



OLD CHUM TOBACCO
is the "chum" of more pipe smokers, than any other tobacco smoked in Canada
EVERYBODY SMOKES "OLD CHUM"

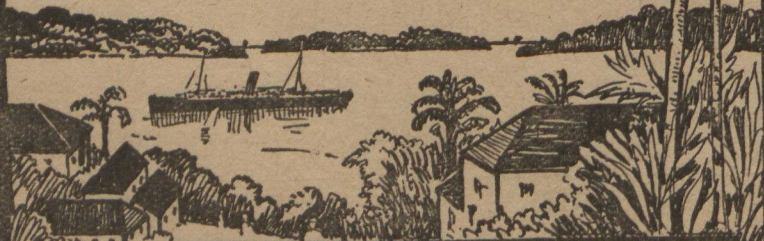
8th ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE BEST WAY

If a person wishes to see the West Indies there is no way he can do it so enjoyably as by the ships of the "Royal Mail" which sail from Halifax once every fortnight.

These ships go to so many different places: Bermuda, St. Kitts, Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad and Demerara, and in each one there is time for a shore visit. And they take the passenger so comfortably; they are good sea boats, and they give him such good things to eat, that he would indeed be hard to please who would not say that he liked the service.

Send your name
for a booklet.



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

Many people are sending their Couriers to the boys at the front. The Courier is a good "letter from home." Send more Couriers and still more.

"Ask her, sahib! Perhaps she will tell you! Perhaps she will let you see! Who knows? She is a woman of resource and unexpectedness—Let her women dance for you a while."

King nodded. Then he got up and laid the knife back on the little table. A minute or so later he noticed that at a sign from Rewa Gunga a woman left the great window place and spirited the knife away.

"May I have a sheet of paper?" he asked, for he knew that another fight for his self-command was due.

Rewa Gunga gave an order, and a maid brought him scented paper on a silver tray. He drew out his own fountain pen then and made ready.

In spite of the great silken punkah that swung rhythmically across the full breadth of the room the heat was so great that the pen slipped round and round between his fingers. Yet he contrived to write, and since his one object was to give his brain employment, he wrote down a list of the names he had memorized in the train on the journey from Peshawur, not thinking of a use for the list until he had finished. Then, though, a real use occurred to him.

While he began to write more than a dozen dancing women swept into the room from behind the silk hangings in a concerted movement that was all lithe slumberous grace. Wood-wind music called to them from the great deep window as snakes are summoned from their holes, and as cobras answer the charmer's call the women glided to the centre and stood poised beneath the punkah.

THEY began to chant, still dreamily; with the chant the dance began, in and out, round and round, lazily, ever so lazily, wreathed in buoyant gossamer that was scarcely more solid than the sandalwood smoke they wafted into rings.

King watched them and listened to their chant until he began to recognize the strain on the eye-muscles that precedes the mesmeric spell. Then he wrote and read what he had written and wrote again. And after that, for the sake of mental exercise, he switched his thoughts into another channel altogether. He reverted to Delhi railway station.

"The Turks can spy as well as anybody. They know those men are going to Kerachi to be ready for them. Therefore, having cut his eye-teeth B. C. several hundred, the Unspeakable Turk will take care not to misbehave UNTIL he's ready. And I suppose our government, being ours and we being us, will let him do it! All of which will take time. And that again means no trouble in the 'Hills'—probably—until the Turks really do feel ready to begin. They'll preach a holy war just ahead of the date. The tribes will keep quiet because an army at Kerachi might be meant for their benefit. Oh, yes, I'm quite sure they were en-training for Kerachi in readiness to move on Basra. Trucks ready for camels—and camel drivers—and food for camels—and Eresby, who's just come from taking a special camel course. Not a doubt of it!—And then, Corrigan—Elwright—Doby—Gould—all on the platform in a bunch, and all down on the Army List as Turkish interpreters! Not a doubt left!"

"What have you written?" asked a quiet voice at his ear; and he turned to look straight in the eyes of Rewa Gunga, who had leaned forward to read over his shoulder. Just for one second he hovered on the brink of quick defeat. Having escaped the Scylla of the dancing women, Charybdis waited for him in the shape of eyes that were pools of hot mystery. It was the sound of his own voice that brought him back to the world again and saved his will for him unbound.

"Read it, won't you?" he laughed. "If you know, take this pen and mark the names of whichever of those men are still in Delhi."

Rewa Gunga took pen and paper and set a mark against some thirty of the names, for King had a manner that disarmed refusal.

"Where are the others?" he asked him, after a glance at it.

"In jail, or else over the border."

"Already?"

The Rangar nodded. "Trust Yasmini! She saw to that jolly well before she left Delhi! She would have stayed had there been anything more to do!"

King began to watch the dance again, for it did not feel safe to look too long into the Rangar's eyes. It was not wise just then to look too long at anything, or to think too long on any one subject.

"Ismail is slow about returning," said the Rangar.

"I wrote at the foot of the tar," said King, "that they are to detain him there until the answer comes."

The Rangar's eyes blazed for a second and then grew cold again (as King did not fail to observe). He knew as well as the Rangar that not many men would have kept their will so unfettered in that room as to be able to give independent orders. He recognized resignation, temporary at least, in the Rangar's attitude of leaning back again to watch from under lowered eyelids. It was like being watched by a cat.

All this while the women danced on, in time to wailing flute-music, until, it seemed from nowhere, a lovelier woman than any of them appeared in their midst, sitting cross-legged with a flat basket at her knees. She sat with arms raised and swayed from the waist as if in a delirium. Her arms moved in narrowing circles, higher and higher above the basket lid, and the lid began to rise. Nobody touched it, nor was there any string, but as it rose it swayed with sickening monotony.

It was minutes before the bodies of two great king-cobras could be made out, moving against the woman's spangled dress. The basket lid was resting on their heads, and as the music and the chanting rose to a wild, weird shriek the lid rose too, until suddenly the woman snatched the lid away and the snakes were revealed, with hoods raised, hissing the cobra's hate-song that is prelude to the poison-death.

They struck at the woman, one after the other, and she leaped out of their range, swift and as supple as they. Instantly then she joined in the dance, with the snakes striking right and left at her. Left and right she swayed to avoid them, far more gracefully than a matador avoids the bull and courting a deadlier peril than he—poisonous, two to his one. As she danced she whirled both arms above her head and cried as the were-wolves are said to do on stormy nights.

SOME unseen hand drew a blind over the window; an eerie green-and-golden light began to play from one end of the room, throwing the dancers into half-relief and deepening the mystery.

Sweet strange scents were wafted in from under the silken hangings. The room grew cooler by unguessed means. Every sense was treacherously wooed. And ever, in the middle of the moving light among the languorous dancers, the snakes pursued the woman!

"Do you do this often?" wondered King, in a calm aside to Rewa Gunga, turning half toward him and taking his eyes off the dance without any very great effort.

Rewa Gunga clapped his hands and the dance ceased. The woman spirited her snakes away. The blind was drawn upward and in a moment all was normal again with the punkah swinging slowly overhead, except that the seductive smell remained, that was like the early-moving breath of all the different flowers of India.

"If she were here," said the Rangar, a little grimly—with a trace of disappointment in his tone—"you would not snatch your eyes away like that! You would have been jolly well transfixed, my friend! These—she—that woman—they are but clumsy amateurs! If she were here, to dance with her snakes for you, you would have been jolly well dancing with her, if she had wished it! Perhaps you shall see her dance some day! Ah—here is Ismail," he added in an altered tone of voice. He seemed relieved at sight of the Afridi.

(To be continued.)