

# The WINDS of the WORLD

by  
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## A New Serial Story of India

JUST as we began to prepare *Winds of the World* for the printer, a large number of newspaper articles appeared concerning German plots among the Hindus, and war despatches indicating that the Hun intends to make the far East his great stamping ground—to strike London via Calcutta and Bombay. At the same time in a contemporary appeared a very long article by Eleanor Franklin Egan describing what a fabulous old lady is doing to foist herself upon the Hindus as a priestess. Her name is Annie Besant, Theosophress, believer in re-incarnation, fomenter of unrest among millions to whom she aspires to be a sort of modern female Moses. In plain words, Mrs. Besant is said to be working hard to unite the dangerous Home Rule minority against British Rule. Dare we imagine that Mrs. Besant is in the pay of the German?

Well, we make no allegations; merely intimating that *Winds of the World* is the very story that illuminates the dark secrets of India. In that story there is also a woman, a stranger creature than Mrs. Besant,

because she is not a preacher nor a prophet, but a poet; the woman with the cobras and the dancing maids; the song-woman who dances to the gods and holds the secrets of India in her ken as *Winds of the World* blowing in to her; the intuitionist of the super-sense, by some called the sixth—Yasmini. In her circle of mysterious vibrations the plain prosaic figures of the British sahib and the Sikh soldier Rangoor come and go as puppets are pulled by a string. Then there is the Hun—the plotter; he who seeks audience of Yasmini; whom the Sikh meets at her house. More of him as the story goes on. It is all part of the Great Intrigue and all very much of a piece with the strange unrest that works upon a minority of India's population. Wherever there is mystery, superstition, the temple, the strange god, the mystic rite—expect the shifty Hun to be on hand.

But Yasmini—the woman with the pet cobras and the fountains and the gardens and the dusky Arabian Nights damsels—what of her? We shall see. And here is the first instalment.—The Editor.

A WATERY July sun was hurrying toward a Punjab sky-line, as if weary of squandering his strength on men who did not mind, and resentful of the unexplainable—a rainy-weather field-day. The cold steel and khaki of native Indian cavalry at attention gleamed motionless between British infantry and two batteries of horse artillery. The only noticeable sound was the voice of a general officer, that rose and fell explaining and asserting pride in his command, but saying nothing as to the why of exercises in the mud. Nor did he mention why the censorship was in full force. He did not say a word of Germany, or Belgium.

In front of the third squadron from the right, Risaldar-Major Ranjoor Singh sat his charger like a big bronze statue. He would have stooped to see his right spur better that shone in spite of mud, for though he has been a man these five-and-twenty years, Ranjoor Singh has neither lost his boyhood love of such things, nor intends to.

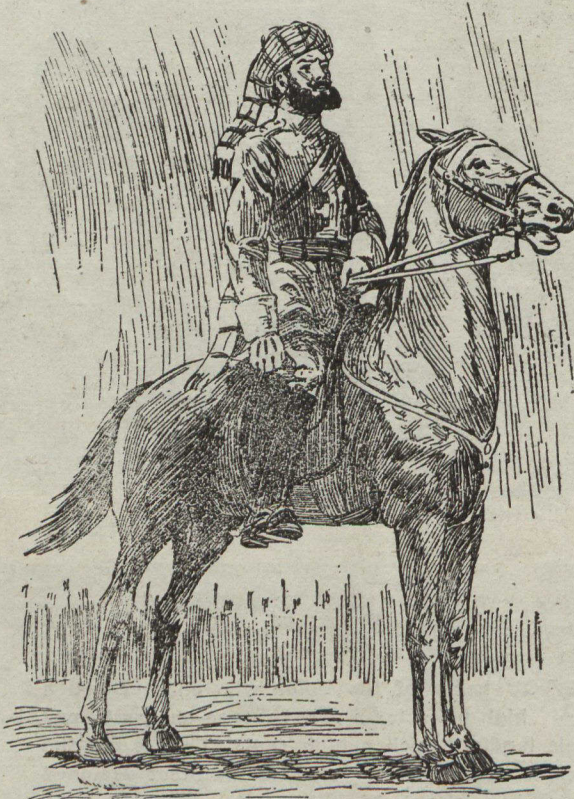
Once—in a rock-strewn gully where the whistling Himalayan wind was Acting Anti-septic-of-the-Day—a young surgeon had taken hurried stitches over Ranjoor Singh's ribs without probing deep enough for an Afghan bullet; that bullet burned after a long day in the saddle. And Bagh was—as the big brute's name implied—a tiger of a horse, unweakened even by monsoon weather.

