

THE TIGER OF TIBET

By GERALD BURRARD

CHAPTER XVI.

The Treasure-Chamber.

"TIGERS" men were either very cautious or else very bold. The attack, and either to be easy to understand, or to be hard to understand, of them had ever been along passage before, and it was entirely unknown ground. "Tiger" himself, who knew the foot of the way, apparently had no desire to lead.

Several minutes Geoffrey could not hear a sound. Then he recognised Hayde Thompson although he could not hear the words, and he knew that it was a prelude to another attack. He gripped the handle of his revolver still tighter, as he heard the shuffling of feet of men crawling up the hill.

He shifted his grip on the handle of his revolver. It was a friend and he had fired a thousand rounds through it practising in the past. In days he had always imagined a weapon could nestle so into his hand, but now he did not get a comfortable hold, and yet nearer crawled they. They were moving very slowly and he could hear his feet falling in on them just as bits had almost smothered the leading man was almost at his mouth. Then he saw a man strike the earth which he and Sher Khan deposited in the lower of the tunnel. Sher Khan him gently behind a sign, but Geoffrey waited. He saw the man striving to move forward, and at last he succeeded, for a satisfied sound of crumpling earth, he stealthily forward crawled.

Khan touched him again, but with a decided pressure; obviously getting impatient. Geoffrey refused to be hurried, that he had his feet in the hands of his hand, and he wished as many of them on, so as all the heavier punishment he did launch his revolver.

Geoffrey pressed the switch, and shot out, illuminating the arch and the head of the man lying face downwards on the floor behind the other. Six feet of Geoffrey were two men. They had crawled through the tunnel, and he could see their upturned faces, they blinked, momentarily, by the sudden glare.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" barked the automatic, and both men were suddenly stretched.

turned gasping, and hurried to the spot where Phyllis and the missionary stood well high petrified with horror at this unlooked-for and dramatic intervention.

Lumps of earth fell from the ceiling, above them and pattered on the floor, each breaking up and sending up its own miniature cloud of dust. Choking they stumbled forward, the torch only serving to show up the curtain of dust which filled the whole passage. The rumblings behind them continued for a couple of minutes, recurring every few seconds with fresh bursts of energy. Then the pattering from the ceiling gradually grew less, and at last all was quiet. Slowly the dust began to settle. Phyllis was clasping Geoffrey with one hand and her father with the other, while Sher Khan stood beside them in grim silence.

Then the full realisation of their situation gradually dawned on all four simultaneously.

"They were buried alive!"

For several seconds no one spoke. Geoffrey felt the responsive pressure of Phyllis's hand. Thrusting the torch in his pocket he drew her to him and locked her in his embrace.

"Well, it is of no use staying here, sahib. Let us go and see if there is not some way out. At least we need no longer fear any attack from behind, and the Pathan laughed grimly.

Geoffrey released Phyllis and switched on the light. The passage took another sharp bend to the left, and immediately they rounded it they found themselves confronted with a closed door. There was neither lock nor bolt, only a latch, and it gave readily. They passed through and entered a fair-sized chamber.

Then they gasped with amazement. All four knew that the passage led to the secret treasure-vault which was the source of all Hayde Thompson's mysterious wealth and power, but even so they were not prepared for the sight which met their gaze.

One wall was stacked with hide-sacks, rotting with age, from many of which the contents were bursting in shining heaps, for the sacks were filled with gold and silver coins. A pile of empty sacks was heaped at one end. Thompson had already dipped heavily into this store of bullion.

On the opposite side were hand-dolls of swords, axes, knives and daggers heaped in untidy profusion. Every one carried a highly ornate and jewelled handle. There were weapons of all shapes and from many countries, Chinese, Indian, and Turkish swords; jewelled daggers from Alwar; Burmese dhars, samitars and axes which might have seen service in the Crusades. Almost every period of the last ten centuries was represented, and in spite of the dry air the majority of the weapons were eaten and crumpling with rust, although some still seemed to be in perfect order.

