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The Man Who
Would be King

By

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THE MAN WHO WOULD
BE KING

The Law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct
of life, and one not easy to follow. I
have been fellow to a beggar again and
again under circumstances which prevented
either of us finding out whether the other

was worthy. I have still to be brother to a
Prince, though I once came near to kinship
with what might have been a veritable King
and was promised the reversion of a Kingdom

all complete. But, to-day, I greatly fear
that my King is dead, and if I want a crown
I must go and hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway
train upon the road to Mhow from
Ajmir. There had been a deficit in the
Budget, which necessitated travelling, not
Second-class, which is only half as dear as
First-class, but by Intermediate, which is
very awful indeed. There are no cushions
in the Intermediate class, and the population
are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian,
or native, which for a long night journey is
nasty; or Loafer, which is amusing though
intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronize
refreshment-rooms. They carry their food
in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the
native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the roadside
water. That is why in the hot weather
Intermediates are taken out of the carriages
dead, and in all weathers are most properly
looked down upon.

My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which me, not knowing more than the crows where seventy millions of revenue the land would he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him. We talked things from the underside where the lath talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the

Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

these days. Did you say you are travelling

Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means

I explained.

changing at Marwar Junction to get into

in the early morning of the 24th by the
Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar

precious few pickings to be got out of these

asked.

you out, and then you get escorted to the

into them. But about my friend here. I

where to go. I would take it more than
kind of you if you was to come out of Central
India in time to catch him at Marwar

sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage
round him in a second-class compartment.

cutting your time of stay in those parts by

hoping that you will give him the message

Englishmen are not usually softened by
appeals to the memory of their mothers, but
for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent,
I saw fit to agree.

now I know that I can depend on you doing
it. A second-class carriage at Marwar Junction,
and a red-haired man asleep in it.

the next station, and I must hold on there

just now as the correspondent of the Backwoodsman.

get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here

her to death as she hung from a beam.

man that would dare going into the State to

me, same as they did in Chortumna

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness.

The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches.

They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. Native States

were created by Providence in order to supply
picturesque scenery, tigers and tall-writing.

They are the dark places of the earth,
full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the
Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and,
on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid.

When I left the train I did business with
divers Kings, and in eight days passed
through many changes of life. Sometimes I
wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes
and Politicals, drinking from crystal and
eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out
upon the ground and devoured what I could
get, from a plate made of a flapjack, and
drank the running water, and slept under
the same rug as my servant. It was all in a

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert
upon the proper date, as I had promised, and
the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction,
where a funny little, happy-go-lucky,
native managed railway runs to Jodhpore.

The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short
halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in,
and I had just time to hurry to her platform
and go down the carriages. There was only
one second-class on the train. I slipped the

window and looked down upon a flaming
red beard, half covered by a railway rug.
That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him
gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt
and I saw his face in the light of the lamps.
It was a great and shining face.

is gone South for the week. He is gone

The train had begun to move out. The

and watched the red lights die out in the
dark. It was horribly cold because the wind
was blowing off the sands. I climbed into

If the man with the beard had given me a
rupee I should have kept it as a memento of
a rather curious affair. But the consciousness
of having done my duty was my only

reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they

Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them; and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from the Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents except the daily manufacture of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit

down and sketch the outline of a series of
ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles
on Seniority versus Selection; missionaries
wish to know why they have not been permitted
to escape from their regular vehicles
of abuse and swear at a brother-missionary
under special patronage of the editorial We;
stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain
that they cannot pay for their advertisements,
but on their return from New
Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest;
inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines,
carriage couplings and unbreakable
swords and axle-trees call with specifications
in their pockets and hours at their disposal;
tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses
with the office pens; secretaries of
ball-committees clamor to have the glories
of their last dance more fully expounded;

and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped
the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business
to ask for employment as a proof-reader.

