

## THE RED YEAR

A Story of the Indian Mutiny

BY LOUIS TRACY

Author of "The Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," "The Captain of the Kansas," "The King of Diamonds," etc., etc.

Copyright, 1908, by McLeod & Allen, Toronto.

### CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

There are few features of the landscape so complex in their windings as the footpaths of India. Owing to the immense distances between towns—the fertile and densely populated Doab offers no standard of comparison for the remainder of a vast continent—roads were scarce and far between in Mutiny days. The Grand Trunk Road and the rivers Ganges and Jumna were the main arteries of traffic. For the rest, men marched across country, and the narrow strands of field tracks meandered through plowed land and jungle, traversed nullah and hill and wood, and intersected each other in a way that was wholly inextricable unless one traveled by the compass or by well-known landmarks, where such were visible.

The road, of course, familiar with each yard of the route, practically followed a straight line. After a steady jog of an hour and a half they saw the silver thread of the Ganges from the crest of a small ridge that ran north and south. The river was then about three miles distant, and they were hurrying down the descent when they came upon an ekka, a little native two-wheeled cart, without springs, and drawn by a diminutive pony. Alone among wheeled conveyances, the ekka leaves the main roads in fairly level country, and this one had evidently brought a zemindar from a riverside village.

The man himself, a portly, full-bearded Mohammedan, was examining a growing crop, and his behavior, no less than the furtive looks cast at the newcomers by his driver, warned Malcolm that here, for a certainty, the Mutiny was a known thing. The zemindar's face assumed a bronze-green tinge when he saw the Europeans, and the sulky-looking native perched behind the shafts of the ekka growled something in the local patois that caused the ryot sitting behind Chumra to squirm uneasily.

The other glanced hastily around, as though he hoped to find assistance near, and Chumra muttered to his master: "Have a care, sahib, else we may hop on to a lined twig."

The boldest course was the best one. Malcolm rode up to the zemindar, who was separated some forty paces from the ekka.

"I come from Lucknow," he said.

"What news is there from Fatehpore and Allahabad?"

The man hesitated. He was so completely taken back by the sight of an armed officer riding towards him in broad daylight—for Malcolm having lost his own sword had taken Chumra's—that he was hardly prepared to meet the emergency.

"There is little news," he said, at last, and it was not lost on his questioner that the customary phrases of respect were omitted, though he spoke civilly enough.

"Nevertheless, what is it?" demanded Frank.

"Has the Mutiny spread thus far, or is it confined to Cawnpore?"

"I know not what you mean," said the self-contained answer. "In this district we are peaceable people. We look after our crops, even as I am engaged at this moment, and have no concern with what goes on elsewhere."

"A most worthy and honorable sentiment, and I trust will avail you when we have hanged all these rebels and we come to inquire into the conduct of your village. I want you to accompany me now and place my order and myself on board a boat for Allahabad."

"That is impossible—sahib—and the words came reluctantly from the man's lips as he turned to the river. "Why not?"

"They are all away, carrying grain and hay."

"What then, are your crops so forward? This one will not be ready for harvesting ere another month."

"You will not find a budgerow on this side. Perchance they will ferry you across at the village in a small boat, and you will have better accommodation at Fatehpore."

"Are we opposite Fatehpore?"

"Yes—sahib."

All the while the zemindar's eyes were looking furtively from Frank to the lower ground. It was a puzzling situation. The man was not actively hostile, yet his manner betrayed an undercurrent of fear and dislike that could only be accounted for by the downfall of British power in the locality. Thinking Chumra could deal better with his fellow-countryman, Malcolm called him, breaking in on a lively conversation that was going on between his servant and the ekka-driver.

Chumra, who had told the ryot to dismount, came at once.

"Our friend here says that things are quiet on the river, but there are no boats to be had," explained Malcolm. Chumra grinned, and the zemindar regarded him with troubled eyes.

