

# Beautiful Cynthia;

## Victory After Many Defeats.

CHAPTER XXIX.  
**'TIS A SMALL WORLD.**  
 "There is a nullah there, sahib," he said, pointing to the cavellike depression in the hillside. "We will rest there; it is our last night. To-morrow we reach the station, and the sahib will be safe. I will go find some water, some food, perhaps, for this is the road the merchants use."  
 Darrel dropped down and began to remove the remains of his boots—stockings had disappeared long since—and Abdurmahn went off on his quest.

Wearily as he was, Darrel could not sleep, for "the little devil in his stomach," as the Afridis put it, was calling "Feed me, feed me!" and he propped himself up on the edge of the nullah and looked vacantly down on the way they had come.

The silence which broods over these solitudes, a silence, which, like the Egyptian darkness, can be felt, enveloped him as if with a cloak. But through it he could hear Cynthia's voice sounding as if in a mist, and, as had often been the case, he could almost feel her presence near him.

Hungry as he was, he had almost fallen asleep when he heard footsteps.

They were not Abdurmahn's, for his stealthy feet made no sound, and, instinctively—for Darrel had learned to dread a foe in every approaching man—he dropped full length and strained his eyes and ears watchfully.

Presently a slight form was silhouetted against the deep purple of the sky, and a man stood within fifty yards of the nullah and looked upward, as if hesitating whether to continue his way or to take shelter for the night.

Darrel judged the newcomer to be an elderly, rather than a young, man, and was puzzled by his appearance and manner; for the man was dressed like a native, and yet held himself erect and with an air quite unlike that of the men Darrel had met on his way.

There was no mule; there was nothing to indicate the object which had brought the man to so lonely and perilous a spot at an hour when, ac-

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rel was in no mood to worry about a mere flesh wound.

"How did you know that I was English?" he asked.

The stranger smiled. "A native would have waited to see which side was winning before joining in the fun, and, again, you did not use the knife, but took to your fists. And, besides—well, I suppose it is difficult for an Englishman when he is off his guard to conceal his nationality."

#### CHAPTER XXX.

##### A STRANGE MEETING.

Abdurmahn interrupted the conversation by seizing Darrel's arm and ending him to the nullah, where he made Darrel impatiently prove to him that the wound was of no consequence.

The rescued person seated himself and calmly took out the precious pipe which he had managed to slip into his pocket at the moment he was attacked, and was proceeding to light it, when he caught Darrel's eye fixed on it longingly.

With a word of comprehension, he handed the pipe to Darrel, and Darrel, who was not devoid of tact, at once, with a murmur of gratitude, accepted the priceless loan.

"Been without a smoke some time?" asked the gentleman, for at his words Darrel had known him for one—"By their voice ye shall know them."

"For weeks—months—years, it seems," replied Darrel, with a kind of sigh, as he drew in the fragrant beccy. "Ever since I left the Barah Pass."

"You were in the fight for the fort, then?"

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"Yes," said Darrel, with a different kind of sigh.

The stranger nodded. "A fierce bit of work," he said gravely. "I read of it in a stray paper at Dhinpur, where I have been staying for a few days. What is your regiment?"

"The Rexford Fusiliers," replied Darrel. "Are you in the service?" he inquired, with the usual shyness.

"No; I am a civilian; a globe-trotter, I'm afraid. I've come through from Burma. How is it you are not with your regiment?"

Darrel told the story of the fight, his wound, and his rescue by Abdurmahn, and he was listened to with evident interest.

"You have had a wonderful, a miraculous, escape," said the stranger, "an escape which not one man in a thousand left wounded on an Afridi hillside ever makes."

"I know," said Darrel, with an involuntary shudder. "And I'm afraid I'm reported dead as well as missing."

"You can wire from the station," said the new-comer.

Darrel nodded, but with no great eagerness; for to whom should he wire?

"I was going to tell you how I came to be out to-night and alone," continued the stranger. "I am interested in mining affairs. I suppose I might call myself a prospector. And I find that it is much safer, excites less curiosity, if I look round in the quiet of the evening. I was warned that I ran some risks in doing so in this country; but—oh, well, one forgets or gets careless. To-night, but for you, would have been my last 'little wander,' as the Afridis call it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Darrel hastily, with the embarrassment of the man who is being thanked by another equally brave. "It's all in the day's work; and you'd have done the same for me. Oh, here's Abdurmahn with the grub; you know the sort of thing. It's getting piteous dark."

"The easiest way to find is the way to one's mouth," remarked the stranger cheerfully, as he took his share of parched peas and the chipati, and the lukewarm acid fluid which Abdurmahn poured from a leather skin and called "water." "You'll be glad of a square meal when you get to the station, and it will afford me one of the greatest pleasures of my life to see that you get it."

They talked in undertones for a little while longer, discussing the wild country and its still wilder inhabitants and avoiding personal matters; then Abdurmahn, with a grunt of dissatisfaction, reminded Darrel that they must rise early, and that he had better turn in.

(To be continued.)

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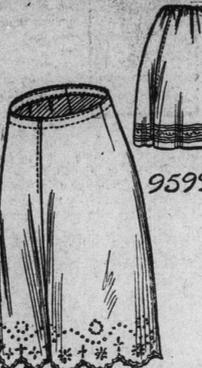
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