Geoffrey picked up a wonderfully inflated Indian sword, and the steel fell away in flakes, leaving the gold filigree standing out in relief. The handle was of ivory, yellow and cracked with age, while the hilt was encased with alternate rubies and emeralds, which scintillated with unaltered brilliance, throwing back the light flashed on them by the torch.

In one corner was neatly stacked a pile of bags which shone with a dull yellow gleam and which could only be gold. In another corner was an even larger pile of similar bags, but their outer glint showed them to be of silver.

Lining the base of the wall opposite to the door was a row of six sets of chests. Sher Khan lifted the lid of the first, but it was empty. The second was jammed almost to the top with trinkets of every description—rings, bangles, ear-rings, nose-rings, anklets, buttons, studs, laps, necklaces, all fell away in confusion as Geoffrey buried his hand in the priceless treasures. Almost all were of gold, and the majority heavily set with jewels. Silver ornaments had apparently been selected for the beauty of workmanship, for all that were made of the cheaper metal were carved with an artistic skill which made even Sher Khan catch his breath.

The next chest contained farquoses, and as far as Geoffrey could tell every one was without a flaw, and of the deepest blue. The fourth chest was nearly empty, but the bottom was strewn with uncut rubies and there was not one which was not larger than anything which Geoffrey had ever seen before.

The last two chests were each about one-quarter full of rubies and diamonds respectively, all uncut, but not nearly of such a size as the stones in the fourth chest.

Any attempts at computing the value of this great hoard staggered the mind, and Geoffrey realised Thompson's shrewdness at keeping it stored in such a safe hiding place, while he only lauded the jewels on the market for drablets. To send out even a tenth of what was there into the world at once would merely have produced a slump and reduced the value to comparatively insignificant figures.

For the time being all four forgot their terrible predicament and gazed spellbound at this inexhaustible supply of treasure.

"How could it all have got here?" Phyllis whispered, awed by the stupendous accumulation.

"Conjecture is hopeless. This is the collection of centuries. Perhaps some former Himalayan or Nepalese King discovered this secret chamber,

ber, or perhaps he even had it cut out of the very foundations of this mountain which has been held sacred by millions well high since the memory of man. Who can say? The work seems to be more Indian and Chinese, but that does not necessarily mean much, for those were the most civilised countries at the time when this treasure was in all probability originally hidden. We know that the Chinese have sent armies across Asia and Tibet on more than one occasion. It is possible that in some dim period of the past some great Chinese chieftain ruled in this part of Tibet. What is almost more surprising is the fact that Thompson should have discovered it.

Suddenly there was a thud on the floor. Phyllis turned round to see her father lying beside her.

"Help," she cried out, "father has fainted!"

Geoffrey threw himself down beside the missionary, while Phyllis held the torch, which was now getting dimly lit. He put his hand over Mr. Merridew's head and found, to his relief, that it was still beating. He turned him over, and as he caught his shoulder he felt his hand touch moisture. He held it up and saw that it was covered with blood.

"Quick, we must rip his clothes off. He must have been wounded!"

As Geoffrey spoke he tore the Tibetan's lama's cloak away, and tipped what clothes Mr. Merridew had been wearing underneath. These had already been cut up when he had been stripped for torture, and in a few seconds Geoffrey laid his back and shoulders bare. Then they saw a bullet-wound behind the right shoulder. It had torn the muscles over the shoulder-blade and had laid profusely, but as far as Geoffrey could tell no bones were broken. From the position and direction of the wound it could only have been inflicted when the missionary had been lying in a prone position.

"My poor, brave dad! And he never gave a sign! When could it have happened?"

"I cannot say, but think that in all probability he was hit when you were lying behind the door of the passage which led into the courtyard while Sher Khan and I were trying to create a diversion by firing a round through the door, but I remember a good many bullets came through the door, but I thought they were all high. I know most of them were."

"Just think! And he never uttered a sound! I know he did not want to be hurt."

Geoffrey tried to soothe her, "You were splendid. You would have been shot dead in your bed if we had stayed in the room. It is entirely owing to your quickness and presence of mind that we are still together and safe from those fiends. But tell me," he added, in order to try and turn her thoughts into another channel, "how on earth did you manage to open the secret door?"

