

into the red, quivering light of the torches. Thrice he struck upon the stout, barred door with his broken chain, and he bade the Marwari open. There were faint rustlings within the hut, but no answer was made.

Then, with an iron-bound *lathi*, Mirza Mahomed thundered upon the door, and cried very loudly and triumphantly to him who shuddered behind it.

"Open, thou swine! It is My Lord the Tiger who hath come to the kill!"

Again the broken chain rattled against the door. The wail of a frightened woman arose, and was hushed quickly. The Tiger man spoke a word to Mirza Mahomed, and pointed to the roof. A score of men sprang up, and hacked at the layered palm *jowlis*, tearing wide a gaping hole in the thatch.

Presently the thing was done, and the Tiger man had swung himself from the ground, and dropped through into the hut. A piercing scream greeted him. The crowd was stirred to its depths. The women clutched at each other, and cowered into groups, fearing what would be seen when the door was opened.

The bars fell, crashing, and from the opened doorway a hand pushed out a woman whose veil was wound about her head so that she could not see. Men received her, and led her to a tree, and fastened her hands behind her; and there she crouched, shivering and moaning.

Then, from the hut came a yell as of one surprised by Death himself. Again and again it tore through the night silence, and always the shrieks of the muffled woman answered. The yells broke into short, barking cries, and there were sounds of heavy falls, and of a desperate struggle. Only in one way could the conflict end, they all knew. Who should withstand my Lord the Tiger?

Out into the torchlight came the Tiger man, forcing Narain Ganesh before him. The Marwari's head was swathed in a cloth so that he was blindfolded, and his hands were bound. His big head jerked from side to side as he tried to catch and recognise the voices of his enemies. Only one voice was heard, and it said:

"Bring the spades, my brothers, and dig beneath the grain chest."

Then madness fell upon the Marwari, and gave

him the strength of ten men, so that he twisted out of the iron grip that had held him, and ran back to defend that which was dearer to him than his life. Blinded, and with outstretched arms, he blundered through the doorway, and cast himself upon the great metal-clamped chest. The men tried to pull him away, but he clung fast, frothing and howling like a maniac in the folds of the cloth about his head.

"It is forbidden! It is forbidden!" he bellowed. "Who diggeth here, dies!"

Blows and stripes could not force him away, though they were dealt out in plenty; but there was Mirza Mahomed, urged by many bitter memories to put a throttling grasp about the creature's throat, and drag him writhing into the open again. There the people fastened upon him, and he escaped no more.

WHEN the grain-chest was dragged aside, they broke up the freshly-plastered floor, and digged; and finding that the gods were asleep, they digged deeper, until they found great earthenware jars, full, and brimming with rupees. These they brought outside, and all the people saw them. It was like a dream, that wealth of shining silver. The Tiger man's voice awoke them—very soft and kind it was, speaking to Mirza Mahomed as a father to a beloved son:

"Thou, whom I name not, what owest thou to the Marwari?"

The old soldier straightened himself, and, giving the salute, made answer hurriedly:

"Take thou that sum, and no more. On the morrow wait upon the Court and pay the debt. My trust is in thee."

"*Barik Alla!*" exclaimed Mirza Mahomed, and bent himself to the counting. In tens and in hundreds he measured the little piles against each other, and the Marwari listened to the ringing of the rupees and groaned as though the pains of death were already upon him.

A lad came and flung himself at the Tiger's feet, imploring, for he also was debtor to the Marwari. His little wife came faltering after him to look with big eyes upon the deliverer. The jars yielded them salvation, and they hurried away to hide the treasure.

Then came one and another seeking relief, and to each was given the amount of his debt—not one rupee less, nor one more. Some fell in the dust and kissed the Tiger man's feet. Others sobbed as their hands closed upon the coins that were the price of life and hope. Torch after torch left the flaming circle as those who borne them sped homeward rejoicing. Then, the crowd was all gone, and the red light was all gone, and only the Tiger man remained by the broken hut, looking down upon the heaving body of the Marwari.

He went and freed the bound woman, and she stood aloof, her eyes straying from the half-empty jars to the wreckage of her home. He stooped and cut the Marwari's bonds, and at the touch the man cried out in new fear, and groaned because the effort of the cry set many bruises throbbing.

"Narain Ganesh," said the Tiger man sadly "through many years thou hast taken the bread of the people, so that they have starved and died. It may be that others will be crushed under thy foot that never steps aside to spare. He who takes must also give—therefore thy life is justly forfeited. Yet the dead sleep, and know no sorrow, and revenge is no weapon for the wise, but rather a handleless knife for the use of the fool. To-night I have aided thee, no less than I have aided thy brethren, for I have given thee time for repentance. I counsel thee to seek no redress from the British Raj, O! Narain Ganesh! Death stands behind thee. Do not tempt him to strike!"

The Marwari cursed him venomously.

"This is thy night! The morrow is mine. There shall be fines, there shall be imprisonment—yea, none shall be spared."

