course. If she sigh, you sigh; if she look at you, you look at her; if she squeeze hand, you squeeze hand; if she kiss, you kiss."

"I am hanged if I do, Jeekl."

"Must, Major; must or never get out of Asika-land. What all that matter, he added, confidentially "Miss Barbara not know, Jeeki doesn't split, also quite necessary in situation, as you can't be married till that Mungana dead. All matter business, Major, make time pass pleasant as well. Asika jolly enough if you stroke her fur right way, but if you put nor back up—oh Lor' No trouble, sit and smile and say, 'Oh, ducky, how beautiful you are!' That not hurt anybody."

In spite of himself Alan burst out laughing.

"But how about the Mungana?" he asked.

"Mungana, he got take that with rest. Also I try make friends with that poor devil. Tell him it all my eye. Perhaps he believe me—not sure. If he me, I no believe him. Mungana," he added oracularly, "Mungana take his chance. What matter? In two months' time he nothing but gold figure, No. 2,403, just like one mummy in museum. Now I try catch my Ma. I hear she live somewhere. They tell me she used to keep lodging-house for Bonsa pilgrim, bnt steal grub, say it cat, all that sort of thing, and get run in as thief. Afraid my Ma come down very much in world, not society lady now, shut up long way off in suburb. Still, p'rape she useful, so best send her message by p'liceman, say how much I love her ;say her dear little Jeeki turn up again just to see her sweet face. Only don't know if she swallow that, or if they let her out of prison unless I pay for all she prig."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Feast of Little Bonsa.

It was the night of full moon, and of the great feast of the return of Little Bonsa. Alan sat in his chamber waiting to be summoned to take part in the ceremony and listening the while to that Wow! Wow! Wow! of the death drums, whereof Jeeki had once spoken in England, which could be clearly heard even above the perpetual boom of the cataract tumbling down its cliff behind the town. But now he had recovered from the fatigues of his journey, and his health was good, but the same could not be said of his spirits, for never in his life had he felt more downhearted, not even when he was sickening for the blackwater fever, or lay in bondage in the city, expecting every morning to wake up and find his reputation blasted. He was a prisoner in this dreadful, gloomy place, where he must live like a second Man in the Iron Mask, without recreation or exercise other than he could find in the walled garden where grew the black cedar trees, and so far as he could see, a prisoner without hope of escape.

Moreover, he could no longer disguise from himself the truth; Jeeki was right. The Asika had fallen in love with him, or at any rate made up her mind that he should be her next husband. He hated the sight of the woman and her sinuous, evil beauty, but to be free of her was impossible, and to offend her, death. All day long she kept him about her, and from his sleep he would wake up, and, as on the night of his arrival, distinguish her leaning over him, studying his face by the light of the faintly-burning lamps, as a snake studies the bird it is about to strike. He dared not stir or give the slightest sign that he saw her. Nor, indeed, did he always see her, for he kept his eyes closely shut. But even in his heaviest slumber some warning sense told him of her presence, and then above Jeeki's snores (for on these occasions Jeeki always snored his loudest) he would hear a soft footfall, as, cat-like, she crept towards him, or the sweep of her spangled robe, or the tinkling of the scales of her golden breastplate. For a long while she would stand there, examining him greedily, and even the few little belongings that remained to him, and then with a hungry sigh glide away and vanish in the shadows. How she came or how she vanished Alan could not discover. Clearly she did not use the door, and he could find no other entrance to the room. Indeed, at times he thought that he must be suffering from delusion, but Jeeki shook his great head and did not agree with him.

"She there right enough," he said. "She walk over me as though I log, and I smell stuff she put on her hair, but I think she come and go by magic. Asika do that if she please."

"Then I wish she would teach me the secret, Jeeki. I should soon be out of Asikaland, I can tell you."