And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing
madly, and Kings are being killed on the

down brimstone upon the British Dominions,

and the little black copy-boys are whining,
tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank

But that is the amusing part of the year.
There are other six months wherein none
ever come to call, and the thermometer
walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass,
and the office is darkened to just above reading
light, and the press machines are red-hot
of touch, and nobody writes anything but
accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations
or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes
a tinkling terror, because it tells you
of the sudden deaths of men and women
that you knew intimately, and the prickly-heat
covers you as with a garment, and you

sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta
Khan District. The outbreak is purely sporadic
in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic
efforts of the District authorities, is now
almost at an end. It is, however, with deep

Then the sickness really breaks out, and
the less recording and reporting the better
for the peace of the subscribers. But the

Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed, the dawn would lower

man could set off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a community was going to die or get a new Constitution,

or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram. It was a pitchy black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the loo, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type ticked and clicked, and the night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the loo dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, was aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make

tension, but, as the clock-hands crept up to fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood

they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads.

across the road and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to

come along and speak to him as turned us

smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction.

There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers.

you as a favor, because you did us a bad

I led from the press-room to the stifling
office with the maps on the walls, and the

proper shop to come to. Now, Sir, let me
introduce to you Brother Peachey Carnehan,

is me, and the less said about our professions
the better, for we have been most things in
our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer,
proof-reader, street-preacher, and
correspondents of the Backwoodsman when
we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan
is sober, and so am I. Look at us first

I watched the test. The men were absolutely
sober, so I gave them each a tepid
peg.

eyebrows, wiping the froth from his mustache.

been all over India, mostly on foot. We

have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty
contractors, and all that, and we have decided

They certainly were too big for the office.

they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued:

you touch it. They spend all their blessed

spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor
anything like that without all the Government

it alone, and go away to some other place

his own. We are not little men, and there
is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink,
and we have signed a Contract on that.

Dravot.

half a year, and require to see Books and

Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-whack. They call it Kafiristan. By my reckoning its the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Peshawar. They have two and thirty heathen idols there, country, and the women of those

one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say

how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish

mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people

are utter brutes, and even if you reached

you could think us a little more mad we
would be more pleased. We have come to
you to know about this country, to read a
book about it, and to be shown maps. We
want you to tell us that we are fools and to
book-cases.

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch
map of India, and two smaller Frontier
maps, hauled down volume INF-KAN of
consulted them.

me know the road. We was there with
the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann

I handed him Wood on the Sources of

the names of their tribes. The more tribes

I smoked while the men pored over

harmless lunatics, and if you come, to-morrow

be turned back at the Frontier or cut up the

minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do
you want any money or a recommendation
down-country? I can help you to the

so easy being a King as it looks. When
let you know, and you can come up and help

pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of note-paper
on which was written the following.

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth

(One) That me and you will settle this matter together:
i.e., to be Kings of Kafiristan.

(Two) That you and me will not while this matter is
being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any
Woman black, white or brown, so as to get
mixed up with one or the other harmful.

(Three) That we conduct ourselves with Dignity and
Discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble
the other will stay by him.

Signed by you and me this day.

Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.

Daniel Dravot.

Both Gentlemen at Large.

looks regular. Now you know the sort of

that we could sign a Contract like that

unless we was in earnest? We have kept

away from the two things that make life

if you are going to try this idiotic adventure.

I left them still poring over the maps and

were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great four-square

sink of humanity where the strings

of camels and horses from the North load

and unload. All the nationalities of Central

Asia may be found there, and most of the

folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara

there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to
draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises,
Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed
sheep and musk in the Kumharsen
Serai, and get many strange things for
nothing. In the afternoon I went down
there to see whether my friends intended to
keep their word or were lying about drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons
and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting
his servant, bending under the load of a
crate of mud toys. The two were loading
up two camels, and the inhabitants of the
Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

to the Amir. He will either be raised to
honor or have his head cut off. He came
in here this morning and has been behaving

caravan would have been cut up by the

Shinwaris almost within shadow of the

trading-house whose goods had been

feloniously diverted into the hands of other

robbers just across the Border, and whose

misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the

blown by the breath of a hundred devils

across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars,

the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and

perjurers! Who will take the Protected of

God to the North to sell charms that are

never still to the Amir? The camels shall

not gall, the sons shall not fall sick, and the

wives shall remain faithful while they are

away, of the men who give me place in

their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper

the King of the Roos with a golden slipper

with a silver heel? The protection of Pir

the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between

the lines of tethered horses.

