

courage. When he failed I knew it by telegram, and I sent another fool before the wires were cold, to kill him in the police-station cell for having failed. One fool has been stabbed and the English will hang the other. Then I sent twenty men to turn India inside out and find the knife again, for like the bracelets it has its place. And that is why I laughed. They are hunting. They will hunt until I call them off!"

"Why didn't you take it with the bracelet?" King asked her, holding it out. "Take it now. I don't want it."

She accepted it and laid it on the man's bronze armour. Then, however, she resumed it and played with it.

"Look again!" she said. "Think and look again!"

He looked, and he knew now. But he still preferred that she should tell

him, and his lips shut tight.

"Why, having ordered your death, did I countermand the order when your life had been attempted once? Why, as soon as Rewa Gunga had seen you, did I order you to be aided in every way?"

Still he did not answer, although the solution to that riddle, too, was beginning to dawn on his consciousness. He suspected she would be annoyed if he deprived her of the fun of telling him, so that by being silent he played both her game and his own.

"Why did I order your death in the first place?"

The answer to that was obvious, but she answered it for him.

"Because, since the sarkar insisted that one man must come with me to

Khinjan, I preferred a fool, who could be lost on the way. I knew your reputation. I never heard any man call you a fool."

She laughed. He nodded. She was obviously telling truth.

"Can you guess why I changed my mind about you—wise man?"

She looked from him to the man on the bed and back to him again. Having solved her riddle, King had leisure to be interested in her eyes, and watched them analytically, like a jeweler appraising diamonds. They were strangely reminiscent, but much more changeable and colourful than any he had ever seen. They had the baffling trick of changing while he watched them.

"Having sent a man to kill you, why did I cease to want you killed? In-

stead of losing you on the way to Khinjan, why did I run risks to protect you after you reached here? Why did I save your life in the Cavern of Earth's Drink to-night? You do not know yet? Then I will tell you something else you do not know. I was in Delhi when you were! I watched and listened while you and Rewa Gunga talked in my house! I was in Rewa Gunga's carriage on the train that he took and you did not! I have learned at first hand that you are not a fool. But that was not enough! You had to be three things—clever and brave and one other. The one other you are! Brave you have proved yourself to be! Clever you must be, to trick your way into Khinjan Caves, even with Ismail at your elbow! That is why I saved your life—

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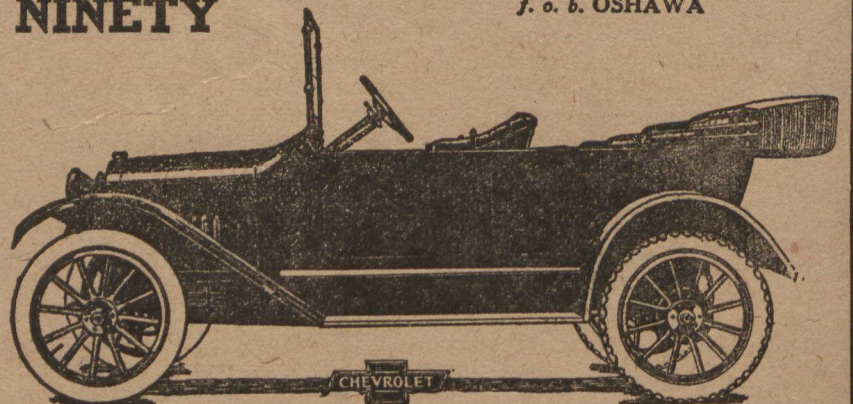
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