All that day Alan had been in her company, answering questions about his past, the lands that he had visited, and especially the women that he had known. He had the tact to tell her that none of these were half so beautiful as she was, which was true in a sense, and pleased her very much, for in whatever respects she differed from them, in common with the rest of her sex, she loved a compliment. Emboldened by her good humor, he had ventured to suggest that, being rested and having restored Little Bonsa, he would be glad to return with her gifts to his own country. Next instant he was sorry, for as soon as she understood his meaning she grew almost white with rage.

"What!" she said, "you desire to leave me? Know, Vernoon, that I will see you dead first, and myself also, for then we shall be born again together, and can never more be separated."

Nor was this all, for she burst into weeping, threw her arms about him, drew him to her, kissed him on the forehead, and then thrust him away, saying:

"Curses on this priests' law that makes us wait so long, and curses on that Mungana, who will not die and may not be killed. Well, he shall pay for it, and within two months, Vernoon, oh! within two months——" and she stretched out her arms with a gesture of infinite passion, then turned and left him.

"My!" said Jeeki afterwards, for he had watched all this scene open-mouthed, "my! but she mean business. Mrs. Jeeki never kiss me like that, nor any other female either. She dead nuts on you, Major. Very great compliment! 'Spect when you Mungana, she keep you alive a long time, four or five years perhaps, if no other white man come this way. Pity you can't take it on a bit, Major," he added insidiously, "because then she grow careless and make you chief, and we get chance scoop out that gold house and bolt with bally lot."

New Way to Be Well

HEALTHFULNESS OF ORANGES.

The one lesson which most people never seem to learn is, how to guard their health.

We have been eating oranges since time immemorial, yet how many of us know that orange juice contains a medicinal principle which has a marked action on the stomach, bowels, kidneys and skin. Some physicians go so far as to say that they can cure the average case of indigestion, constipation, billiousness and dark skin with orange juice and proper diet.

This can be easily proved to the satisfaction of any sufferer. Take the juice of one or two oranges every morning before breakfast, take one or two "Fruit-a-tives" every night at bedtime, exercise a reasonable care in diet, and the proof will be found in health.

The cure will be greatly assisted and hastened by taking "Fruit-a-tives" in conjunction with the orange juice. "Fruit-a-tives" are fruit juices in which the medicinal principle of oranges, apples, figs and prunes are many times increased by the special way in which they are combined. Then tonics are added and the whole made into tablets. "Fruit-a-tives" may be obtained at all dealers, or will be sent postpaid on receipt of price 50c a box—6 for $2.50. "Fruit-a-tives," Limited, Ottawa.

Miss Barbara sensible woman. She see all that cash she not mind, she say, 'Bravo, old boy, quite right spoil Lady Potiphar in land of bondage, but Jeeki must have ten per cent., because he show you how do it.'"

Alan was so depressed, and, indeed, terrified by this demonstration on the part of his fearful hostess, that he could neither laugh at Jeeki nor swear at him. He only sat still and groaned, feeling that bad as things were they were bound to become worse.

Above the perpetual booming of the death drums rose a sound of wild music. The door burst open, and through it came a number of priests, their naked bodies hideously painted, and on their heads the most devilish-looking masks. Some of them clashed cymbals, some blew horns, and some beat little drums, all to time, which was given to them by a bandmaster with a golden rod. In front of them, with painted face and decked in his gorgeous apparel, walked the Mungana himself.

"They come to take us to Bonsa worship," exclaimed Jeeki. "Cheer up, Major, very exciting business, no go to sleep there, as in English church. See god all time and no sermon."

