

AN INTRICATE CASE.

A TRUE HISTORY OF A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

CHAPTER XII.—(CONTINUED.)

"As I lay here he dropped it when he was first attacked. The box was the same which now lies open upon your table. A key was hung by a silken cord to that carved handle upon the top. We opened it, and the light of the lantern gleamed upon a collection of gems such as I have read of and thought about when I was a little lad at Peshawar. It was blinding to look upon them. When we feasted our eyes we took them all out and made a list of them. There were one hundred and forty-three diamonds of the first water, including one which has been called, I believe, 'the Great Mogul,' and is said to be the second largest stone in existence. Then there were ninety-seven very fine emeralds, and one hundred and seventy rubies, some of which, however, were small. There were forty caruncles, two hundred and ten sapphires, sixty-one agates, and a great quantity of beryls, onyxes, cats'-eyes, turquoises, and other stones, the very names of which I did not know at the time, though I have become more familiar with them since. Besides this, there were nearly three hundred very fine pearls, twelve of which were set in a gold coronet. By the by, these last had been taken out of the chest and were not there when I recovered it.

"After we had counted our treasures we put them back into the chest and carried them to the gate-way to show them to Major Sholto. He was so wearily renewed our oath to stand by each other and be true to our secret. We agreed to conceal our loot in a safe place until the country should be at peace again, and then to divide it equally among ourselves. There was no use dividing it at present, for if gems of such value were found upon us it would cause suspicion, and there was no privacy in the fort nor any place where we could keep them. We carried the box, therefore, into the same hall where he had buried the body, and there under certain bricks in the best-preserved wall, we made a hollow and put our treasure. We made careful note of the place, and next day I drew four plans, one for each of us, and put the sign of the four of us at the bottom, for we had sworn that we should each always act for all, so that none might take advantage. That is an oath that I can put my hand to my heart and swear that I have never broken.

"Well, there's no use my telling you gentlemen what came of the Indian mutiny. After Wilson took Delhi and Sir Colin relieved Lucknow the back of the business was broken. Fresh troops came pouring in, and Nana Sahib made himself scarce over the frontier. A flying column under Colonel Greathed came round to Agra and cleared the Pandies away from it. Peace seemed to be settling upon the country, and we four were beginning to hope that the time was at hand when we might safely go off with our shares of the plunder. In a moment, however, our hopes were shattered by our being arrested as the murderers of Achmet. "It came about this way. When the rajah put his jewels into the hands of Achmet he did it because he knew that he was a trusty man. They are suspicious folk in the East, however: so what does this rajah do but take a second even more trusty servant and set him to play the spy upon the first? This second man was ordered to go to let Achmet out of his sight, and he followed him like his shadow. He went after him that night, and saw him pass through the door-way. Of course he thought he had taken refuge in the fort, and applied for admission there himself next day, but could find no trace of Achmet. This seemed to him so strange that he spoke about it to the sergeant of guides, who brought it to the ears of the commandant. A thorough search was quickly made, and the body was discovered. Thus at the very moment that we thought that all was safe we were all four seized and brought to trial on a charge of murder—three of us because we had held the gate, and the fourth because he was known to have been in the company of the murdered man. Not a word about the jewels came out at the trial, for the rajah had been deposed and driven out of India: so no one had any particular interest in them. The murder, however, was clearly made out, and it was certain that we must all have been concerned in it. The three Sikhs got penal servitude for life, and I was condemned to death, though my sentence was afterwards commuted into the same as the others.

"It was rather a queer position that we found ourselves in then. There were all four tried by the leg and with precious little chance of ever getting out again, while each of us held a secret which might have put each of us in a palace if we could only have made use of it. It was enough to make a man eat his heart out to have to stand the kick and the cuff of every petty jack-in-office, to have rice to eat and water to drink, when that gorgeous fortune was ready for him outside, just waiting to be picked up. It might have driven me mad; but I was always a pretty stubborn one, so I just held on and bided my time.

"At last it seemed to me to have come. I was changed from Agra to Madras, and from there to Blair Island in the Andamans. There are very few white convicts at this settlement, and, as I had behaved well from the first, I soon found myself a sort of privileged person. I was given a hut in Hope Town, which is a small place on the slope of Mount Harriet, and I was left pretty much to myself. It is a dreary, fever-stricken place, and all beyond our little clearings was infested with wild cannibal natives, who were ready enough to blow a poisoned dart at us if they saw a chance. There was digging, and ditching, and yam-planting, and a dozen other things to be done, so we were busy enough all day; though in the evening we had a little time for ourselves. Among other things, I learned to dispense drugs for the surgeon, and picked up a smattering of his knowledge. All the time I was on the lookout for a chance of escape: but it is hundreds of miles from any other land, and there is little or no wind in those seas: so it was a terribly difficult job to get away.

