

us below Keitung, towards Sultanpoor, on the afternoon of the day when the moon is full. Travel by Julinder and Sultanpoor; you will easily overtake me, since I go by Simla. For friendship's sake, for love's sake, come. It is life and death. Give the money to the Irishman. Peace be with you."

I sighed a sigh of the most undetermined description. Was I glad to rejoin my friend? or was I pained to leave the woman he loved in her present condition? I hardly knew.

"I think we had all better go back to Simla," said John, when I explained that the most urgent business called me away at dawn.

"There will be none of us left soon," said Ghyrkins quite quietly and mournfully.

I found means to let Miss Westonhaugh understand where I was going. I gave Kildare the money in charge.

In the dark of the morning, as I cleared the tents, the same shadow I had seen before shot out and laid a hand on my rein. I halted on the same spot where Isaacs had drawn rein twenty-four hours before.

"Give him this from me. God be with you!" She was gone in a moment, leaving a small package in my right hand. I thrust it in my bosom and rode away.

"How she loves him," I thought, wondering greatly.

CHAPTER XII.

It was not an agreeable journey I had undertaken. In order to reach the inaccessible spot, chosen by Isaacs for the scene of Shere Ali's liberation, in time to be of any use, it was necessary that I should travel by a more direct and arduous route than that taken by my friend. He had returned to Simla, and by his carefully made arrangements would be able to reach Keitung, or the spot near it, where the transaction was to take place, by constant changes of horses where riding was possible, and by a strong body of dooly-bearers, wherever the path should prove too steep for four-footed beasts of burden. I, on the other hand, must leave the road at Julinder, a place I had never visited, and must trust to my own unaided wits and a plentiful supply of rupees to carry me over at least two hundred miles of country I did not know — difficult certainly, and perhaps impracticable for riding. The prospect was not a pleasant one, but I was convinced that in a matter of this importance a man of Isaacs' wit and wealth would have made at least some preliminary arrangements for me, since he probably knew the country well enough

himself. I had but six days at the outside to reach my destination.

I had resolved to take one servant, Kiramat Ali, with me as far as Julinder, whence I would send him back to Simla with what slender luggage we carried, for I meant to ride as light as possible, with no encumbrance to delay me when once I left the line of the railway. I might have ridden five miles with Kiramat Ali behind me on a sturdy *tat*, when I was surprised by the appearance of an unknown saice in plain white clothes, holding a pair of strong young ponies by the halter and salaaming low.

"Pundit Ram Lal sends your highness his peace, and bids you ride without sparing. The *dák* is laid to the fire-carriages."

The saddles were changed in a moment, Kiramat Ali and I assisting in the operation. It was clear that Ram Lal's messengers were swift, for even if he had met Isaacs when the latter reached the railroad, no ordinary horse could have returned with the message at the time I had received it. Still less would any ordinary Hindus be capable of laying a *dák*, or post route of relays, over a hundred miles long in twelve hours. Once prepared, it was a mere matter of physical endurance in the rider to cover the ground, for the relays were stationed every five or six miles. It was well known that Lord Steepleton Kildare had lately ridden from Simla to Umballa one night and back the next day, ninety-two miles each way, with constant change of cattle. What

puzzled me was the rapidity with which the necessary dispositions had been made. On the whole, I was reassured. If Ram Lal had been able to prepare my way at such short notice here, with two more days at his disposal he would doubtless succeed in laying me a *dák* most of the way from Julinder to Keitung.

I will not dwell upon the details of the journey. I reached the railroad and prepared for forty-eight hours of jolting and jostling and broken sleep. It is true that railway travelling is nowhere so luxurious as in India, where a carriage has but two compartments, each holding as a rule only two persons, though four can be accommodated by means of hanging berths. Each compartment has a spacious bath-room attached, where you may bathe as often as you please, and there are various contrivances for ventilating and cooling the air. Nevertheless the heat is sometimes unbearable, and a journey from Bombay to Calcutta direct during the warm months is a severe trial to the strongest constitution. On this occasion I had about forty-eight hours to travel, and I was resolved to get all the rest in that time that the jolting made possible; for I knew that once in the saddle again it might be days before I got a night's sleep. And so we rumbled along, through the vast fields of sugar-cane, now mostly tied in huge sheaves upright, through boundless stretches of richly-cultivated soil, intersected with the regularity of a chess-board by the rivulets and channels of a laborious irrigation. Here and there stood the high frames made by planting

four bamboos in a square and wickering the top, whereon the ryots sit when the crops are ripening, to watch against thieves and cattle, and to drive away the birds of the air. On we spun, past Meerut and Mozuffernugger, past Umballa and Loodhiana, till we reached our station of Julinder at dawn. Descending from the train, I was about to begin making inquiries about my next move, when I was accosted by a tall and well-dressed Mussulman, in a plain cloth *caftán* and a white turban, but exquisitely clean and fresh looking, as it seemed to me, for my eyes were smarting with dust and wearied with the perpetual shaking of the train.