Alan, who wore a linen robe over the remains of his European garments, and whose mask was already on his head, rose listlessly and bowed to the gorgeous Mungana, who, poor man, answered him with a stare of hate, knowing that this wanderer was destined to fill his place. Then they started, Jeeki, accompanying them, and walked a long way through various halls and passages, bearing first to the left and then to the right again, till suddenly through some side door they emerged upon a marvellous scene. The first impressions that reached Alan's mind were those of a long stretch of water, very black and still, and not more than eighty feet in width. On the hither edge of this canal, seated upon a raise dais is in the midst of a great open space of polished rock, was the Asika, or so he gathered from her gold breastplate and sparkling garments, for her fierce and beautiful features were hid beneath an object familiar enough to him, the yellow, crystal-eyed mask of Little Bonsa. Arranged in companies about and behind her were hundreds of people, male and female, clad in hideous costumes to resemble demons, with masks to match. Some of these masks were semi-human, and some of them bore a likeness to the heads of animals, and had horns on them, while their wearers were adorned with skins and tails. To describe them in their infinite variety would be impossible; indeed, the recollection that Alan carried away was one of a mediaeval hell, as it is occasionally to be found portrayed upon "Doom pictures" in old churches.

On the further side of the water the entire Asiki people seemed to be gathered; at least, there were thousands of them seated upon a rising rock slope as in an amphitheatre, clad only in the ordinary costume of the West African native, and in some instances in linen cloaks. This great amphitheatre was surrounded by a high wall with gates, but in the moonlight he found it difficult to discern its exact limits.

Jeeki nudged Alan and pointed to the centre of the canal or pool. He looked and saw floating there a huge and hideous golden head, twenty times as large as life, perhaps, with great promient eyes that glared up to the sky. Its appearance was quite unlike anything else in the world, more loathsome, more horrible; man, fish and animal, all seemed to have their part in it, human hair and teeth, fish-like eyes, and stout, bestial expression.

"Big Bonsa," whispered Jeeki. "Just the same as when I sweet little boy. He live there for thousand years."

Preceded by the Mungana, and followed by Jeeki and the priests, the band bringing up the rear, Alan was marched down a lane left open for him till he came to some steps leading to the dais, upon which, in addition to that occupied by the Asika, stood two empty chairs. These steps the Mungana motioned to him to mount, but when Jeeki tried to follow him he turned and struck him contemptuously in the face. At once the Asika, who was watching Vernon's approach through the eye-holes in the Little Bonsa mask, said fiercely;

"Who bade you strike the servant of my guest, O Mungana? Let him also, that he may stand behind us and interpret."

Her wretched husband, who knew that this public slight was put upon him purposely, but did not dare to protest against it, bowed his head. Then all three of them climbed to the dais, the priests and the musicians remaining below.

"Welcome, Vernoon," said the Asika through the lips of the mask, which to Alan, notwithstanding the dreadful cruelty of its expression, looked less hateful than the lovely, tigerish face it hid. "Welcome, and be seated here on my left hand, since on my right you may not sit—as yet."

He bowed and took the chair to which she pointed, while her husband placed himself in the other chair upon her right, and Jeeki stood behind, his great shape towering above them all.

"This is a festival of my people," Vernoon," she went on, "such a festival as has not been seen for years, celebrated because Little Bonsa has come back to them."

"What is to happen?" he asked uneasily. "I have told you, Lady, that blood is orunda to me. I must not witness it."

"I know, be not afraid," she answered. "Sacrifice there must be, since it is the custom and we may not defraud the gods, but you shall not see the deed. Judge from this, Vernoon how greatly I desire to please you."

Now Alan, looking about him, saw that immediately beneath the dais and between them and the edge of the water, were gathered his cannibal friends, the Ogula and Fahni, their chief, who had rowed him to Asikiland, and with them the messengers whom they had sent on ahead. Also he saw that their arms were tied behind them, and that they were guarded by men dressed like devils and armed with spears.

"Ask Fahni why he and his people are bound, Jeeki," said Alan, "and why they have not returned to their own country."

Jeeki obeyed, putting the question in the Ogula language, whereon the poor men turned and began to implore Alan to save their lives, Fahni adding that he had been told they were to be killed that night.

"Why are these men to be slain?" asked Alan of the Asika.