The surgeon, Dr. Somerton, was a fast, sporting young chap, and the other young officers would meet at his rooms on an evening and play cards. The surgery, where I used to make up my drugs, was next to his sitting-room, with a small window between us. Often, if I felt lonesome, I used to turn out the lamp in the surgery and watch the fire play. I am fond of a hand at cards myself, and it was almost as good as having one to watch the other's. There was Major Sholto, Captain Morstan, and Lieutenant Bromley Brown, who were in command of the native troops, and there was the surgeon himself and two or three prison-officers, crafty old fellows who played a nice

provide both the officers with charts of the part of the Agra fort and mark the place in the walls where the treasure was hid. Major Sholto was to go to India to test our story. If he found the box he was to leave it there to send out a small yacht provisioned for a voyage, which was to sail to Rutland Island, to which we were to make our way, and finally to return to his duties. Captain Morstan was then to apply for leave of absence, to meet us at Agra, and there we were to have a final division of the treasure, he taking the major's share, as well as all. All this we sealed by the most solemn oaths that the mind could think or the lips utter. I sat up all night with paper and ink, and by the morning I had the two charts all ready, signed with the sign of four—thatis, of Abdullah, Akbar, Mahomet, and myself.

"Well, gentlemen, I weary you with my long story, and I know that my friend Mr. Jones is impatient to get me safely stowed in chokey. I'll make it as short as I can. The villain Sholto went off to India, but he never came back again. Captain Morstan showed me his name among a list of passengers in one of the mail-boats very shortly afterwards. His plan had died leaving him a fortune, and he had left the army; yet he could stoop to treat five men as he had treated us. Morstan went over to Agra shortly afterwards, and found, as we expected, that the treasure was indeed gone. The scoundrel had stolen it all, without carrying out one of the conditions on which we had sold him the secret. From that day I lived only for vengeance. I thought of it by day and I nursed it by night. It became an overpowering, absorbing passion with me. I cared nothing for the law,—nothing for the gallows. To escape, to track down Sholto, to have my hand upon his throat,—these were my one thought. Even the Agra treasure had come to be a smaller thing in my mind than the slaying of Sholto.

"Well, I have set my mind on many things in this life, and never one which I did not carry out. But it was weary years before my time came. I have told you that I had picked up something of medicine. One day Dr. Somerton was down with a fever, and I was called in to attend to him. He was a convict gang in the woods. He was sick to death, and had gone to a lonely place to die. I took him in hand, though he was as venomous as a young snake, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk. He took a kind of fancy to me then, and would hardly go back to his hut. I learned a little of his story from him, and this made him all the fonder of me.

"Gonga—for that was his name—was a fine boatman, and owned a big, roomy canoe of his own. When I found that he was devoted to me and would do anything to serve me, I thought of my chance of escape. I talked it over with him, and we arranged his boat round on a certain night to an island which was never guarded, and there he was to pick me up. I gave him directions to have several gourds of water and a lot of yams, coconuts, and sweet potatoes.

"He was steady and true, was little Tonga. At the night he had a more faithful mate than I have since. He had his boat at the wharf. As it chanced, however, there was one of the convict-guard down there,—a vile Pathan who had never missed a chance of insulting and injuring me. I had always vowed vengeance, and now I had my chance. It was as if fate had placed him right in my way. He was looking at me before I left the wharf. He stood on his shoulder. I looked about for a stone to beat out his brains with, but none could I see. Then a queer thought came into my head and showed me where I could lay my hand on a weapon. I took my wooden leg in the darkness and unstrapped it on my hip. With three long hops I was on him. He put his hand to his shoulder, but I struck him full, and he fell the whole front of his skull in. You can see the split in the wood now where I hit him. We both went down together, for I could not keep my balance, but when I got up I found him still lying quite enough. I made for the boat, and in an hour we were well out at sea. Tonga had brought all his earthly possessions with him, his arms and his gods. Among other things, he had a long bamboo spear, and some Andaman coconut-matting, with which I made a sort of sail. For ten days we were beating about, trusting to luck, and on the eleventh we were picked up by a trader which was going from Singapore to Malacca, and Tonga and I soon managed to sell down among them. They had one very good quality: they let you alone and asked no questions.

