

you held it up in the Cavern of Earth's Drink! Then I knew it could not be anybody's else's head!"

"Why bid me throw it to them, then?" he asked her, and he was aware of her scorn before the words had left his lips.

She leaned back again and looked at him through lowered eyes, as if she must study him all anew. She seemed to find it hard to believe that he really thought so in the commonplace.

"What is a head to me, or to you—a head with no life in it—carrion!—compared to what shall be? Would you have known it was his head if you had thrown it to them when I ordered you?"

HE understood. Some of her blood was Russian, some Indian.

"A friend is a friend, but a brother is a rival," says the East, out of world-old experience, and in some ways Russia is more eastern than the East itself.

"Muhammad Anim shall answer to you for your brother's head!" she said with a little nod, as if she were making concessions to a child. "At present we need him. Let him preach his jihad, and loose it at the right time. After that he will be in the way! You shall name his death—Earth's Drink—slow torture—fire! Will that content you?"

"No," he said, with a dry laugh.

"What more can you ask?"

"Less! My brother died at the head of his men. He couldn't ask more. Let Bull-with-a-beard alone."

She set both elbows on her knees and laid her chin on both hands to stare at him again. He began to remember long-forgotten schoolboy lore about chemical reagents, that dissolve materials into their component parts, such was the magic of her eyes. There were no eyes like hers that he had ever seen, although Rewa Gunga's had been something like them. Only Rewa Gunga's had not changed so. Thought of the Rangar no sooner crossed his mind than she was speaking of him.

"Rewa Gunga met you in the dark, beyond those outer curtains, did he not?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Did he tell you that if you pass the curtains you shall be told all I know?"

He nodded again, and she laughed.

"It would take time to tell you all I know! First, I think I will show you things. Afterward you shall ask me questions, and I will answer them."

She stood up, and of course he stood up, too. So, she on the footstool of the throne, her eyes and his were on a level. She laid hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes until he could see his own twin portraits in hers that were glowing sunset pools. Heart of the Hills? The Heart of all the East seemed to burn in her, rebellious!

"Are you believing me?" she asked him.

He nodded, for no man could have helped believing her. As she knew the truth, she was telling it to him, as surely as she was doing her skilful best to mesmerize him. But the Secret Service is made up of men trained against that.

"Come!" she said, and stepping down she took his arm.

She led him past the thrones to other leather curtains in a wall, and through them into long hewn passages from cavern into cavern, until even the Rock of Gibraltar seemed like a doll's house in comparison.

In one cave there were piles of javelins that had been stacked there by the Sleeper and his men. In another were sheaves of arrows; and in one were spears in racks against a wall. There were empty stables, with rings made fast into the rock where a hun-

dred horses could have stood in line.

She showed him a cave containing great forges, where the bronze had been worked, with charcoal still piled up against the wall at one end. There were copper and tin ingots in there of a shape he had never seen.

"I know where they came from," she told him. "I have made it my business to know all the 'Hills.' I know things the Hillmen's great-great-grandfathers forgot! I know old workings that would make a modern nation rich! We shall have money when we need it, never fear! We shall conquer India while the English backs are turned and the best troops are oversea. We will bring a hundred thousand slaves back here to work our mines! With what they dig from the mines, copper and gold and tin, we will make ready to buy the English off when they are free to turn this way again. The English will do anything for money! They will be in debt when this war is over, and their price will be less than now!"

She laughed merrily at him because his face showed that he did not appreciate that stricture. Then she called him her Warrior and her Well-beloved and took him down a long passage, holding his hand all the way, to show him slots cut in the floor for the use of archers.

"You entered Khinjan Caves by a tunnel under this floor, Well-beloved. There is no other entrance!"

By this time Well-beloved was her name for him, although there was no air of finality about it. It was as if she paved the way for use of Athelstan and that was a sacred name. It was amazing how she conveyed that impression without using words.

"The Sleeper cut these slots for his archers. Then he had another thought and set these cauldrons in place, to boil oil to pour down. Could any army force a way through by the route by which you entered?"

"No," he said, marvelling at the ton-weight copper cauldrons, one to each hole.

"Even without rifles for the defence?"

"No," he said.

"And I have more than a thousand Mauser rifles here, and more than a million rounds of ammunition!"

"How did you get them?"

"I shall tell you that later. Come and see some other things. See and believe!"

SHE showed him a cave in which boxes were stacked in high square piles.

"Dynamite bombs!" she boasted. "How many boxes? I forget! Too many to count! Women brought them all the way from the sea, for even Muhammed Anim could not make Afridi riflemen carry loads. I have wondered what Bull-with-a-beard will say when he misses his precious dynamite!"

"You've enough in there to blow the mountain up!" King advised her. "If somebody fired a pistol in here, the least would be the collapse of this floor into the tunnel below with a hundred thousand tons of rock on top of it. There is no other way out?"

"Earth's Drink!" she said, and he made a grimace that set her to laughing.

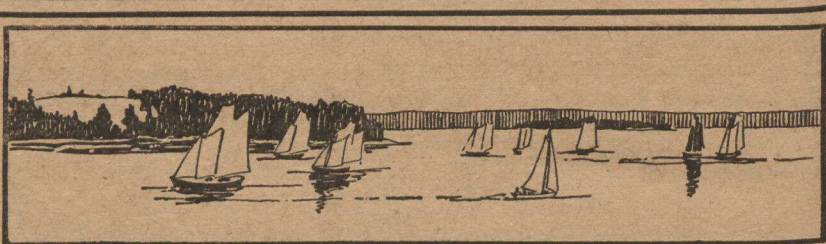
But she looked at him darkly after that and he got the impression that the thought was not new to her, and that she did not thank him for the advice. He began to wonder whether there was anything she had not thought of—any loophole she had left him for escape—any issue she had not foreseen.

"Kill her!" a secret voice urged him. But that was the voice of the "Hills," that are violent first and regretful

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