The courteous native soon explained that he was Isaacs' agent in Julinder, and that a *tár ki khaber*, a telegram in short, had warned him to be on the lookout for me. I was greatly relieved, for it was evident that every arrangement had been made for my comfort, so far as comfort was possible. Isaacs had asked my assistance, but he had taken every precaution against all superfluous bodily inconvenience to me, and I felt sure that from this point I should move quickly and easily through every difficulty. And so it proved. The Mussulman took me to his house, where there was a spacious apartment, occupied by Isaacs when he passed that way. Every luxury was prepared for the enjoyment of the bath, and a breakfast of no mean taste was served me in my own room. Then my host entered and explained that he had been directed to make certain arrange-

ments for my journey. He had laid a *dák* nearly a hundred miles ahead, and had been ordered to tell me that similar steps had been taken beyond that point as far as my ultimate destination, of which, however, he was ignorant. My servant, he said, must stay with him and return to Simla with my traps.

So an hour later I mounted for my long ride, provided with a revolver and some rupees in a bag, in case of need. The country, my entertainer informed me, was considered perfectly safe, unless I feared the *tap*, the bad kind of fever which infests all the country at the base of the hills. I was not afraid of this. My experience is that some people are predisposed to fever, and will generally be attacked by it in their first year in India, whether they are much exposed to it or not, while others seem naturally proof against any amount of malaria, and though they sleep out of doors through the whole rainy season, and tramp about the jungles in the autumn, will never catch the least ague, though they may have all other kinds of ills to contend with.

On and on, galloping along the heavy roads, sometimes over no road at all, only a broad green track, where the fresh grass that had sprung up after the rains was not yet killed by the trampling of the bullocks and the grinding jolt of the heavy cart. At intervals of seven or eight miles I found a saice with a fresh pony picketed and grazing at the end of the long rope. The saice was generally squatting near by, with his bag of food and his three-sided kitchen

of stones, blackened with the fire from his last meal, beside him; sometimes in the act of cooking his chow-patties, sometimes eating them, according to the time of day. Several times I stopped to drink some water where it seemed to be good, and I ate a little chocolate from my supply, well knowing the miraculous sustaining powers of the simple little block of "Menier," which, with its six small tablets, will not only sustain life, but will supply vigour and energy, for as much as two days, with no other food. On and on, through the day and the night, past sleeping villages where the jackals howled around the open doors of the huts; and across vast fields of late crops, over hills thickly grown with trees, past the broad bend of the Suttlej river, and over the plateau toward Sultanpoor, the cultivation growing scantier and the villages rarer all the while, as the vast masses of the Himalayas defined themselves more and more distinctly in the moonlight. Horses of all kinds under me, lean and fat, short and high, roman-nosed and goose-necked, broken and unbroken; away and away, shifting saddle and bridle and saddle-bag as I left each tired mount behind me. Once I passed a stream, and pulling off my boots to cool my feet, the temptation was too strong, so I hastily threw off my clothes and plunged in and had a short refreshing bath. Then on, with the galloping even triplet of the horse's hoofs beneath me, as they came down in quick succession, as if the earth were a muffled drum and we were beating an untiring *rataplan* on her breast.

I must have ridden a hundred and thirty miles before dawn, and the pace was beginning to tell, even on my strong frame. True, to a man used to the saddle, the effort of riding is reduced to a minimum when every hour or two gives him a fresh horse. There is then no heed for the welfare of the animal necessary; he has but his seven or eight miles to gallop, and then his work is done; there are none of those thousand little cares and sympathetic shiftings and adjustings of weight and seat to be thought of, which must constantly engage the attention of a man who means to ride the same horse a hundred miles, or even fifty or forty. Conscious that a fresh mount awaits him, he sits back lazily and never eases his weight for a moment; before he has gone thirty miles he will kick his feet out of the stirrups about once in twenty minutes, and if he has for the moment a quiet old stager who does not mind tricks, he will probably fetch one leg over and go a few miles sitting sideways. He will go to sleep once or twice, and wake up apparently in the very act to fall—though I believe that a man will sleep at a full gallop and never loosen his knees until the moment of waking startles him. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding Lord Steepleton Kildare and his ride to Umballa and back in twenty-four hours, when a man, be he ever so strong, has ridden over a hundred miles, he feels inclined for a rest, and a walk, and a little sleep.

Once more an emissary of Ram Lal strode to my side as I rolled off the saddle into the cool grass at