"Excellent," he said. "We shall go to his house and wait while his servants look for a boat."

This suggestion seemed to please the other man.

"I will go on in front in the ekka," he agreed, "and lead you to my dwelling speedily."

Chumra edged nearer his master while their new acquaintance walked towards the ekka.

"Jump down and tie both when I give the word, sahib," he whispered. "There has been murder done here."

Malcolm understood instantly that his native companion had found the ekka-driver had fooled the man by pretending to be a zemindar, but Malcolm liked the looks of the man as little as he liked the looks of his master, and he preferred to trust to Chumra's nimble wit rather than the stupid contriving of a peasant, no matter how willing the latter might be to help.

The zemindar, having written, was gagged again, and the pair were left to that torture of silence and doubt they were not scrupled to indulge in at this remarkable change of tone. The flabby, well-fed rasal squealed like a pig when the point of the sword touched his skin, and the Englishman was forced to recoil fiercely to hide a smile.

"Speak, sag," he said. "What of Fatehpore and Allahabad, and be sure thou has spent thy last hour if thou liest."

"Sahib, God knoweth that I can tell thee naught of Allahabad, but the but-masher at Fatehpore is a rascal, and Tucker-sahib is dead. They killed him, I have heard, after a fight on the roof of the chutcheri."

Malcolm guessed rightly that Mr. Tucker was the judge at that station, but he must not betray ignorance.

"And the others—who did they do?"

"A contemptuous use of the word 'dog' of them," he said, knowing that the scenes enacted elsewhere must have had their counterpart at Fatehpore.

"Wow!" The kneeling man flinched as the sword pricked him again. "There are two men in a house near the ghat. They alone remain of those who crossed. And I saved them, sahib. I swear it, by the Kaaba, I saved them."

"They are young, doubtless, and good-looking?"

A new fear shone in the Mohammedan's eyes, and he did not answer. Frank's gorge rose with a deadly disgust, and it is hard to say that his sword would not have gone home in another instant had not Chumra intervened.

"Kill him not yet, sahib. He may be useful. Bind him and take him away back to Fatehpore. Then I shall help you to trust them properly."

Chumra soon showed that he meant business. When he was free to replace the pistol in the holster, which he did all the more readily since he had never used a firearm in his life, he gagged master and man with skill, tied them to a tree, and then untied the plan which the ekka-driver's story had suggested.

The fever of rebellion had spread along the whole of the left bank of the Ganges as far as Allahabad. A party of fugitives from Fatehpore who had taken to a boat were pursued, captured, and slain. Two girls who had managed to cross the river unseen were now lodged in a go-down, or warehouse, belonging to the very man whose chance had made Malcolm's prisoner. He was keeping them to curry favor with a local rajah who headed the outbreak at Fatehpore. It was true that there were no boats left on this side of the river: they were all on the opposite bank, being loaded with loot, and the two Englishwomen were awaiting the return of the zemindar's budgerow to be sent to a fate worse than death.

Chumra, a Mohammedan himself, was not greatly concerned about the misfortunes of a couple of women, but he saw plainly that Malcolm could no more hope to escape under the present conditions than the poor creatures whose whereabouts had just become known. This was precisely the blend of intrigue and adventure that appealed to his latent intelligence.

"I wringing through a mesh of difficulties he was like a snake, and the proposal he now made was certainly bold enough to commend itself to the most daring.

He drew Malcolm and the trembling ryot apart.

"Listen, friend, lest if that fog sees them again. He will harry thee and thy wife and all thy family day and night, having helped us, and it will be vain to protest that thou hast no mind in the matter, for behold, thou dost not lift a finger when I threatened him with the pistol."

"Protector of the poor, what was one to do, winned the ryot.

"I am not thy protector. 'Tis the sahib here to whom thou must look for counsel. Attend, now, and I will show thee a road to safety. I will lead thee to know to-night of those men."

"I have not seen them before, for I come this way by sedition."