So Ranjoor Singh sat still. He was willing to eat agony at any time for the squadron's sake—for a squadron of Outram's Own is a unity to marvel at, or envy; and its leader a man to be forgiven spurs a half-inch longer than the regulations. As a soldier, however, he was careful of himself when occasion offered.

Sikh-soldier-wise, he preferred Bagh to all other horses in the world, because it had needed persuasion, much stroking of a black beard—to hide anxiety—and many a secret night-ride—to sweat the brute's savagery—before the colonel-sahib could be made to see his virtues as a charger and accept him into the regiment. Sikh-wise, he loved all things that expressed in any way his own unconquerable fire. Most of all, however, he loved the squadron; there was no woman, nor anything between him and D Squadron; but Bagh came next.

Spurs were not needed when the general ceased speaking, and the British colonel of Outram's Own

Illustrated by T. W. McLEAN



shouted an order. Bagh, brute energy beneath hand-polished hair and plastered dirt, sprang like a loosed Hell-tantrum, and his rider's lips drew tight over clenched teeth as he mastered self, agony and horse in one man's effort.

LINE after rippling line, all Sikhs of the true Sikh baptism except for the eight of their officers who were European, Outram's Own swept down a living avenue of British troops; and neither gunners nor infantry could see one flaw in them, although picking flaws in native regiments is almost part of the British army officer's religion.

To the blare of military music, through a bog of their own mixing, the Sikhs trotted for a mile, then drew into a walk, to bring the horses into barracks cool enough for watering.

They reached stables as the sun dipped under

the near-by acacia trees, and while the black-bearded troopers scraped and rubbed the mud from weary horses, Ranjoor Singh went through a task whose form at least was part of his very life. He could imagine nothing less than death or active service that could keep him from inspecting every horse in the squadron before he ate or drank.

BUT, although the day had been a hard one and the strain on the horses more than ordinary, his examination now was so perfunctory that the squadron gaped; the troopers signaled with their eyes as he passed, little more than glancing at each horse. Almost before his back had vanished at the stable entrance, wonderment burst into words.

"For the third time he does thus!"

"See! My beast overreached, and he passed without detecting it! Does the sun set the same way still?"

"I have noticed that he does thus each time after a field-day. What is the connection? A field-day in the rains—a general officer talking to us afterward about the Salt, as if a Sikh does not understand the Salt better than a British general knows English—and our risaldar-major neglecting the horses—is there a connection?"

"Aye. What is all this? We worked no harder in the war against the Chitralis. There is something in my bones that speaks of war, when I listen for a while!"

"War! Hear him, brothers! Talk is talk, but there will be no war until India grows too fat to breathe—unless the past be remembered and we make one for ourselves!"

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There was silence for a while, if a change of sounds is silence. The Delhi mud sticks as tight as any, and the kneading of it from out of horsehair taxes most of a trooper's energy and full attention. Then, the East being the East in all things, a solitary trooper picked up the scent and gave tongue.

"Who is she?" he wondered, loud enough for fifty men to hear.

From out of a cloud of horse-dust, where a stable helper on probation combed a tangled tail, came one word of swift enlightenment.

"Yasmini!"

"Ah-h-h-h!"

In a second the whole squadron was by the ears,