and be at Peshawar in a day! Ho! Hazar

out the camels, but let me first mount my

He leaped on the back of his beast as it

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed

the two camels out of the Serai till we

reached open road and the priest halted.

can get donkeys for our camels, and strike

into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir,

O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags

I felt the butt of a Martini, and another

and another.

under the whirligigs and the mud

I asked, overcome with astonishment.

momento of your kindness, Brother. You
did me a service yesterday, and that time in
Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have,

compass from my watch-chain and handed
it up to the priest.

shake hands with an Englishman these many

he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands.

Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises.

The scene in the Serai attested that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection.

But, beyond, they would find death, certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawar,

been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawar and associated himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased because through superstition they imagine that such

The two then, were beyond the Border.

I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

* * * * *

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt

there crept to my chair what was left of a
man. He was bent into a circle, his head
was sunk between his shoulders, and he
moved his feet one over the other like a bear.
I could hardly see whether he walked or
who addressed me by name, crying that he

I went back to the office, the man following
with groans of pain, and I turned up the
lamp.

into a chair, and he turned his drawn
face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to
the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had
I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an
inch-broad black band, but for the life of me
I could not tell where.

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered

in spite of the suffocating heat.

I was more than a little astonished, and
expressed my feelings accordingly.

cackle, nursing his feet which were wrapped

never take advice, not though I begged of

your own time. Tell me all you can recollect
of everything from beginning to end.

You got across the border on your camels,
Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his

soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking
at me, or maybe my words will go all to
pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and

I leaned forward and looked into his face
as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand
upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist.

the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped
scar.

Carnehan.

caravan, me and Dravot, playing all sorts of
antics to amuse the people we were with.
Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings
when all the people was cooking their
did they do then? They lit little fires

he smiled foolishly.

had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where

talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak,

because we heard the roads was good.

the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes
and mine too, and said we would be heathen,

to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt
and between, and such a sight as Daniel
Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see
again. He burned half his beard, and slung
a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved
his head into patterns. He shaved mine,
too, and made me wear outrageous things to
look like a heathen. That was in a most
mountaineous country, and our camels

mountains. They were tall and black, and
coming home I saw them fight like wild

And these mountains, they never keep still,
no more than the goats. Always fighting

do when the camels could go no further because

called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was
with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him?

He died out there in the cold. Slap from

the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and
twisting in the air like a penny whirligig

or I am much mistaken and woful sore.

And then these camels were no use, and

camels all among the mountains, not having
anything in particular to eat, but first they
took off the boxes with the guns and the
ammunition, till two men came along driving
four mules. Dravot up and dances in front

ever he could put his hand to his knife,

Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and

the other party runs away. So Carnehan

loaded the mules with the rifles that was

taken off the camels, and together we starts

forward into those bitter cold mountainous

parts, and never a road broader than the

He paused for a moment, while I asked

him if he could remember the nature of the

country through which he had journeyed.

drove nails through it to make me hear
better how Dravot died. The country was
mountainous and the mules were most contrary,
and the inhabitants was dispersed and
solitary. They went up and up, and down
and down, and that other party Carnehan,
was imploring of Dravot not to sing and
whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the
tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that
King, and whacked the mules over the rump,
and never took no heed for ten cold days.
We came to a big level valley all among the
mountains, and the mules were near dead,
so we killed them, not having anything in
special for them or us to eat. We sat upon
the boxes, and played odd and even with
the cartridges that was jolted out.

ran down that valley, chasing twenty men
with bows and arrows, and the row was

well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the

fires two rifles at the twenty men and drops
one of them at two hundred yards from the
rock where we was sitting. The other men

began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits
on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up
and down the valley. Then we goes up to the
ten men that had run across the snow too,
and they fires a footy little arrow at us.