"Tis well. The sahib shall sit in the ekka, with the curtains drawn, while I give it out that I go with my wife to take the zemindar's share. A group of men, which purpose the worthy zemindar will presently hand us a written order, as he hath ink, paper, and pen in the ekka. Thou shalt come drive and come with us on the boat, and when we are in mid-stream, and the sahib appears at my signal, see that thou hast a cudgel handy."

"You will not find a budgerow on this side. Perchance they will ferry you across at the village in a small boat, and you will have better accommodation at Fatehpore."

"Are we opposite Fatehpore?"

"Yes—sahib."

All the while the zemindar's eyes were looking furtively from Frank to the lower ground. It was a puzzling situation. The man was not actively hostile, yet his manner betrayed an undercurrent of fear and dislike that could only be accounted for by the downfall of British power in the locality. Thinking Chumra could deal better with his fellow-countryman, Malcolm called him, breaking in on a lively conversation that was going on between his servant and the ekka-driver.

Chumra, who had told the ryot to dismount, came at once.

"Our friend here says that things are quiet on the river, but there are no boats to be had," explained Malcolm. Chumra grinned, and the zemindar regarded him with troubled eyes.

"Excellent," he said. "We shall go to his house and wait while his servants look for a boat."

This suggestion seemed to please the other man.

"I will go on in front in the ekka," he agreed, "and lead you to my dwelling speedily."

Chumra edged nearer his master while their new acquaintance walked towards the ekka.

"Jump down and tie both when I give the word, sahib," he whispered. "There has been murder done here."

Malcolm understood instantly that his native companion had found the ekka-driver had fooled the man by pretending to be a zemindar, but Malcolm liked the looks of the man as little as he liked the looks of his master, and he preferred to trust to Chumra's nimble wit rather than the stupid contriving of a peasant, no matter how willing the latter might be to help.

The zemindar, having written, was gagged again, and the pair were left to that torture of silence and doubt they were not scrupled to indulge in at this remarkable change of tone. The flabby, well-fed rasal squealed like a pig when the point of the sword touched his skin, and the Englishman was forced to recoil fiercely to hide a smile.

"Speak, sag," he said. "What of Fatehpore and Allahabad, and be sure thou has spent thy last hour if thou liest."

"Sahib, God knoweth that I can tell thee naught of Allahabad, but the but-masher at Fatehpore is a rascal, and Tucker-sahib is dead. They killed him, I have heard, after a fight on the roof of the chutcheri."

Malcolm guessed rightly that Mr. Tucker was the judge at that station, but he must not betray ignorance.

"And the others—who did they do?"

others. When he dismounted a scabbard clattered at his heels. Malcolm now had the pistol between his knees as he sat behind the tightly drawn curtains of the vehicle.

"Mohammed Rasul!" shouted the rascal, loudly. "Where is Mohammed Rasul? I must discourse with him instantly."

A man came running.

"Oho, sirdar," he cried. "Behold, I come!"

A note was thrust into the runner's hands.

"Read, and quickly," was the imperious order. "I have affairs at Fatehpore and here here long. Is there a boat to be hired?"

"A budgerow is even now approaching, sirdar. There is some disposition to be made of two Ferangi women. Read that which Hossien Beg hath written. Read that which Hossien Beg hath written. Read that which Hossien Beg hath written."

Perhaps Mohammed Rasul wondered why his employer wrote in such imploring strain that he was to obey the wishes of "Ali Khan," sirdar, and bestow him and his belongings, together with the two prisoners, on board a boat for Fatehpore with the utmost speed. However that may be, he lost no time. A budgerow was warped close to the ghat, her contents, mostly European furs, Malcolm could see through a fold in the curtain, were promptly unladen, and preparations made for the return journey. Malcolm could see through a fold in the curtain, were promptly unladen, and preparations made for the return journey. Malcolm could see through a fold in the curtain, were promptly unladen, and preparations made for the return journey.

