

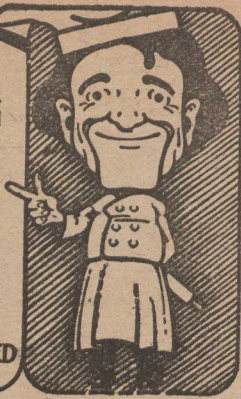


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that because Solomon said much the same thing first:

"A soft answer is better than a sword!"

But Cocker adds, "Never excuse. Explain! And blame no man."

"My brothers," he said, and paused, since a man must make a beginning, even when he can not see the end. And as he spoke the answer came to him. He stood upright, and his voice became that of a man whose advice has been asked, and who gives it freely. "These be stirring times! Ye need take care, my brothers! Ye saw this night how one man entered here on the strength of an oath and a promise. All he lacked was proof. And I had proof. Ye saw! Who am I that I

should deny you a custom? Yet—think ye, my brothers!—how easy would it not have been, had I thrown that head to you, for a traitor to catch it and hide it in his clothes, and make away with it! He could have used it to admit to these caves—why—even an Englishman, my brothers! If that had happened, ye would have blamed me!"

Yasmini smiled. Taking its cue from her, the crowd murmured, scarcely assent, but rather recognition of the hakim's adroitness. The game was not won; there lacked a touch to tip the scales in his favor, and Yasmini supplied it with ready genius.

"The hakim speaks truth!" she laughed.

King turned about instantly to face her, but he salaamed so low that she could not have seen his expression had she tried.

"If ye wish it, I will order him tossed into Earth's Drink after those other three."

Muhammed Anim rose, stroking his beard and rocking where he stood.

"It is the law!" he growled, and King shuddered.

"It is the law," Yasmini answered in a voice that rang with pride and insolence, "that none interrupt me while I speak! For such ill-mannered ones Earth's Drink hungers! Will you test my authority, Muhammad Anim?"

The mullah sat down, and hundreds of men laughed at him, but not all of the men by any means.

"It is the law that none goes out of Khinjan Caves alive who breaks the law of the Caves. But he broke no very big law. And he spoke truth. Think ye! If that head had only fallen into Muhammad Anim's lap, the mullah might have smuggled in another man with it!"

A roar of laughter greeted that thrust. Many men who had not laughed at the mullah's first discomfiture joined in now. Muhammad Anim sat and fidgeted, meeting nobody's eye and answering nothing.

"So it seems to me good," Yasmini

said, in a voice that did not echo any more but rang very clear and true (she seemed to know the trick of the roof, and to use the echo or not as she chose), "to let this hakim live! He shall meditate in his cave a while, and perhaps he shall be beaten, lest he dare offend again. He can no more escape from Khinjan Caves than the women who are prisoners here. He may therefore live!"

There was utter silence. Men looked at one another and at her, and her blazing eyes searched the crowd swiftly. It was plain enough that there were at least two parties there, and that none dared oppose Yasmini's will for fear of the others.

"To thy seat, Kurram Khan!" she ordered, when she had waited a full minute and no man spoke.

He wasted no time. He hurried out of the arena as fast as he could walk, with Ismail and Darya Khan close at his heels. It was like a run out of danger in a dream. He stumbled over the legs of the front-rank men in his hurry to get back to his place, and Ismail overtook him, seized him by the shoulders, hugged him, and dragged him to the empty seat next to the Orakzai Pathan. There he hugged him until his ribs cracked.

"Ready o' wit!" he crowed. "Ready o' tongue! Light o' life! Man after mine heart! Hey, I love thee! Readily I would be thy man, but for being hers! Would I had a son like thee! Fool—fool—fool not to throw the head to them! Squeamish one! Man like a child! What is the head but earth when the life has left it? What would thy head be without the nimble wit? Fool—fool—fool! And clever! Turned the joke on Muhammad Anim! Turned it on Bull-with-a-beard in a twinkling—in the bat of an eye—in a breath! Turned it against her enemy and raised a laugh against him from his own men! Ready o' wit! Shameless one! Lucky one! Allah was surely good to thee!"