"Because I have learned that they attacked you in their own country, Vernoon," she answered, "and would have killed you had it not been for Little Bonsa; it is therefore right that they should die as an offering to you."

"I refuse the offering since afterwards they dealt well with me. Set them free, and let them return to their own land, Asika."

"That cannot be," she replied coldly. "Here they are and here they remain. Still, their lives are yours to take or to spare, so keep them as your servants if you will," and bending down she issued a command which was instantly obeyed, for the men dressed like devils cut the bonds of the Ogula, and brought them round to the back of the dais, where they stood blessing Alan loudly in their own tongue.

Then the ceremonies began with a kind of infernal ballet. On the smooth space between them and the water's edge appeared male and female bands of dancers who emerged from the shadows. For the most part they were dressed up like animals, and imitated the cries of the beasts that they represented, although some of them wore no clothing whatsoever. To the sound of wild music of horns and drums these creatures danced a kind of insane quadrille, which seemed to suggest everything that is cruel and vile upon the earth. They danced and danced there in the moonlight till the madness spread from them to the thousands who were gathered unon the further side of the water, fo presently all of these began to dance also. Nor did it stop there, since at length the Asika rose from her chair upon the dais, and joined in the performance with the Mungana, her husband. Even Jeeki began to prance and shout behind, so that at last Alan and the Ogula alone remained still and silent in the midst of a scene and a noise which might have been that of hell let loose.

Leaving go of her husband, the Asika bounded up to Alan, and tried to drag him from his chair, thrusting her gold mask against his mask. He refused to move, and after a while she left him and returned to the Mungana. Louder and louder brayed the music and beat the drums, wilder and wilder grew the shrieks. Individuals fell exhausted, and were thrown into the water, where they sank or floated away on the slow moving stream, as part of some inexplicable play that was being enacted.

Then suddenly the Asika stood still and threw up her arms, whereon all the thousands present stood still also. Again she threw up her arms, and they fell upon their faces and lay as though they were dead. A third time she threw up her arms, and they rose and remained so silent that the only sound to be heard was that of their thick breathing. Then she spoke, or rather screamed, saying:

"Little Bonsa has come back again, bringing with her the white man whom she led away," and all the audience answered, "Little Bonsa has come back again. Once more we see her on the head of the Asika as our fathers did. Give her a sacrifice. Give her the white man."

"Nay," she screamed back, "the white man is mine. I name him as the next Mungana."

"Who!" roared the audience, "Oho! she names him as the next Mungana. Good-bye, old Mungana! Greeting, new Mungana! When will be the marriage feast?"

"Tell us, Mungana, tell us," cried the Asika, patting her wretched husband on the cheek. "Tell us when you mean to die, as you are bound to do."

"On the night of the second full moon from now," he answered, with a terrible groan that seemed to be wrung out of his very heart, "on that night my soul shall be eaten up and my day done. But till then I am lord of the Asika, and if she forgets it death shall be her portion, according to the ancient law."

"Yes, yes," shouted the multitude, "death shall be her portion, and her lover we will sacrifice. Die in honor, Mungana, as all those died that went before you."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Alan to himself, "I am safe from that witch for the next two months," and through the eye-holes of his mask he contemplated her with loathing and alarm.

At the moment, indeed, she was not a pleasing spectacle, for in the heat and excitement of her mad dance she had cast off her gold breast-plate or stomacher, leaving herself naked except for her kirtle and the thin spangled robe upon her shoulders, over which streamed her black, disordered hair. Contrasting strangely in the silver moonlight with her glistening copper-colored body, the mask of Little Bonsa on her head glared round with its fixed crystal eyes and fiendish smile as she turned her long neck from side to side. Seen thus, she scarcely looked human, and Alan's heart was filled with pity for the poor bedizened wretch she named her husband, who had just been forced to announce the date of his own suicide.