"Well, if I were to tell you all the adventures that my little chum and I went through, you would not thank me, for I should have to tell you a long story. Here and there we drifted about the world, something always turning up to keep us from London. All the time, however, I never lost sight of my purpose. I would dream of Sholto at night. A hundred times I have killed him in my sleep. At last, however, some three or four years ago, I found myself in England. I had no great difficulty in finding where Sholto lived and I set to work to discover whether he had realized the treasure, or if he had not. I made friends with some one who could help me. I named no names, for I don't want to get any one else in a hole,—and I soon found that he still had the jewels. When I tried to get at him in many ways, he was pretty sly, and had always two prize-fighters, besides his sons and his khitmutars, on guard over him.

"One day, however, I got word that he was dying. I hurried at once to the garden, and that he should slip out of my clutches like that, and looking through the window, I saw him lying in his bed, with his sons on each side of him. I'd have come through and taken my revenge with three of them, even as I looked at him his jaw dropped, and I knew that he was gone. I got into his room that same night, though, and I searched his papers to see if there was any record of where he had hidden our jewels. There was not a line, however: so I came away, bitter and savage as a man could be. Before I left, however, I thought of a way to meet my Sikh friends again: it would be a satisfaction to know that I had left some mark of our hatred: so I scrawled down the sign of the four of us, as it had been on the chart, and I pinned it on his bosom. It was too much that he should be taken to the grave without some token from the men whom he had robbed and defiled.

"We earned a living at this time by my exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal. He would cut raw meat and dance his war-dance: so we always had a haul of pennies after a day's work. I still heard all the news from Pondicherry Lodge, and for some years there was no news to hear, except that at last, however, came what we had waited for so long. The treasure had been found. It was up at the top of the house in Mr. Bartholomew Sholto's chemical laboratory. I came at once and had a look

at the place, but I could not see how my wooden leg I was to make my way up to it. I learned, however, about a trap-door in the roof, and also about Mr. Sholto's supper-hour. It seemed to me that I could manage the thing easily through Tonga. I brought him out with me with a long rope round his waist. He could climb like a cat, and he soon made his way through the roof, but as his luck would have it, Bartholomew Sholto was still in the room, to his cost. Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him, for when I came up by the rope I found him strutting about as proud as I found him very much surprised as he when I made at him with the rope's end and cursed him for a little blood-thirsty imp. I took the treasure-box and let it down, and then slid down myself, having first left the sign of the four upon the table, to show that the jewels had come back at last to those who had most right to them.—Tonga then pulled up the rope, closed the window, and made off the way that he had come.

"I don't know that I have anything else to tell you. I had heard a waterman speak of the speed of Smith's launch the Aurora, so I thought she would be a handy craft for my escape. I engaged with the old Smith, and was to give him a big sum if he got us safe to our ship. He never, however, but he was some screw loose, but he was not in our secrets. All this is the truth, and if I tell it to you, gentlemen, it is not to amuse you,—for you have not done me a very good turn,—but it is because I believe the best defence I can make is just to hold back nothing, but let the world know how badly I have myself been served by Major Sholto, and how innocent I am of the death of his son.

THE WHITE DEATH.

A Naked, Gleaming, Shifting Flood of Sand Moving Ever Inland.

The white death is a naked, gleaming, shifting flood of sand, moving ever inland from the ocean shore, inch by inch, foot by foot, in huge white waves of glistening grit, inexorable as fate, silent as the grave swallowing and destroying everything that lies before it in its way.

The wind blows the shifting surface upon the crest of each towering wave, and over the edge in a sparkling mist. Beyond the crest the dry mist falls, and so the wave moves steadily, restlessly forward, enveloping all things in a universal white.

Standing at the edge of a marshy flat, the eye looks far away across the level of coarse sedge grass to the white line of sand hills and the black lines of pine woods in the distance. Here and there the flat is lush and green, where shallow lakes, blooming with white lilies and blue arrowweeds, back the arid soil; here and there it burns yellow and brown, where the hot smooth sand stretching in from the ocean shore drinks up water and life, and leaves all dead.

