

suggest the outer world—nothing but wind. The wind blew a hurricane.

Their path now was a very narrow ledge formed by a crack that ran diagonally down the face of a black cliff on their right. They hugged the stone because of a sense of fathomless space above—below—on every side but one. The rock wall was the one thing tangible, and the footing the crack in it afforded was the gift of God.

The moaning wind rose to a shriek at intervals and made their clothes flutter like ghosts' shrouds, and in spite of it King's shirt was drenched with sweat, and his fingers ached from clinging as if they were on fire.

**C**RAWLING against the wind along a ledge at the top, they came to a chasm, crossed by a foot-wide causeway. The wind howled and moaned in it, and the futile lantern rays only suggested unimaginable things—death the least of them.

"Art thou afraid?" asked Ismail, holding the lantern to King's face.

"Kuch dar nahin hai!" he answered. "There is no such thing as fear!"

It was a bold answer, and Ismail laughed, knowing well that neither of them believed a word of it at that moment. Only, each thought better of the other, that the one should have cared to ask, and that the other should be willing to give the lie to a fear that crawled and could be felt. Too many men are willing to admit they are afraid. Too many would rather condemn and despise than ask and laugh. But it is on the edges of eternity that men find each other out, and sympathize.

Ismail went down on his hands and knees, lifting the lantern along a foot at a time in front of him and carrying it in his teeth by the bail the last part of the way. It seemed like an hour before he stood up, nearly a hundred yards away on the far side, and yelled for King to follow.

The wind snatched the yell away, but the waving lantern beckoned him, and King knelt down in the dark. It happened that he laid his hand on a loose stone, the size of his head, near the edge. He shoved it over and listened.

He listened for a minute but did not hear it strike anything, and the shudder, that he could not repress, came from the middle of his backbone and spread outward through each fibre of his being. If he had delayed another second his courage would have failed; he began at once to crawl to where Ismail stood swinging the light.

There was room on the ledge for his knees and no more. Toes and fingers were over the side. He sat down as on horseback, and transferred both slippers to his pockets, and then went forward again with bare feet, waiting whenever the wind snatched at him with redoubled fury, to lean against it and grip the rock with numb fingers. Ismail swung the lamp, for reasons best known to himself, and half-way over King sat astride the ridge again to shout to him to hold it still. But Ismail did not understand him.

"Khinjan graves are deep!" he howled back. "Fear and the shadow of death are one!"

He swung the lamp even more violently, as if it were a charm that could exorcise fear and bring a man over safely. The shadows danced until his brain reeled, and King swore he would thrash the fool as soon as he could reach him. He lay belly-downward on the rock and crawled like an insect the remainder of the way.

And as if aware of his intention Ismail started to hurry on while there was yet a yard or two to crawl, and anger not being a load worth carrying, nor revenge a thing permitted to inter-

fere with the sarkar's business, King let both die.

Hunted by the wind, they ran round a bold shoulder of cliff into another black-dark tunnel. There the wind died, swallowed in a hundred fissures, but the track grew worse and steeper until they had to cling with both hands and climb and now and then Ismail set the lantern on a ledge and lowered his girdle to help King up. Sometimes he stood on King's shoulder in order to reach a higher level. They climbed for an hour and dropped at last panting, on a ledge, after squeezing themselves under the corner of a boulder.

The lantern light shone on a tiny trickle of cold water, and there Ismail drank deep, like a bull, before signing to King to imitate him.

"A thirsty throat and a crazy head are one!" he counseled. "A man needs wit and a wet tongue who would talk with her!"

"Where is she?" asked King, when he had finished drinking.

"Go and look!"

Ismail gave him a sudden shove, that sent him feet first forward over the edge. He fell a distance rather greater than his own height, to another ledge and stood there looking up. He could see Ismail's red-rimmed eyes blinking down at him in the lantern light, but suddenly the Afridi blew the lamp out, and then the darkness became solid. Thought itself left off less than a yard away.

Ismail!" he whispered. But Ismail did not answer him.

He faced about, leaning against the rock, with the flat of both hands pressed tight against it for the sake of its company; and almost at once he saw a little bright red light glowing in the distance. It might have been a hundred yards, and it might have been a mile away below him; it was perfectly impossible to judge, for the darkness was not measurable.

"Flowers turn to the light!" droned Ismail's voice above sententiously, and turning, he thought he could see red eyes peering over the rock. He jumped, and made a grab for the flow-beard that surely must be below them, but he missed.

"Little fish swim to the light!" droned Ismail. "Moths fly to the light! Who is a man that he should know less than they?"