Then two pallid girls, only half clothed, their eyes red with weeping and their cheeks haggard with fright, were led from the go-down. "Ali Khan" was about to guide the ekka along the rough gangway when Mohammed Rasul intervened.

"My master says naught concerning the ekka and pony," said he. "He hath desired Gopi, and this driver is unknown to me. Who will bring them back when they have served your needs, sirdar?"

"I will attend to that," replied Chumra, gruffly, and Hossien Beg's fustian faded to be content with the undertaking.

But fate, which had certainly favored Malcolm and his native comrade thus far, played them what looked like a jade's trick at the very moment when success was within their grasp. The ekka pony, frightened by the lap of the swift-flowing water against the steps beneath, shied, backed, and strove to reach the shore. The alarmed ryot, could prevent the brute from turning. A wheel slipped off the staging, the narrow vehicle toppled over, and Malcolm and the expectant crew, booted and spurred British officer of cavalry sprawling on the ghat instead of the well-mannered Mohammedan.

Malcolm was on his feet in a second.

"Come, Chumra," he cried, and he leaped on the board the budgerow. He saw one of the crew take an extra turn of a rope round a cat-head, and fired a shot at him. The fellow tumbled overboard, and his mates followed. Chumra, assisted by the ryot, who elected at this juncture to risk his life in his master's cause, rushed to the aid of the boat. The dazed girls helped, even they knew that an Englishman was fighting in their behalf.

To add to the excitement on shore Malcolm fired the second pistol at the men nearest to the boat, which was now beginning to slip away with the current. Then he rushed to the helm, unlashed it, and turned the boat's head toward the channel where the budgerow lay. He was aided by the girls, hauled at the heavy mat sail.

Having heeled the helm again in order to keep the budgerow on the starboard tack, Malcolm was about to lend a hand, despite his wound, when a spurt of firing from the bank checked him. He saw that he had been neither gun nor pistol in the hands of the loungers on the ghat, and the coolies were certainly unarmed.

Chumra, who had been waiting for the budgerow to be hauled up, saw that the boat had been sent to the wrong place, and he directed the target practice of a second group of ill-used horses behind them showed that they had ridden hard and fast, so the accident, which nearly led to his death, was really helped to save him and his companions, else the fusillade to which they were now subjected must have taken place while the boat was still in the wharf.

"Lie flat on the deck," he shouted in English, and repeated the words in Hindustani. He flung himself down by Chumra's side.

"Haul away!" he gasped. "We will soon be out of range."

That was the cunningest sail he had ever seen, and he slowly climbed the mast, and bullets cut through the matting or were deflected by the stout woodwork, the latest arsenal of Malcolm's fortunes thrust herself with ever-increasing speed into the ample breast of Mother Ganges. Soon the firing ceased. Malcolm raised his head. The excited mob on the shore was already a horde of Lilliputians, and the placid swish of the river around the rony craft told him that he was actually free, and on his way to Allahabad once more.

### CHAPTER XII.

The Swing of the Pendulum.

Malcolm's first measured thought was to keep the budgerow on the starboard tack, Malcolm was about to lend a hand, despite his wound, when a spurt of firing from the bank checked him. He saw that he had been neither gun nor pistol in the hands of the loungers on the ghat, and the coolies were certainly unarmed.

Chumra, who had been waiting for the budgerow to be hauled up, saw that the boat had been sent to the wrong place, and he directed the target practice of a second group of ill-used horses behind them showed that they had ridden hard and fast, so the accident, which nearly led to his death, was really helped to save him and his companions, else the fusillade to which they were now subjected must have taken place while the boat was still in the wharf.

"Lie flat on the deck," he shouted in English, and repeated the words in Hindustani. He flung himself down by Chumra's side.

"Haul away!" he gasped. "We will soon be out of range."