Soon, however, he forgot it, for a new act in the drama had begun. Two

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priests, clad in horns and tails, leapt on to the dais, and at a signal unlaced the mask of Little Bonsa. Now the Asika lifted it from her streaming face and held it on high, then she lowered it to the level of her breast, and holding it in both hands walked to the edge of the dais, whereon priests disguised as fiends began to leap at it, striving to reach it with their fingers and snatch it from her grasp. One by one they leapt with the most desperate energy, each man being allowed to make three attempts, and Alan noted that this novel jumping competition was watched with the deepest interest by all the audience, at the time he knew not why.

The first two were evidently elderly men, who failed to come anywhere near the mark. Their failure was received with shouts of derision. They sank exhausted to the ground, and from the motion of his body Alan could see that one of them was weeping, while the other remained sullenly silent. Then a younger man advanced, and at the third try almost grasped the fetish. Indeed, he would have grasped it had he not met with foul play, for the Asiki, seeing that he was about to succeed, lifted it an inch or two, so that he also missed, and with a groan joined the band of the defeated. Next appeared a fourth priest even more horribly arrayed than those who went before him, but Alan noticed that his mask was of the lightest, and that his garments consisted chiefly of paint, the main idea of his make-up being that of a skeleton. He was a thin, active fellow, and all the watching thousands greeted him with a shout. For a few seconds he stood back gazing at the mask as a wolf might at an unapproachable bone. Then suddenly he ran forward and sprang into the air. Such an amazing jump Alan had never seen before. So high was it, indeed, that his head came level with that of the fetish, which he snatched with both hands, tearing it from the Asika's grasp. Coming to the ground again with a thud, he began to caper to and fro, kissing the mask, while the audience shouted.

"Little Bonsa has chosen. What fate for the fallen? Ask her, priest?"

The man stopped his capering and held the mouth of Little Bonsa to his ear, nodding from time to time as though she were speaking to him and he heard what she said. Then he passed round the dais where Alan could not see him, and presently reappeared holding Little Bonsa in his right hand and in his left a great gold cup. A silence fell upon the place. He advanced to the first man who had jumped and offered him the cup. He turned his head away, but a thousand voices thundered "Drink!" Then he took it and drank, passing it to a companion in misfortune, who in turn drank also and gave it to the third priest, he who would have snatched the mask had not the Asika lifted it out of his reach.

This man drained it to the dregs, and with an exclamation of rage dashed the empty vessel into the face of the chosen priest with such fury that the man rolled upon the ground and for a while lay there stunned. Now he who had drunk first began to spring about in a ludicrous fashion, and presently was joined in his dance by the other two. So absurd were their motions and clownlike grimaces and tumblings, for they had dragged off their masks, that roars of brutal laughter rose from the audience in which the Asika joined.

At first Alan thought that the thing was a joke and that the men had merely been made mad drunk, till catching sight of their eyes in the moonlight, he perceived that they were in great pain, and turned indignantly to remonstrate with the Asika.

"Be silent, Vernoon," she said savagely, "blood is your arunda, and I respect it. Therefore, by decree of the god, these die of poison," and again she fell to laughing at the contortions of the victims.

Alan shut his eyes, and when at length, drawn by some fearful fascination, he opened them once more it was to see that the three poor creatures had thrown themselves into the water, where they rolled over and over like wounded porpoises, till presently they sank and vanished there.

This farce, for they so considered it, being ended and the stage, so to speak, cleared, the audience having laughed itself hoarse, set itself to watch the proceedings of the newly chosen high-priest of Little Bonsa, who now had recovered from the blow dealt to him by one of the murdered men. With the help of some other priests he was engaged in binding the fetish on to a little raft of reeds. This done, he laid himself flat upon a broad plank which had been laid ready for him at the edge of the water, placing the mask in front of him, and with a few strokes of his feet, that hung over the sides of the plank, paddled himself out to the centre of the canal where the god called Big Bonsa floated, or was anchored. Having reached it he pushed the little raft off the plank into the water, and in some way that Alan could not see, made it fast to Big Bonsa, so that now the two of them floated one behind the other. Then while the people cheered, shouting out that husband and wife had come together again at last, he paddled his plank back to the water's edge, sat down, and waited.

