village grove, and marry the bar tree to the mango, or the holy Basil to the Salagrama, in the belief that they were embodiments of Vishnu and Lakshmi? How could I be a Brahmin? I wrote back and told them all this. But they replied that they would kill the witch, and then I should return and be cleansed. I laughed at their superstitions; I no longer believed in their magic-not really. "But when Mr. Jenkins wrote to me, and I beheld Lily so ill, all my love for her returned a hundredfold. And there returned, too, all my fears. As the weeks went on I despaired of her life, as did the doctors who attended her. Lut when I was in India an old fakir had told me what to do in these cases: had told me that if you took the arbor vitæ and used it with the necessary rites and charms, you would counteract the evil spells of your enemies, thwart their magic and preserve the life they threatened. "As a last resource I got the shrub (Thuja Occidentalis), and did as I had been instructed. From that moment Lily mended. In a few weeks she was well. But the terrible thing is that one must be near the person who is being killed by the sorcerors afar-the white pined and wasted. The Brahmins were magic is not so powerful as the black;