That level flat, reaching far away into the distance, is like the plane of life one has to travel: the black streak of a gloomy pine woods is the valley of shadows, and the white waving line of sand is a likeness of death, and as in real life, so here,—neither death nor its shadow looks sinister seen from such a distance.

To travel across the level flat is a mimic image of the journey of life. The lakes, so pretty in the distance, are muddy, and smell rank and dank to the nostrils; they are full of tadpoles and lizards and crawling things. Here and there little deserts of arid sand are passed; they burn the soles of the feet, and scorch the face with a red, like petty troubles, to bite and sting. There are quicksands under the feet where the grass looks the freshest and the greenest, and hiding the dead levels of sand a mirage of visionary water.

First come the hot black shadows—the shadows of the pines—then the foot-hills, as it were of death. All is breathless silence, except for the shrieking of the fish-hawk high in the air, and the strange, mysterious whispering of the carelessly moving and shifting sand.

Here and there a stark gray tree trunk, already dead in the clutch of the oncoming death, reaches helpless skeleton arms up into the air. Each is an empty hollow shell of bark, each is soulless and void of life, except, perhaps, for a nest of woodpeckers or of mice—a squalid metempsychosis of the spirit.

Beyond the foot hills lies grim and still the silent bosom of the white death—hills and valleys of lifeless sand, blinding, burning, parchy and dry. The air is like the blast from a fiery furnace, and a breathless curtain of silence stretches between the glare of the sky above and the whispering of the shifting surface. The sliding feet sink deep into the shifting surface, and the traveler stands face to face with Israel in the desert. So the gates of death are passed and the journey is ended.

Then suddenly, as the head rises above the crest of the last white wave, all is instantly transformed. The last hill is climbing with panting breath, and then death itself is left behind.

REIGN OF MONSTERS.

Howe Creatures that Ruled the Primeval World.

When first the great French naturalist, Cuvier, began to tell his countrymen the strange tale of the huge, uncouth monsters that inhabited the primeval world, the world that existed before history had been written, or the men that make history had come into being, there was no ear to the sceptical and scorn he encountered from scientist and layman. It is strange to think how the globe laughed and awaked nation upon nation that beings once walked over the surface of the earth, or dived into its waters, or winged their way through the air, present man-inhabited globe.

It was contrary to religion, said the theologians; it was opposed to science, said the savants: it was against all common sense, and the ordinary man. When the great naturalist showed the bones of the mammoth, that is a little like the elephant, the best anatomists of the day maintained that he had merely found the bones of an elephant. When Cuvier said that there were no elephants ever recorded to have lived in France they said the Romans must have brought them with their legions. When Cuvier showed how fossil bones were found in England, too, they reminded him that Caesar had crossed the channel and, doubtless, carried his elephants with him. No one, indeed, now believed in the old scientific and religious superstition that the fossil bones were not real bones at all, but false things that nature herself in a sportive mood had fabricated in mimicry of her own production.

It was the age of reason and logic and Mr. Cuvier's astounding theories must be met by arguments, that had, at any rate, the outward semblance of logic. But argument and ridicule only prevailed for a time, and at last, a hundred years ago, the wonders of the bygone fauna of the earth were accepted in Europe.

Cuvier it was whose fine imaginative reasons invented the great science of comparative anatomy and paleontology. His vast and splendid knowledge of existing beasts and birds enabled him to reconstruct from a fossil skull or a vertebra, sometimes from nothing but a single tooth, the long extinct creature in its true semblance as it had lived, to clothe it with flesh and skin, and show it in imagination, in the haunts in which it lived and moved.

This, which Baron Cuvier did in graphic description of great scientific and literary beauty, Mr. Hatcher, in his work on "Extinct Monsters," published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, London, has now done popularly and yet learnedly, and with the accompaniment of many most admirable illustrations. Baron Cuvier showed how our planet was once inhabited by reptiles of enormous size and vicious aspect, the dinosaurs. The crocodiles and alligators are the degenerate descendants of these terrible primeval lizards that in size and in their ungainly shapes were like to the dragons of our tales and legends than any beast that at present roams the earth.