Meanwhile, at some sign from the Asika, all the scores of priests and priestesses who were dressed as devils had fled off to right and left, and vanished, presumably to cross the water by bridges or boats that were out of sight. At any rate now they began to appear upon its further side and to wind their way singly among the thousand of the Asika people who were gathered from the rocky slope beyond in order to witness this fearsome entertainment. Alan observed that the spectators did not appear to appreciate the arrival amongst them of these priests, from whom they seemed to edge away. Indeed, many of them rose and tried to depart altogether, only to be driven back to their places by a double line of soldiers armed with spears, who now for the first time became visible, ringing in the audience. Also other soldiers, and with them bodies of men who looked like executioners, showed themselves upon the further brink of the water and then marched off, disappearing to left and right.

"What's the matter now?" Alan asked of Jeeki over his shoulder.

"All in blue funk," whispered Jeeki back, "joke gone. Get to business now. Silly fools forget that when they laugh so much. Both Bonsas very hungry, and Asika want wipe out old scores. Presently you see."

Presently Alan did see, for at some preconcerted signal the devil priests, each of them, jumped with a yell at a person near to them, gripping him or her by the hair, whereon assistants rushed in and dragged them down to the bank of the canal. Here, to the number of a hundred or more, a wailing, struggling mass, they were confined in a pen like sheep. Then a bar was lifted and one of them allowed to escape, only to find himself in a kind of gangway which ran down into shallow water. Being forced along this he came to an open space of water exactly opposite to the floating fetishes, and there was kept a while by men armed with spears. As nothing happened they lifted their spears and the man bolted up an incline and was lost among the thousands of spectators.

The next one, evidently a person of rank, was not so fortunate. Jumping into the pool off the gangway, he stood there like a sheep about to be washed, the water reaching up to his middle. Then Alan saw a terrible thing, for snuddenly the horrid golden head of Big Bonsa, towing Little Bonsa behind it, began to swim with a deliberate motion across the stream until reaching the man, it seemed to rear itself up and poke him with its snout in the chest as a turtle might do. Then it sank again into the water and slowly floated back to its station, directed by some agency or power that Alan could not discover.

At the touch of the god the man screamed like a horse in pain or terror, and soldiers leaping on him with a savage shout, dragged him up another gangway opposite to that by which he had descended, whereon, to all appearance more dead than alive, he departed into the shadows. The horns and drums set up a bray of triumph, the Asika clapped her hands approvingly, the spectators cheered, and another victim was bundled down the gangway and submitted to the judgment of the Bansas, which came at him like a hungry pike at a frog. Then followed more and more, some being chosen and some let go, till at last, growing weary, the priests directed the soldiers to drive the prisoners down in batches until the pen in the water was full as though with huddled sheep. If the horrible golden masks swam at them and touched one of their number, they were all dragged away; if these remained quiescent, they were let go.

So the thing went on, until at length Alan could bear no more of it.

"Lady," he said to the Asika, when she paused for a moment from her hand-clopping, "I am weary, I would sleep."

"What," she exclaimed, "do you wish to sleep on such a glorious night, when so many evil-doers are coming to their just doom? Well, well, go if you will; for then my promise is off me, and I can hasten this business and deal with the wicked before the people, according to our custom. Good-night to you, Vernoon, to-morrow we will meet," and she called to some priests to lead him away, and with him the Ogula cannibals whom she had given to him as servants.

Alan went thankfully enough. As he plunged into one of the passages the sound of frightful yelling reached his ears, followed by loud, triumphant shouts.

"Now you gone they kill those who Bonsa smell out," said Jeeki. "Why you no wait and see? Very interesting sight."

