

Buehler to the Blind

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of 55, as before remarked looking not unlike Samuel Gompers, gave them all a truly artistic rendering.

Not big in virtuosity, not astounding in poetics, nowhere dazzling or extraordinarily captivating, Mr. Buehler's second programme in Toronto was still a very cordial, clean performance. This man is another and sincere enthusiast of the sensible deutic type. He lives in his music, does not pose as a great solo virtuoso, but does prove

himself a most eminent master of ensemble playing in which he has done a deal of big pioneer work. Mr. Buehler is, above all things, a teacher. His solo work is an exposition of the human side of good piano playing as a phase of art. His choice of works for his first one-man appearance in Toronto was designedly from standard masterpieces. And they were done with a delightful mixture of sincerity, elderly poise and mellow experience. Mr. Buehler has no tinge of the grand manner whose decadence was noted by Huneker in a recent issue of the

Courier. He played the Sonata Appassionata without a touch of solemn abandon. This is the work which Huneker declared that D'Albert, the nominal Scot, played better than any other artist he had ever heard do it. Mr. Buehler's rendering was a mezzotint of highly agreeable quality; the sort of interpretation that would please a number of music students much more than it would dazzle a mob. That is why the blind folk enjoyed it so. Buehler's playing is the impersonal sort that makes no demand on the sight. In the Brahms' Waltzes—

10—he was peculiarly at home. Brahms, however, was not a supreme waltz maker. Those ten were quite enough to demonstrate that he knew how if anybody really wanted him to do it. The Chopin Scherzo in B flat minor is an old favourite of Paderewski and of Rubinstein; as Buehler gave it a modified form of passion, done with true regard for all the quiet graces of interpretation. In the climaxes he left somewhat to the imagination, but gave a lovely legato rendering of the parts where staccato is not noted in the score.

KING—OF THE KHYBER RIFLES

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN King awoke he lay on a comfortable bed in a cave he had never yet seen, but there was no trace of Yasmini, nor of the men who must have carried him to it. Barbaric splendour and splendour that was not by any means barbaric lay all about—tiger skins, ivory-legged chairs, graven bronze vases, and a yak-hair shawl worth a rajah's ransom.

The cave was spacious and not gloomy, for there was a wide door, apparently unguarded, and another square opening cut in the rock to serve as a window. Through both openings light streamed in like taut threads of Yasmini's golden hair—strings of a golden zither, on which his own heart's promptings played a tune.

He had no idea how long he had slept, but judged from memory of his former need of sleep and recognition of his present freshness—and from the fact that it was a morning sun that shone through the openings—that he must have slept the clock round.

It did not matter. He knew it did not matter in the least. He had no more plan than a mathematician has who starts to solve a problem, knowing that twice two is four in infinite combination. Like the mathematician, he knew that he must win.

From Yasmini's point of view he had no ground to stand on, unless he should choose to come and stand on hers. She had men, ammunition, information. He had what he stood in, and his only information had been poured into his ears for her ends.

Yet his heart sang inside him now; and he trusted it because that singing never had deceived him. He did not believe she would have left him alone at that stage of affairs unless through over-confidence. It is one of the absolute laws that over-confidence begets blindness and mistakes.

She had staked on what seemed to her the certainty of India's rising at the first signal of a holy war. She believed from close acquaintance that India was utterly disloyal, having made a study of disloyalty. And having read history she knew that many a conqueror has staked on such cards as hers, to win for lack of a better man to take the other side.

But King had studied loyalty all his life, and he knew that besides being the home of money-lenders, thugs and murderers, India is the very motherland of chivalry; that besides sedition she breeds gentlemen with stout hearts; that in addition to what one Christian Book calls "whoring after strange gods" India strives after purity.

Not that he was analyzing thoughts just then. He was listening to the still small voice that told him half of his purpose was accomplished. He had probed Khinjan Caves, and knew the whole purpose for which the lawless thousands had been gathering

THE hero of this story, Captain King, was the only officer of his set in India who was not "placed" shortly after the war began. While his brother officers were on their way to the front, or on garrison duty in India, King was apparently unattached and loafing. But—

The General in charge of the forces in India had uses for King. He had secret information of a great plot being prepared among the hill-tribes up through the Khyber Pass. And one of his helpers was the famous Yasmini, whose entrancing beauty is the centre of a secret cult to whom her lightest wish is law. King's orders, therefore, are to follow Yasmini.

Ismail, one of "Her" men, is King's guide. After meeting her lieutenant, Rewa Gunga, he departs from Delhi for the Hills with Ismail and thirty of Yasmini's humbler followers whom he rescues from jail. On the way through Rewa Gunga disappears; and King, to ensure safety, dressed himself as a native hakim, one of the men who practise modern medicine without license. In this disguise he takes the name of Kurram, and goes on to the Khinjan Caves to find Yasmini.

King has learned, through a former failure to reach the Caves that the price of entrance is the life of an English officer, taken in the teeth of written law. Therefore he gains permission to enter by saying that he has slain Captain King. Ismail is his witness; and when they finally appear before Yasmini and her followers, it is Ismail who produces as proof the actual head of an Englishman, and Yasmini decrees that King shall live.