Dravot he shoots above their heads and they
all falls down flat. Then he walks over
them and kicks them, and then he lifts them
up and shakes hands all around to make
them friendly like. He calls them and gives
them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand
for all the world as though he was King
already. They takes the boxes and him
across the valley and up the hill into a pine
wood on the top, where there was half a
dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the
a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his
nose respectful with his own nose, patting
him on the head, and saluting in front of it.

He turns round to the men and nods his
the know too, and these old jim-jams are my
points down it, and when the first man

the boss of the village brings him food, he

That was how we came to our first village,

without any trouble, just as though we had
tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled
from one of those damned rope-bridges, you

he was the King, and a handsome man
he looked with the gold crown on his head
and all. Him and the other party stayed in
that village, and every morning Dravot sat
by the side of old Imbra, and the people came

Then a lot of men came into the valley, and
Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with
the rifles before they knew where they was,
and runs down into the valley and up again
the other side, and finds another village,
same as the first one, and the people all falls

as fair as you or me, that was carried off,
and Dravot takes her back to the first village

For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk
on the ground and waves his arms like a

Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of

each village by the arm and walks them
down into the valley, and shows them how
to scratch a line with a spear right down
the valley, and gives each a sod of turf
people comes down and shouts like the devil

Then we asks the names of things in their
and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each
village up to the idol, and says he must sit
there and judge the people, and if anything
goes wrong he is to be shot.

land in the valley as quiet as bees and much
prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints
and told Dravot in dumb show what

and Carnehan picks out twenty good men
and shows them how to click off a rifle, and
form fours, and advance in line, and they
was very pleased to do so, and clever to see
the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe
and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one
village, and one at the other, and off we two
goes to see what was to be done in the next
valley. That was all rock, and there was a

impress the people, and then they settled
down quiet, and Carnehan went back to
Dravot who had got into another valley, all
snow and ice and most mountainous. There
was no people there and the Army got afraid,
so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on
till he finds some people in a village, and
the Army explains that unless the people
wants to be killed they had better not shoot
their little matchlocks; for they had matchlocks.
We makes friends with the priest
and I stays there alone with two of the
Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a
thundering big Chief comes across the snow
with kettledrums and horns twanging, because
he heard there was a new god kicking
about. Carnehan sights for the brown of
the men half a mile across the snow and
wings one of them. Then he sends a message
to the Chief that, unless he wished to
be killed, he must come and shake hands
with me and leave his arms behind. The
Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes
hands with him and whirls his arms about,
same as Dravot used, and very much surprised
that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows.
Then Carnehan goes alone to the
Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he

Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the Army to show them drill and at the end of two weeks Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chiefs men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot, wherever he be by land or by

At the risk of throwing the creature out of

looking at me between the eyes, please. It

the way of it from a blind beggar in the

I remember that there had once come to

the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cypher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but failed.

this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priest at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot
marches down the hill with his Army and a
tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the

I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis,

six weeks with the Army, and every footy
little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful;

the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton.

that a man brought me. Call up all the

and I slips the crown on. It was too small
and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory.

like a hoop of a barrel.

him afterwards, because he was so like Billy
Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach

and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me
the Grip. I said nothing, but tried him
with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers,

the priest can work a Fellow Craft Lodge

cut the marks on the rocks, but they

Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft
Degree, but this is a miracle. A god and a
Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a
Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and

a Lodge without warrant from any one;

easy as a four-wheeled bogy on a down

my heel, and passed and raised according
to their merit they shall be. Billet these
men on the villages and see that we run up
a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra
will do for the Lodge-room. The women

such a fool as not to see what a pull this

Craft business gave us. I showed the

border and marks was made of turquoise

lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a

great square stone in the temple for the

chairs, and painted the black pavement

with white squares, and did what we

could to make things regular.