"Hold your tongue," answered Alan savagely. "Did you think so years ago when you were put into that pen to be butchered?"

"No, Major," replied the unabashed Jeeki, "not think at all then, too far gone. But see other people in there, and know it not you, quite different matter."

They reached their room. At the door of it Fahni and his followers were led off to some quarters near by, blessing Alan as they went because he had saved their lives.

"Jeeki," he said, when they were alone, "tell me what makes that hellish idol swim about in the water picking out some people and leaving others alone?"

"Major, I not know; no one know except head priests and Asika. Perhaps there man underneath, perhaps they pull string, or perhaps fetish alive, and he do what he like. Please don't call him names, Major, or he remember and come after us one time, and that bad job," and Jeeki shivered visibly.

"Bosh!" answered Alan, but all the same he shivered also.

"Jeeki," he asked again, "what happens to those people whom the Bonsas smell out?"

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"Case of good-bye, Major. Sometimes they chop off nut, sometimes they spiflicate in gold tub, sometimes priest-man make hole in what white doctor call diagram and shake hands with heart—all matter of taste, Major, just as Asika please. If she like victim chop off heads; if she not like him—do worse things."

More than satisfied with this information, Alan went to bed. For hour after hour that night he lay tossing and turning, haunted by the recollection of the dreadful sights that he had seen and of the horrible Asika, beautiful and half naked, glaring at him amorously through the crystal eyes of Little Bonsa. When at last he fell asleep, it was to dream that he was alone in the water with the god, which pursued him as a shark pursues a shipwrecked sailor. Never did he experience a nightmare that was half so awful. Only one thing could be more awful—the reality itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Mother of Jeeki.

"Jeeki," said Alan next morning, "I tell you again that I have had enough of this place; I want to get out."

"Yes, Major, that just what mouse say when he finish cheese in trap, but missus call him 'Pretty, pretty, come along,' and drown him all the same," and he nodded in the direction of the Asika's house.

"Jeeki, it has got to be done—do you hear me? I had rather die trying to get away than stop here on the night of the next full moon but one, I shall shoot that Asika and then shoot myself, and you must take your chance. Do you understand?"

"Understand that foolish game and poor look-out for Jeeki, Major, but can't think of any plan." Then he rubbed his big nose reflectively and added, "Fanny and his people your slaves now, 'spose we have talk with him. I tell pirests to bring him along when they come with breakfast. Leave it to me, Major."

Alan did leave it to him, with the result that after long argument the priests consented or obtained permission to produce Fahni and his followers, and a little while after the great men arrived, looking very dejected, and saluted Alan humbly. Bidding the rest of them be seated, he called Fahni to the end of the room and asked him through Jeeki if he and his men did not wish to return home.

"Indeed we do, white lord," answered the old chief, "but how can we? The Asika has a grudge against our tribe, and but for you would have killed every one of us last night. We are snared, and must stop here till we die."

"Would not your people help you if they knew, Fahni?"

"Yes, lord, I think so. But how can I tell them who doubtless believe us dead. Nor can I sent a messenger, for this place is guarded, and he would be killed at once. We came here for your sake because you had Little Bonsa, a god that is known in the east and west, in the north and the south, and because you saved me from the lion, and here, alas! we must perish."

"Jeeki," said Alan, "can you not find a messenger? Have you, who were born of this people, no friend among them all?"

Jeeki shook his white head and rolled his eyes. Then suddenly an idea struck him.

"Yes," he said, "I think one, p'r'aps. I mean my ma."

"Your ma!" said Alan, "oh! I remember. Have you heard anything more about her?"

"Yes, Major. Very old girl now, but strong on leg, so they say. Believe she glad go anywhere, because she public nuisance; they tired of her in prison, and there no workhouse here, so they want turn her out starve, which, of course, break my heart. Perhaps she take message. Some use that way. Only think she afraid go Ogula-land because they nasty cannibal and eat old woman."