"When we were hiding under the 'Tiger's' bed I could see out through a hole in the hangings. I saw the 'Tiger' cross the room and pull aside a curtain. Then he felt for a crack in the wall. I could see his hand moving slowly, but I didn't want to expose myself for about six inches and I was suddenly a bit of the wall opened and swung back. While you and Sher Khan were trying to reach the skylight I thought I'd try and open the door just in case we could not get through the skylight or over the roof."

"Well, it was very quick of you darling, but I wish we had a lamp of sorts. I am sure that the 'Tiger' must have kept one down here. Let's look for it!"

Phyllis, and he probably kept it outside the door or over the top inside all ready for him when he came to get some treasure."

"Sure enough, on a little shelf in the passage immediately outside the door was a 'Dietz' model hurricane-lamp and a box of matches. Geoffrey took the lamp and the matches, and where Mr. Merridew was still lying, and placing the lamp on one of the chests struck a match.

It flickered for an instant and then went out.

He was about to strike another when Phyllis called out excitedly. "Didn't you see? The match was blown out!"

"Well, dear, I know. I will light another."

"But don't you understand? There must be a draught. Where does it come from? There may be another secret door."

Geoffrey leapt to his feet with a shout. "By jove, dear, you're right! What a fool I was not to see at once! Phyllis darling, you're wonderful!"

Even Sher Khan, who had been sitting apart for the last few minutes and who seldom let his hand rest on a treasure-chest, was filled with great emotion.

"The miss-sahib is right and we men are slow fools. We will escape yet, my colonel-sahib, and cheat those Chinese devils."

"Now," said Geoffrey, "I am going to strike another match. I will shelter it carefully with my hand, until it is well alight. All of you watch and see from which direction it is blown out!"

The match hissed as he struck it on the box, flickered for a moment and then began to burn steadily in the cup of his hands.

THREE HUNDRED YEARS BETWEEN

Times change—in dress the changes are very interesting. Compare Meissonier's famous "Cavalier" with the smart "Hipsley" Suit. The Cavalier is perhaps more picturesque. The modern "Hipsley" Suit combines excellent materials, well cut and perfectly tailored. Hipsley Ltd., are Leaders in Modern Tailoring, and in Modern Valves.

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while Phyllis, Geoffrey and Sher Khan carried great lumps of gold and filled the empty chest.

"There, now"—Geoffrey surveyed his handiwork with professional pride when the chest was half full—"I don't think anything will be able to shift all and moves anything, it really should be the stone. I wonder what they would say to this at Chatham! I only hope the cord won't break."

He picked the ends of the cord up and held them firmly.

"Now keep right back, all of you. Mr. Merridew, I think you will be all right where you are, but keep your face turned away and your eyes shut. There may be some dust flying about. Ready, Phyllis dear? All right, Sher Khan? Good. Eyes shut! Now!"

He turned away and pulled the cord, stones or bits of dust were flung into the room and there was remarkably little dust. But when they looked at the loose stone all four gave a shout of triumph. It was now really loose, for it had dropped a good two inches!

"Now then, Sher Khan, let's have the chest away again. But we must first get the gold first." Feverishly they worked and soon had cleared all the tamping away from the hole under the stone. But although the stone had sunk appreciably, they were still unable to get any hold on it. For a few minutes Geoffrey gazed at it in thought.

"Look here what I've found! Won't this help?" Phyllis was holding out an ankus or elephant-goat. It was made of steel inlaid with gold. The handle was of carved ivory, and above and below the grip were double rings of sapphires.

"The very thing. I only hope it is strong enough."

Geoffrey pushed the end through the gap above the stone, and the point met with no resistance. He turned it round so that the hook caught on the far side of the stone. The end of the ankus was through the stone wall!

Then he pulled with all his strength. To his relief the ankus did not break, but still he could make no impression on the stone. It was obviously wedged very tight.

"Come on, Sher Khan," he panted, "put your arms round me and pull when I give the word. That's right. Are you ready? Now!"

Together they heaved with all their might. For a second nothing moved, and then something gave suddenly and they fell over backwards.