on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot

gives out that him and me were gods and

sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters

in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan

a country where every man should eat

in peace and drink in quiet, and specially

obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to

shake hands, and they was so hairy and

white and fair it was just shaking hands

with old friends. We gave them names according

as they was like men we had known

Kergan that was Bazar-master when I was

at Mhow, and so on, and so on.

next night. One of the old priests was
watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy,

old priest was a stranger come in from beyond
the village of Bashkai. The minute

girls had made for him, the priest fetches a
whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the

never winked an eye, not when ten priests

priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it
to clear away the black dirt, and presently

into the stone. Not even the priests of
the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The

missing Mark that no one could understand

Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a

vested in me by my own right hand and
the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master
of all Freemasonry in Kafiristan in

At that he puts on his crown and I puts on

opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served make the Degree common. And they was clamoring to be raised.

about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other and were fair sick and tired of it. And when they

tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know

like common, black Mohammedans. You are

see the hang of, and he learned their lingo
in a way I never could. My work was to
help the people plough, and now and again
to go out with some of the Army and see
what the other villages were doing, and
ravines which cut up the country horrid.

Dravot was very kind to me, but when he
walked up and down in the pine wood pulling
that bloody red beard of his with both
fists I knew he was thinking plans I could
not advise him about, and I just waited for
orders.

before the people. They were afraid of me
and the Army, but they loved Dan. He
was the best of friends with the priests and
the Chiefs; but any one could come across
the hills with a complaint and Dravot would
hear him out fair, and call four priests together
and say what was to be done. He
used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and
Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief
when there was any fighting to be done in

small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council.

forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini

that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

the Governor the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred hand-made Martinis, a hundred yards, and forty manloads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with

men that the Chiefs sent in to me to drill.

Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight.

Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big

about powder-shops and factories, walking
up and down in the pine wood when the
winter was coming on.

look at their mouths. Look at the way they
stand up. They sit on chairs in their own

want the rifles and a little drilling. Two
hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to

Donkin, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail;

on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do

dispensation from the Grand Lodge for what

native troops in India take up the Martini.

fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a

hundred thousand Sniders run through the

be an Empire. When everything was ship-shape,

more men coming in to be drilled this

autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds.

you, for no other living man would have

followed me and made me what I am as you

and I was sorry when I made that remark,

but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking

done all he told me.

and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but

his mouth, and it was as red as the gold of
his crown.

the people how to stack their oats better, and

at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed

can, though I am a fool. Remember the

as we was Kings; and Kings we have been

prettier than English girls, and we can take

have any dealings with a woman not till we

lie off a bit, and see if we can get some
better tobacco from Afghan country and run

for the King. A Queen out of the strongest

the people thinks about you and their own

to me. She taught me the lingo and one or
two other things; but what happened? She

up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste,
and had the impudence to say I was her husband

said Dravot, and he went away through the
pine-trees looking like a big red devil. The

low sun hit his crown and beard on one side,
and the two blazed like hot coals.

Dan thought. He put it before the Council,
and there was no answer till Billy Fish said

the shadow of my hand over this country?

me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember.

thumped his hand on the block that he used
to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which
opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said

could feel, I hope, that he was going against
his better mind. He walked out of the
Council-room, and the others sat still, looking
at the ground.

who know everything? How can daughters

Bible; but if, after seeing us as long as they
had, they still believed we were gods it

these mountains, and now and again a girl

Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the
stone. Only the gods know that. We
thought you were men till you showed the

about the loss of the genuine secrets of a
Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said
nothing. All that night there was a blowing
of horns in a little dark temple half-way
down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit
to die. One of the priests told us that she
was being prepared to marry the King.

Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

can induce the King to drop all this nonsense

you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the

finest men that God Almighty ever made.

head upon his great fur cloak for a minute

have twenty of my men with me, and they

everything was white except the greasy fat
clouds that blew down and down from the
north. Dravot came out with his crown
on his head, swinging his arms and stamping
his feet, and looking more pleased than
Punch.

with a voice as loud as the braying of a

were all there leaning on their guns and
spears round the clearing in the centre of

the pine wood. A deputation of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew up fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and red beard.

his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howls in their

I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

with an English Martini and drilled three
beggars in a line. The valley was full of
shouting, howling creatures, and every soul

Billy Fish all they were worth, but their
breech-loaders, and four of them dropped.
Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was
very wrathful; and Billy Fish had a hard job
to prevent him running out at the crowd.

ran, and we went down the valley
swearing horribly and crying out that he
was a King. The priests rolled great stones
on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and

Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came
down to the bottom of the valley alive.

villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I

mad in his head from that hour. He stared
up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was
all for walking back alone and killing the
priests with his bare hands; which he could

Queen.

after your Army better. There was

upon a rock and called me every foul name
he could lay tongue to. I was too heart-sick
to care, though it was all his foolishness
that brought the smash.

accounting for natives. This business is our

night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

runners to the villages to say that you are

down on the snow and begins to pray to his gods.

at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-wise as if they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an army in position waiting in the middle!

says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh.

in the calf of the leg. That brought him to
his senses. He looks across the snow at the
Army, and sees the rifles that we had
brought into the country.

blasted nonsense that has brought you to
this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your

with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out,

second word but ran off, and Dan and Me
and Billy Fish walked across to where the
drums were drumming and the horns were
got that cold in the back of my head now.

The punkah-coolies had gone to sleep.

Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first

Peachey fired his last cartridge into the

did those swines make. They just closed up, tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks

Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No,

rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the
paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They
marched him a mile across that snow to a
rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the
bottom. You may have seen such. They

your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan,
where you was late Commander-in-Chief of

Out he goes, looking neither right nor left,
and when he was plumb in the middle of those
shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell,
turning round and round and round, twenty
thousand miles, for he took half an hour to
fall till he struck the water, and I could see
his body caught on a rock with the gold
crown close beside.

Peachey between two pine-trees? They
show. They used wooden pegs for his hands
there and screamed, and they took him
down next day, and said it was a miracle

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly,
wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred
hands and moaning like a child for some
ten minutes.

in the temple, because they said he was more
of a god than old Daniel that was a man.

Then they turned him out on the snow, and
told him to go home, and Peachey came
home in about a year, begging along the
roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked

they danced at night, and the mountains

but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey
came along bent double. He never let go

head. They gave it to him as a present in
the temple, to remind him not to come again,
and though the crown was pure gold, and
Peachey was starving, never would Peachey
sell the same. You knew Dravot, sir! You
knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot!

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his

bent waist; brought out a black horsehair
bag embroidered with silver thread; and

withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning
sun that had long been paling the lamps
struck the red beard and blind sunken eyes;
struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded
with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed
tenderly on the battered temples.

of Kafiristan with his crown upon his
head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements
manifold, I recognized the head of the man
of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go.
I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to

Commissioner and ask to set in the Poor-house
till I get my health. No, thank you,

He shambled out of the office and departed

house. That day at noon I had

occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall,
and I saw a crooked man crawling along the
white dust of the roadside, his hat in his
hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion
of street-singers at Home. There was not a
soul in sight, and he was out of all possible
earshot of the houses. And he sang through

A golden crown to gain;

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor
wretch into my carriage and drove him off to
the nearest missionary for eventual transfer
to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice
while he was with me whom he did not in
the least recognize, and I left him singing to
the missionary.

Two days later I inquired after his welfare
of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at

know if he had anything upon him by any

And there the matter rests.