Still exulting, he let go, but none too soon for comfort. King's ribs were sore from his hugging for days.

"What is it?" he asked. For King seemed to be shaping words with his lips. He bent a great hairy ear to listen.

"Have they taken Ali Masjid Fort?" King whispered.

"How should I know? Why?"

"Tell me, man, if you love me! Have they taken it?"

"Nay, how should I know? Ask her! She knows more than any man knows!"

(To be continued.)

## Farm Women

(Concluded from page 12.)

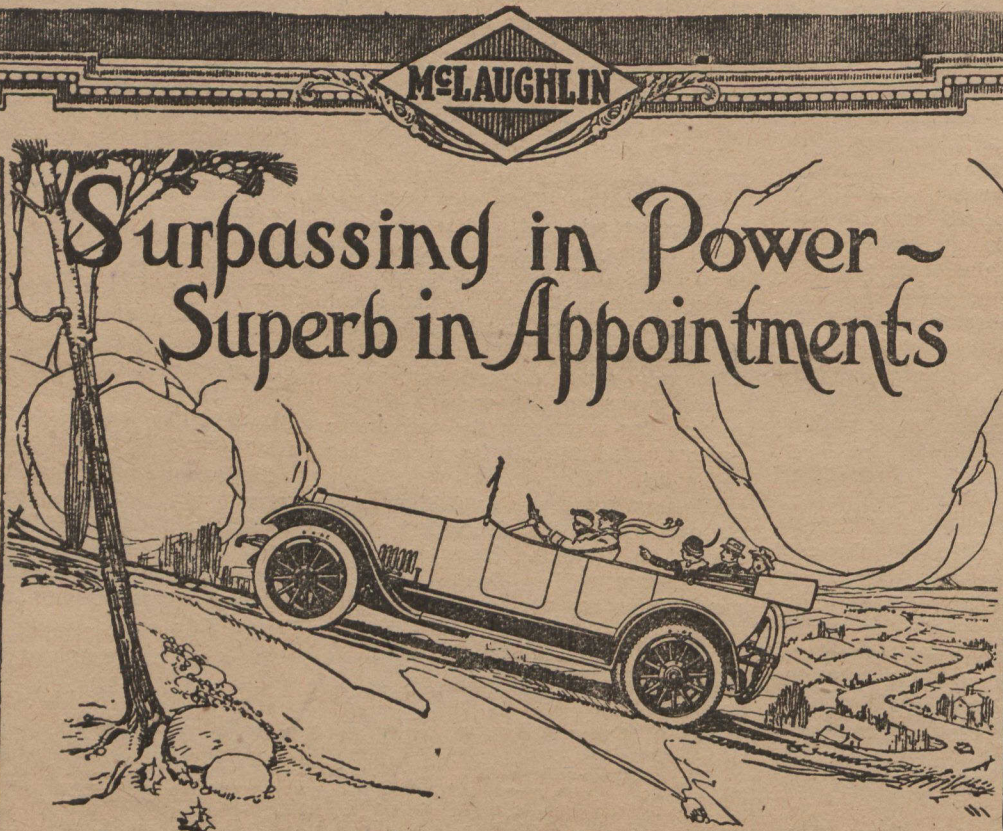
results, from both agrarian and eugenic standpoints, are going to be very interesting. In the meantime—to come back with a jolt to this convention—the farm women's associations are paving the way. If organized farmers are indeed to form the most potent factor in the coming political scenery, if (as the "Madam President" of the U. F. W. A. suggests) organized womanhood is the strongest force in the whole world, what will not be the influence of organized farm womanhood? I leave the thought with you, as the preacher says; and should those two statues ever materialize, I respectfully suggest the following inscription, to be found in the poetical works of Arthur Hugh Clough:

And not by Eastern windows only,

When daylight comes, comes in the light;

In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,

But Westward, look, the land is bright!



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