"Without attempting to get up Geoffrey looked at the ankus. No, it was not broken. Then he dared to look at the wall. The stone had revolved about its lower end, where it was still jammed, and was now sticking out into the room almost horizontally.

"Above the stone there was a black gap."

"Your torch, Sher Khan. Quick! Let me look!"

Geoffrey's hand shook as he turned the beam of light through the gap and looked beyond.

"Jays of jays! He saw a flight of steps!"

(To be continued.)

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YOU NEED Matlesco

Blue Shirts Banned.

SENSATIONAL ACTION BY GOVERNMENT.

The Young Ireland Association, a section of Fine Gael which has become known as the Blue Shirts, has been banned by Government Proclamation.

Issued yesterday evening, the proclamation came as a complete surprise and created a sensation. It is as follows:—

TEXT OF PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS it is provided by sub-section (2) of section 10 of Article 2A of the Constitution that an order made by the Executive Council declaring that a specified association is, in the opinion of the Executive Council, an unlawful association shall be conclusive evidence for all purposes that such association is an unlawful association; and

NOW the Executive Council in exercise of the powers conferred on them by sub-section (2) of section 10 of Article 2A of the Constitution and of every and any other power them in this behalf enabling, do hereby declare and order as follows:—

1. The association styling itself and generally known as the Young Ireland (also known as the Blue Shirts) is, in the opinion of the Executive Council, an unlawful association.

2. The Interpretation Act, 1923 (No. 46 of 1923) applies to the interpretation of this Order in like manner as it applies to the interpretation of an Act of the Oireachtas.

3. This Order may be cited for all purposes as the Constitution (Declaration of Unlawful Association) (No. 2) Order, 1933.

DUBLIN.

This 8th Day of December, 1933.

NON-BOBBING BARBER

Quits After Fifty Years.

Concord, capital of New Hampshire, has a barber whose resolution is as hard and enduring as the rock for which the Granite State is named, states the New York Times. Retiring at the age of 70 after a half century of work, he proudly boasts that never has he cut a woman's hair. Women have begged, threatened, argued and laughed, but no one could move his immutable determination.

His reply, with numerous variations, has been: "What was good enough for God Almighty ought to be good enough for them. He put the hair on their heads as a crowning glory. No bolts or shingles ever will be executed in this shop." And then, what perhaps infuriated some potential customer more, he would add: "Anxious women look much better with long flowing tresses."

What may have been his reply to an intimation that only the barber prevents men's hair from rivaling women's in quantity is not disclosed.

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With each revolution the plugs meet and pass through jets of water little thicker than the lead in a pencil. The amazing result is that plugs of stainless iron or nickel wear half-way through in two or three minutes. Steel and iron intrude, which is almost diamond hard, hold out for only 15 or 20 minutes.

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Sturdy Little Ones

Healthy youngsters are those kept free from constipation. Mother watches for the first signs of trouble and corrects it with baby's own laxative—Steedman's Powders. Steedman's Powders regulate the bowels from teething time to fourteen years.

Steedman's POWDERS

Each pierced by two bullets, for there was no distance. Followed shouts in the air and the ruffians were in a confined space, and lumps fell down in showers from loosened by the concussion.

He dropped his revolver and the last two Mills' bombs whizzed from the first and it as far as he could down into the tunnel. Almost before he reached the end of its range and was shot after it than ever sounded the clanging explosion. The shouts of baffled rage and followed were suddenly by an even greater noise, as a sudden rumbling roar, as the entire roof of the tunnel in the narrowest part.

Phyllis and Sher Khan were at the side of the tunnel, and they

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HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

A GARDNER WROTE IN 1914.

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Mr. E. Gardner, a well-known Englishman, writes in 1914: "I have suffered from constipation for many years, and have tried many remedies, but have not found any relief. I have been advised to take Holloway's Pills, and I have taken them, and I have found them to be the best medicine I have ever taken. I have been cured of my constipation, and I am now in perfect health. I can now eat and drink as much as I wish, and I am able to do my work as usual. I am very grateful to you for your kind advice, and I am sure that your pills will do much good for many other people who suffer from constipation."