When all this was translated to Fahni he assured Jeeki with eagerness that nothing would induce the Ogula people to eat his ma, moreover that for her sake they would never look carnivorously on another old woman, fat or thin.

"Well," said Jeeki, "I try again to get hold of old lady and we see. I pray priests let her out of chokey, as I sick to fall upon bosom, which quite true, only so much to think of that no time to attend to domestic relation till now."

That very afternoon, on returning to his room from walking in the dismal cedar garden, Alan's ears were greeted by a sound of shrill quarrelling. Looking up, he saw an extraordinary sight. A tall, guant, withered female, who might have been of any age between sixty and a hundred, had got Jeeki's ear in one hand, and with the other was slapping him in the face while she exclaimed:

"O, thief, whom by the curse of Bonsa I brought into the world, what have you done with my blanket? Was it not enough that you, my only son, should leave me to earn my own living? Must you also take my best blanket with you, for which reason I have been cold ever since. Where it is, thief, where is it?"

"Worn out, my mother, worn out," he answered, trying to free himself. "You forget, honorable mother, that I grow old, and you should have been dead years ago. How can you expect a blanket to last so long? Leave go of my ear, beloved mother, and I will give you another. I have travelled across the world to find you, and I want to hear news of your husband."

"My husband, thief; which husband? Do you mean your father, the one with the broken nose, who was sacrificed because you ran away with the white man whom Bonsa loved? Well, you look out for him when you get into the world of ghosts, for he said that he was going to wait for you there with the biggest stick that he could find. Why, I haven't thought of him for years, but then I have had three other husbands since his time, bad enough, but better than he was, so who would? And now Bonsa has got the lot, and I have no children alive, and they say I am to be driven out of the prison to starve next week as they won't feed me any longer, I who can still work against any one of them, and you've got my blanket, you ugly old rascal," and collapsing beneath the weight of her recited woes, the hag burst into a melancholy howl.

"Peace, my mother," said Jeeki, patting her on the head. "Do what I tell you and you shall have more blankets than you can wear, and, as you are still so handsome, another husband, too, if you like, and a garden and slaves to work for you and plenty to eat."

"How shall I get all these things, my son?" asked the old woman, looking up. "Will you take me to your home and support me or will that white lord marry me? They told me that the Asika had named him as the Mungana, and she is very jealous, the most jealous Asika that I have ever known."

"No, mother, he would like to, but he dare not, and I cannot support you as I should wish, as here I have no house or property. You will get all this by taking a walk and holding your tongue. You see this man here, he is Fanny, king of a great tribe, the Ogula. He wants you to carry a message for him, and by and by he will marry you, won't you, Fanny?"

"Oh! yes—yes," said Fahni, "I will do anything she likes. No one shall be so rich and honored in my country, and for her sake we will never eat another old woman, whereas if she stays here she will be driven to the mountains, to starve in a week."

"Set out the matter," said the mother of Jeeki, who was by no means so foolish as she seemed.

So they told her what she must do, namely, travel down to the Ogula and tell them of the plight of their chief, bidding them muster all their fighting men, and when the swamps were dry enough, advance as near as they dared to the Asiki country, and, if they could not attack it, wait till they had further news.

The end of it was that mother of Jeeki, who knew her case to be desperate at home, where she was in no good repute, primised to attempt the journey in consideration of advantages to be received. Since she was to be turned adrift to meet her fate with as much food as she could carry, this she could do without exciting any suspicion, for who would trouble about the movements of a useless old thief? Meanwhile Jeeki gave her one of the robes which the Asika had provided for Alan, also various articles which she desired, and having learned Fahni's message by heart and announced that she considered herself his affianced bride, the gaunt old creature departed happy enough, after exchanging embraces with her long-lost son.

"She will tell somebody all about it, and we shall only get our throats cut," said Alan wearily, for the whole thing seemed to him a foolish farce.

(To be Continued.)

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