It is now established by science that during the mesozoic period of the world's history evolution had proceeded to such a development of life into the form of these strange reptiles. This was the "Age of Reptiles," but of such reptiles as the earth has not held upon its surface. As yet mammalian quadrupeds did not exist. The horse, the ox, the elephant, the lion, the deer, and the thousand genera of four-footed mammalian beasts whom we know to-day had not been created or brought forth. The seas, the estuaries, the marsh, the forest, and the plain were lorded over by the dinosaurs, reptiles indeed in a scientific point of view, but that mimicked in their structure and habits the nature of the mammalian quadrupeds of to-day. Of some of the dinosaurs the bones must have been as massive as those of our elephants and rhinoceroses. They were four-footed, but many of them walked the earth erect on their hind feet. Some were horned creatures of terrible aspect, feeding on vegetable food, while others were carnivorous animals with formidable teeth and claws. Most of the dinosaurs were many times the graminivorous dinosaurs were kangaroo-sized creatures with powerful hindquarters and the faculty of leaping as a kangaroo or jerboa leaps. In the case of the vegetable-feeding dinosaurs it is conjectured that the creature was enabled to stand upon its hind legs and feed on the branches of trees as in the case of the gigantic dinosaur known as Iguanodon from its tenacious. The most terrible-looking of these ancient monsters are by no means the carnivorous ones, as, for instance, the awful horned dinosaur with helmeted head and skin studded with spiked armor bosses. These formidable means of offense and defense belong to a partly vegetable feeder, and the strength of the osseous skeleton by tokening a strong and active body, is a measure of the stress and struggle for existence during the Reptile Age. Triceratops Proterus, though larger than the largest rhinoceros was evidently armed and equipped against the attacks of the still larger, ferocious carnivorous dinosauran reptiles, of Atlantosaurus, for instance, of whom we know little but that his thigh-bone measures six feet two inches in height, that his length could not have been less than eighty feet, and that if he traveled on his hind legs, as he probably did, he must have been tall enough to look in at the third-story window of a London house.

There is no scientific reason why the sea-serpent should not have survived from the "Age of Reptiles," for creatures that exactly repeat in size and shape the fabled serpent of nautical men, incapacitated by fertility of imagination, or other more temporary causes, from observing scientifically, were abundant in the sea-serpent times. "Come, now," said an inquiring savant to an old sea-captain, "have you ever seen a sea-serpent?" "Why, no, sir; I never did. I'm a teetotaller." The sea-serpents have, by the best accounts, died out of our world, with the toothed reptile birds that held their air before the kites and falcons, the eagle and the hawks became supreme in the elements.

One thing is apparent from a study of mezoic life on the globe. Man may thank a kindly Providence that he only came on the scene in quiet times than mezoic ones. He could hardly have lived comfortably with his neighbors. The earth was a huge zoological garden, or rather a huge r. p. l. house. He could not have gone to sea, because the first mosasaur that passed his ship would have lifted thirty feet of neck from the depths and picked the steersman from the rudder or the anchor from the yards. He could not have tilted the earth, for it would have been preposterous to yoke the mildest dinosaur to a plow. Flying raptors would have pecked his eyes out. When he took his "talks about the winged dimorphism—a cross between a bat and an alligator—would have chopped his nose, perhaps his head off, with its cruel rat-trap jaws.

"Cool and collect—The Ice Age."

Cholera in Hamburg.

Two fresh cases of cholera have been reported, and the doctors are making examinations with a view of detecting the bacteria.

The Cholera Commission announces that the cases developed yesterday are of the Asiatic type. The report has caused considerable apprehension, and business men who had been picking up courage are less hopeful of the future. It is also feared that the news will have an unfavorable influence on the steamship traffic of Hamburg and will strengthen the movement in America to shut out immigrants, especially Russian Jews.

The statement of the Hamburg newspaper, intimating that the United States Consul at Hamburg was about to resume clearing from that port for the United States, notwithstanding the fact that fresh cases of cholera were reported is entirely discredited in Washington. Nevertheless, of abundant caution, Secretary Chase, Foster immediately communicated the information to the Secretary of State, with the suggestion that the United States Consul at Hamburg be instructed to refrain from such action until there is no longer any danger of the introduction of the contagion from that source into the United States.

We must not only look ahead, but we must go ahead.

Not as Bad as That. He (poor and idle)—You reject my hand, Cruel girl! Reserve your decision or I shall do something desperate! She (an heiress who knows her goodly inheritance)—Go to work, I suppose.

Feminine Contrariness. Old Rooster.—"What have you stopped laying for?" Old Hen.—"It's too cold." Old Rooster.—"Huh! Just like you females. Quick as it gets cool enough for me to quit without getting into a perspiration, you crows laying."

Cool and collect—The Ice Age.