He was writhing on the ground, and snarling like a maimed wild cat. His wife pulled the jars within doors, and then bent over him, whispering in his ear. Suddenly, he dragged himself into the hut, and she followed. The door closed and the bars rattled into place.

The Tiger man beat out the last torch for a lean moon had risen to give light in open places and turned the shadows to deeper blackness. Through the village he went, listening and looking. Where

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WHEN THE FREIGHT WENT THROUGH

An Incident of the Rail and the Turning Point in a Man's Career

By VICTOR LAURISTON

THE men, grouped about the interior of the little, dingy ticket office, glanced up casually as Jack Stevely, his hands crowded into his trousers' pockets, strode gloomily into their midst.

"Tic-tic-a-tic!" chattered the sounder in merry welcome.

"There's the second gone, thank heaven," commented Allan, with a sigh of vast relief.

"I hate a night like this," muttered young Manning, nervously. "What the dickens is it inspires the Old Boy to send a whole lot of specials, crowded right through to the vestibules, whirling clear across the division with an army of picnickers at a dollar apiece. It may be business—but we've got ten thousand more people on our nerves to-night than we want. I'll feel better to-morrow morning, when they're all safe home again."

"We'll all feel better right now if you'll just cut out your caterwauling," interjected old Meagher, the "regular," his grey head bent attentively over the sounder. "Your talk makes me nervous. Cut it out! 'Lo, Stevely," he added, in a tone of worried cheerfulness.

The tardy greeting from the old operator brought all eyes once more to Stevely.

"What in sheol is the matter with you, Stevely?" demanded Manning, sharply. "You look as blue as—as the Tory ticket."

Stevely smiled icily, and drew a slender forefinger across his throat. The other men gazed at him, their faces glowing with a sympathy borne of experience. Old Meagher glanced up again from his instrument, whose nervous "tic-tic" grew intense in the sudden stillness.

"Is it the girl—?" commenced Manning, impetuously.

Stevely's sombre face grew suddenly radiant.

"No," he rejoined, in ringing tones. "Minnie is true blue. She's coming down on one of the specials from White Springs to-night."

"Then what the——?" ejaculated Manning.

Again Stevely resorted to gesture; finally, as though disgusted with the utter futility of gesture to portray his burning resentment, burst into vehement words.

"It's the Old Boy," he cried, sharply. "I'm thrown down—played for a sucker—that's what it is. After McCarron promising me half a dozen times that I was to have the Warrenville office, here some twenty-ninth cousin of the Old Boy suddenly imagines he's cut out for a railroader, and, just because he's related to the president of the line, they switch the job over to him. What d'you call that?" and he turned a pair of blazing eyes on the men about him. "I'm just going to chuck the whole blamed thing. The L. & R. can go plump to smash for all I care."

"Doubtless, they will," intrested Meagher, cynically, with the satiric smile of the man who has learned the heat of the furnace by journeying through it.

"I'm just going to chuck the whole blamed thing," repeated Stevely, vehemently. "There's livings to be had outside the L. & R., and jobs where I won't have to work myself to death for nineteen years, just to be made somebody else's scapegoat in the twentieth."

ALLAN, watching the young fellow gravely, glanced curiously from him to Meagher. Meagher had the reputation of knowing everyone on the line, from A to Z.

"Stevely—day operator at Wawa Falls," whispered Meagher, in response to the tacit query. "If you've never been in Wawa Falls, pray that you won't have to go there. A little, jerkwater station—you know the kind—where the water tank freezes in the winter time and stays froze, and the hayseeds come down to the station to see the trains go through—and they do go through," he chuckled—"straight through, without even hesitating. It's

next door to Nowhere. If a man's powerful smart, he'll likely be promoted from there to Nowhere itself by the time he's sixty." He concluded with a short laugh, typically cynical. Allan's answering look was still curious. The old man saw it; his lips parted a couple of times before he spoke.

"I don't suppose he ever had the ghost of a show for the Warrenville job," he muttered, huskily, "but I reckon he felt powerful certain it was coming his way. Was to marry a girl from White Springs this week—when his holidays came. She's coming down on one of the specials."

He glanced at Stevely, as though fearing the young man might have overheard. Stevely, though, his vehemence of a moment before exhausted, was gazing sullenly through the little window upon the dimly lighted station platform and the dark, shadowy line of track.

"Tic-tic-a-tic-tic!" sang the instrument; and in the silence which suddenly fell upon the party, its chatter seemed oddly loud. Even young Manning, who had been talking about wrecks and disasters all evening, was subdued and voiceless.

"Looks as if we aren't in for an all night session this time," cried Allan gayly to the old operator, as the third excursion train pulled out for the east. "Number 19 is on time."

Meagher assented, with a laugh which was manifestly one of relief.

"Wonder if Stevely's girl came down on her?" queried Manning, with a touch of malice.

"Guess she's on the last train," rejoined Allan, as the young man returned alone from an anxious scrutiny of the crowd which had, a few moments before, poured forth from the special upon the station platform.

Stevely vouchsafed no enlightenment, but instead, resumed his old post by the window and his

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