That was the cunningest sail he had ever seen, and he slowly climbed the mast, and bullets cut through the matting or were deflected by the stout woodwork, the latest arsenal of Malcolm's fortunes thrust herself with ever-increasing speed into the ample breast of Mother Ganges. Soon the firing ceased. Malcolm raised his head. The excited mob on the shore was already a horde of Lilliputians, and the placid swish of the river around the rony craft told him that he was actually free, and on his way to Allahabad once more.

CHAPTER XII.

The Swing of the Pendulum.

Malcolm's first measured thought was to keep the budgerow on the starboard tack, Malcolm was about to lend a hand, despite his wound, when a spurt of firing from the bank checked him. He saw that he had been neither gun nor pistol in the hands of the loungers on the ghat, and the coolies were certainly unarmed.

Chumra, who had been waiting for the budgerow to be hauled up, saw that the boat had been sent to the wrong place, and he directed the target practice of a second group of ill-used horses behind them showed that they had ridden hard and fast, so the accident, which nearly led to his death, was really helped to save him and his companions, else the fusillade to which they were now subjected must have taken place while the boat was still in the wharf.

"Lie flat on the deck," he shouted in English, and repeated the words in Hindustani. He flung himself down by Chumra's side.

"Haul away!" he gasped. "We will soon be out of range."

That was the cunningest sail he had ever seen, and he slowly climbed the mast, and bullets cut through the matting or were deflected by the stout woodwork, the latest arsenal of Malcolm's fortunes thrust herself with ever-increasing speed into the ample breast of Mother Ganges. Soon the firing ceased. Malcolm raised his head. The excited mob on the shore was already a horde of Lilliputians, and the placid swish of the river around the rony craft told him that he was actually free, and on his way to Allahabad once more.

However, to cross was the only way, and the only way is ever the best way. Having once made up his mind, Frank coolly reviewed the situation. Food was the first essential. The boat itself, having been used for carrying hay, contained some sweeping, while the feed the horses, and he set the ryot to work on gathering the odds and ends of forage. A brief search brought to light a quantity of rice, and a couple of peas. He divided the store into five portions, and set a good example to the others by compelling himself to eat his share of the cooked food at once, while the peas went into his pockets to be crushed or chewed at leisure.

Chumra kept the budgerow steadily on her course, and ere many minutes elapsed it was plain to be seen that the rebels were alive to the tactics of this quarry. The budgerow was swept and the riders on the eastern bank eased their pace to a walk. This space between pursuers and pursued began to decrease. At the end of the first mile he was seriously concerned at finding that the mutineers were gaining on him in an inconspicuous manner. The boat was then suddenly in mid-stream, while the enemy kept close to the shore, and they were certainly traveling half as fast again, a difference in speed that was the use of the ears hardly accounted for.

He kept on grimly, however, never deviating from his perspective, which was the swampy ground on the outer curve of the bend. It was not until nearly another mile was covered and the mutineers were almost abreast in the true line of the river, that he knew why they were making such heart-breaking progress as compared with his own craft. The Ganges, after the vagrom fender of all giant rivers, was cutting a new bed through the sunken reefs towards the low-lying marsh. At the wide elbow there were really two channels and he was now sailing along the comparatively motionless water between them!

Side by side with this terrifying discovery was the certain fact that his awkwardly built craft would gain little by maneuvering. There was a new danger, too. At any instant she might run ashore the shoal that was surely forming in the center of the river. At all costs that must be avoided.

With a smile and a few confident words to the girls, he went ast, took the helm from Chumra and bade him help the ryot in putting the port sweep. The effect was quickly apparent. The budgerow ran into the second channel, but she allowed her dangerous rivals to approach so close that the natives opened fire with long range dropping shots.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls were seated in the well amply decked fore and aft.

It was now a matter of minutes ere the rebel marksmen would render the deck uninhabitable. To beach the boat, and the horses, and get the young ladies ashore in safety, had become an absolute impossibility. Then it occurred to Frank that the budgerow was surrounded by good horses, and the girls