**H**E turned and stared at the light. Dimly, very vaguely, he could make out that a causeway led downward from almost where he stood. He was convinced that should he try to climb back Ismail would merely reach out a hand and shove him down again, and there was no sense in being put to that indignity. He decided to go forward, for there was even less sense in standing still.

"Come with me! Come along, Ismail!" he called.

"Allah! Hear him! Nay, nay, nay! Who was it said a little while ago, 'There is no such thing as fear!' I am afraid, but thou and I are two men! Go thou alone!"

Reason is a man's only dependable faculty. Reason told him that at a word from Yasmini he would have been flung into "Earth's Drink" hours ago. Therefore, added reason, why should she forego that spectacular opportunity when his death would have amused Kkinjan's thousands, only to kill him now in the dark alone? He had treated a few dozen sick men, but surely she had not been afraid to offend them. Had she not dared forbid the sick coming to him altogether? "Forward!" says Cocker, in at least a dozen places. "Go forward and find out! Better a bed in hell than a seat on the horns of a dilemma! Forward!"

There was no sound now anywhere. He stretched a leg downward and felt

a rock two or three feet lower down, and the sound of his slipper sole touching it, being the only noise, made the short hair rise on the back of his neck. Then he took himself, so to speak, by the hand and went forward and downward, for action is the only curb imagination knows.

He forgot to count his pulse and judge how long it took him to descend that causeway in the dark. It was not so very rough, nor so very dangerous, but of course he only knew that fact afterward. He had to grope his way inch by inch, trusting to sense of touch and the British army's everlasting luck, with an eye all the while on a red light that was something like the glow through hell's keyhole.

When he reached bottom, after perhaps twenty minutes, and stood at last on comparatively level rock, his legs were trembling from tension, and he had to sit down while he stretched them out and rested. The light still looked a quarter of a mile away, although that was guesswork. It made scarcely more impression on the surrounding darkness than one coal glowing in a cellar. The silence began to make his head ache.

**H**E got up and started, but just as he did that he thought he heard a footstep. He suspected Ismail might be following after all.

"Ismail!" he called, trying to peer through the dark. But all the darkness had its home here. He could not even see his own hand stretched out. His own voice made him jump; after a second's pause it began to crack and rattle from wall to wall and from roof to floor, until at last the echoing word became one again and died with a hiss somewhere in the bowels of the world—Mbisssss!—like the sound of hot iron being plunged into a blacksmith's trough with a little after-murmur of complaining water.

But then he was sure he heard a footstep! He faced about; and now there were two red lights where there

had been only one. They seemed rather nearer, perhaps because there were two of them.

"Hullo, King sahib!" said a voice he recognized; and he choked. He felt that if he had coughed his heart would have lain on the floor!

"Are you afraid, King sahib?" said the Rangar Rewa Gunga's voice, and he took a step forward to be closer to his questioner. He found himself beside a rock, looking up at the Rangar's turban, that peered over the top of it. He could dimly make out the Rangar's dark eyes.

"I would be afraid if I were you!"

Rewa Gunga flashed a little electric torch into his eyes, but after a few seconds he shifted it so that both their faces could be seen, although the Rangar's only very faintly.

"I have come to warn you!"

"Very good of you, I'm sure!" said King.

"If she knew I were here, she would jolly well have my liver nailed to a wall! I come to advise you to go back!"

"Have they taken Ali Masjid Fort?" King asked him.

"Never mind, sahib, but listen! I have brought her bracelet! I stole it! She stole it from you, and I stole it back! Take it! Put it on and wear it! Use it as a passport out of Kkinjan Caves—for no man dare touch you while you wear it—and as a passport down the Khyber into India! Go back to India and stay there! Take it and go! Quick! Take it!"

"No, thanks!" said King.

The Rangar laughed mirthlessly, shifting the light a little as King stepped aside to get a better view of him. He held the torch more cunningly than a Spanish lady holds a fan.

"All Englishmen are fools—most of them stiff-necked fools," he asserted. "Bah! Do you think I do not know? Do you think anything is hidden from her? I know—and she knows—that you think you have a surprise in store for her! You think you will go to her,

#### 17th ANNOUNCEMENT

## SPRINGTIME

The most trying part of the Canadian climate is the early spring. It is a time when delicate people who can afford the expense should go away to the sunny Islands of the South. It is a time to secure a passage on a "Royal Mail" steamer and hike away to Barbados, or any other of the numerous places at which these ships call.

The cost of a ticket from Halifax to Barbados and return to St. John, is \$106.25, while a round ticket to Demerara costs only \$125.00. These prices cover first-class berth and meals.



**THE ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY**  
57-59 Granville Street, HALIFAX, N. S.