Then she takes him into her confidence, explaining that for long she has searched for a man strong enough to rule with her; but though she has tried many, among them a German prince, all have failed her tests. King, she thinks, is the one who will fulfil her hopes; so she tells him the many war secrets she has learned, and which he has risked his life to find out.

By TALBOT MUNDY

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and were gathering still. Remained, to thwart that purpose. And he had no more doubt of there being a means to thwart it than a mathematician has of the result of two times two, applied.

Like a mathematician, he did not waste time and confuse issues by casting too far ahead, but began to devote himself steadily to the figures nearest. Knots are not untied by wholesale, but are conquered strand by strand. He began at the beginning, where he stood.

He became conscious of human life near by and tiptoed to the door to look. A six-foot ledge of smooth rock ended just at the door and sloped in the other direction sharply downward toward another opening in the cliff side, three or four hundred yards away and two hundred feet lower down.

Behind him in a corner at the back of the cave was a narrow fissure, hung with a leather curtain, that was doubtless the door into Khinjan's heart; but the only way to the outer air was along that ledge above a dizzying precipice, so high that the huge waterfall looked like a little stream below. He was in a very eagle's eyrie; the upper rim of Khinjan's gorge seemed not more than a quarter of a mile above him.

Round the corner, ten feet from the entrance, stood a guard, armed to the teeth, with a rifle, a sword, two pistols and a long curved Khyber knife stuck handy in his girdle. He spoke to the man and received no answer. He picked up a splinter of rock and threw it. The fellow looked at him then. He spoke again. The man transferred his rifle to the other hand and made signs with his free fingers. King looked puzzled. The man opened his mouth and showed that his tongue was missing. He had been made dumb, as pegs are made to fit square holes. King went in again, to wait on events and shudder.

NOR did he have long to wait. There came a sound of grunting, up the rock path. Then footsteps. Then a hoarse voice, growling orders. He went out again to look, and beheld a little procession of women, led by a man. The man was armed, but the women were burdened with his own belongings—the medicine chest—his saddle and bridle—his unrifled mule-pack—and, wonder of wonders! the presents Khinjan's sick had given him, including money and weapons. They came past the dumb man on guard and laid them all at King's feet just inside the cave.

He smiled, with that genial, face-transforming smile of his that so often melted a road for him through sullen crowds. But the man in charge of the women did not grin. He was suffering. He growled at the women, and they went away like obedient animals, to sit half-way down the ledge and await further orders. He himself made as if to follow them, and the dumb man on guard did not pay much attention; he let women and man pass behind him, stepping one pace forward toward the edge to make more room. That was his last entirely voluntary act in this world.

With a suddenness that disarmed all opposition the other humped himself against the wall and bucked into the dumb man's back, sending him, weapons and all, hurtling over the precipice. With a wild effort to recover, and avenge himself, and do his duty, the victim fired his rifle, that was ready cocked. The bullet struck the rock above and either split or shook a great fragment loose, that hurtled down after him, so that he and the stone made a race of it for the waterfall and the caverns into which the water tumbled thousands of feet away. The other ruffian spat after him, and then walked back to where King stood.

"Now heal me my boils!" he said,

grinning at last, doubtless from pleasure at the prospect. He was the same man who had stood on guard at the "guest-cave" when Ismail led King out to see the Cavern of Earth's Drink.

The temptation was to fling the brute after his victim. The temptation always is to do the wrong thing—to cap wrath with wrath, injustice with vengeance. That way wars begin and are never ended. King beckoned him into the cave, and bent over the chest of medical supplies. Then, finding the light better for his purpose at the entrance, he called the man back and made him sit down on the box.

The business of lancing boils is not especially edifying in itself; but that particular minor operation probably saved India. But for hope of it the man with boils would never have stood two turns on guard hand running and let the relief sleep on; so he would not have been on duty when the message came to carry King's belongings to his new cave of residence. There would have been no object in killing the dumb man, and so there would have been an expert with a loaded rifle to keep Muhammad Anim lurking down the trail.

Muhammad Anim came—like the devil, to scotch King's faith. He had followed the women with the loads. He stood now, like a big bear on a mountain track, swaying his head from side to side six feet away from King, watching the boils succumb to treatment. He grunted when the job was finished, and King jumped, nearly driving the lance into a new place in his patient's neck.

"Let him go!" growled Muhammad Anim. "Go, thou! Stand guard over the women until I come!"

The mullah turned a rifle this way and that in his paws, like a great bear dancing. The Mahsudi with a sore neck could have shot him, perhaps, but there are men with whom only the bravest dare try conclusions. In cold gray dawn it would have needed a martinet to make a firing squad do execution on Muhammad Anim, even with his hands tied and his back against a wall.

"What meant thy message?" growled the mullah. "There came a Pathan to me in the Cavern of Earth's Drink with word that yonder sits a hakim. What of it?"

KING had almost forgotten the message he had sent to Muhammad Anim in the Cavern of Earth's Drink. But that was not why his eyes looked past the mullah's now, nor why he did not answer. The mullah did not look around, for he knew what was happening.

The very Orakzai Pathan who had sat next King in the Cavern of Earth's Drink, and who had carried the message for him, was creeping up behind the women and already had his rifle levelled at the man with boils.

"Aye!" said the mullah, watching