

# **The Butcher of Cawnpore**

The Butcher of Cawnpore  
or, The Devil's Whirlwind  
by William Murray Graydon  
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The Butcher of Cawnpore.

## CHAPTER I

“Good-evening, colonel. You have just come from Meerut, I believe?”

“Ah, how are you, Fanshawe? Glad to see you—yes, I arrived only a few moments ago; was detained by very important business.”

“Yes, I know. That’s what I wanted to ask you about. I have been in Delhi for the past two days. What did you do with the eighty-five of the light infantry who refused to accept their cartridges a day or two ago?”

“The unruly dogs were tried this morning,” replied the colonel; “all were found guilty and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from three to ten years. Their fate will prove a timely warning to other mutinous fellows—if, indeed, there are any, which I doubt.”

“You think then that this was an isolated case, and that the spirit of insubordination is in no danger of spreading through the Sepoy army?” asked Mr. Fanshawe.

The colonel frowned, and tugged fiercely at his long mustaches.

“What put such nonsense into your head?” he demanded, angrily. “Our power in India was never on a sounder basis than now. As for this discontent among the native troops—it is nothing of any account and will blow over in a week or two.”

“I hope so with all my heart,” replied Mr. Fanshawe. “Our power in India depends on our vast Sepoy army—these native soldiers who have been drilled to perfection by British martinets, and in comparison to which our English troops are indeed few in numbers. And you know the rumor that has been circulated among them lately—that the cartridges used in the Brown Bess muskets are smeared with the fat of the hog and the cow. The former animal is obnoxious to the Mohammedans, and the latter is sacred to the Hindoos; so they believe that in biting off the ends of these new cartridges they will lose their caste.”

“Absurd!” muttered the colonel. “They surely can’t credit such a story.”

“They also believe that the rations served to them are defiled,” continued Mr.

Fanshawe; “that bone dust is mixed with the flour, and fat with the butter.”

“I have heard some talk of that kind,” growled the colonel. “The rascals will come to their senses after a while.”

“And there are other and more serious grounds for uneasiness,” persisted Mr. Fanshawe. “Take the case of Dhandoo Pant, commonly known as Nana Sahib. He was the adopted son of a Hindoo prince of Oudh, and when the latter died in 1851 Nana Sahib was by Hindoo law the rightful heir. But the Government deprived him of most of his adopted father’s possessions, and he is said to hate the English bitterly. His power and influence over the people are very great.”

Colonel Bland shrugged his shoulders.

“Any more reasons?” he asked.

“Many,” Mr. Fanshawe gravely replied. “There is the Begum, the favorite wife of the old king of Delhi. She, too, possesses influence, and she is greatly incensed because the Government has deprived her sons of the right of succession. That, in my opinion, was arbitrary and unjust. Surely, my dear colonel, you cannot be blind to the signs of the times—”

At this point the speakers moved slowly across the veranda still conversing earnestly, and entered a broad doorway whence issued a yellow flood of light.

On the spot they had just left stood a tall screen made of peacock feathers, and from behind this now emerged a lad of perhaps, twenty with a frank, rosy face, yellow hair that clung in little curls about his head, and a very faint mustache of the same color. He was faultlessly attired in evening dress, and although his appearance and bored manner rather smacked of effeminacy, those who were so fortunate as to number Guy Mottram among their friends knew that he was lacking in no manly attribute.

“Old Fanshawe is always croaking about danger of some sort,” muttered the lad to himself, as he saw the two figures vanish through the doorway. “I couldn’t help overhearing the conversation—I was just going to cough when they moved away. But I wonder if Fanshawe has any good ground for his fears in this case. These little disturbances among the Sepoys have occurred in widely separated parts of India—that is true enough—but then Colonel Bland ought to understand the situation thoroughly, and he laughed at the idea of danger. The conversation

was not intended for me, so I won't bother about it. I wish it was time to go home. My foot is a little too lame yet for dancing, and I don't know what to do with myself. I'll hunt up a nice cool spot where I can sit down and watch what is going on."

Guy found just such a place at the foot of the steps which led to Nawab Ali's terraced lawn, and there he ensconced himself, looking down toward the moonlit waters of the Kalli Nudda and exchanging greetings with friends who passed up and down the steps.

It was the evening of Saturday, the 9th of May, 1857, and the place at which our story opens was the palace of Nawab Ali lying a few miles south of the city of Meerut far up in the northwest provinces of India. The Nawab was giving a ball, and his princely apartments were filled with English army officers, government officials, neighboring planters, and, in fact, everybody of consequence from Meerut and Delhi—for Nawab Ali was a very blue-blooded Hindoo—the possessor of great wealth—and stood high in the estimation of the English.

Back in the spacious ball-room, with its floor of polished marble, the Grenadiers' Band was guiding the feet of the dancers—for the officers had brought their wives and daughters with them—but the greater portion of the Nawab's guests were scattered about the lawn, which stretched clear to the water's edge, and had been decorated in honor of the occasion. Strings of Chinese lanterns hung everywhere—green, blue, red, yellow—and dangled from the branches of the tamarind trees.

Near the veranda were two long tables resplendent with snowy linen and polished silver, groaning under the weight of fruits, dainty cakes, tea and coffee, ices, claret and champagne cup—for the Nawab was a prodigal and generous entertainer.

Between the lawn and the ball-room passed an endless procession of beautiful women, smartly uniformed officers, and civilians in faultless dress—yet not one of these people, in the midst of Nawab Ali's luxurious hospitality, dreamed of the smoldering volcano beneath their feet that was to burst into flame on the morrow. At that period all the English in India were living in a fool's paradise.

For a long time Guy remained at his post, watching the brilliant scene before him, and at the same time keeping an eye on those who passed up and down the

steps, for among them he hoped to find his father, who had mysteriously disappeared several hours before.

“I can’t imagine where he is,” muttered Guy, impatiently, when his vigil had lasted half an hour. “He is not a dancing man, so it would be useless to seek him in the ball-room. I think I’ll stroll down to the river and back—he may return by that time.”

Guy rose and sauntered slowly across the lawn until he reached the hedge that separated Nawab Ali’s grounds from the shore of the Kalli Nudda. There he stood for a few moments looking across the quiet stretch of water and enjoying the fragrance of the Nawab’s garden, and then he turned slowly back toward the house. As he passed from the shadow of a clump of tamarind trees to the open lawn he glanced up to see his father coming hastily toward him.

The discovery was mutual, and at sight of Guy, Mr. Mottram quickened his steps. In the brief interval that elapsed the lad was startled to observe the strange appearance of his father’s face; it was of a dusky pallor, and set in a stern expression. Still another thing he noted at the same time, for his glance passed beyond his father and rested for a passing second on the figure of Nawab Ali standing a little apart from his guests, with his arms folded and his dark eyes fixed on the receding form of Mr. Mottram.

Then the latter reached Guy, and seizing him by the arm without a word he drew him almost roughly into the deep shadow of the tamarind trees.

“Tell me, Guy,” he exclaimed, when they were screened from observation. “Do you see anything of the Nawab?”

Guy looked up in amazement. His father’s voice was changed beyond recognition; it was husky and tremulous.

Mr. Mottram repeated the question more sharply. “Peep out through the leaves,” he added, “but don’t let yourself be seen.”

In wonder and consternation Guy obeyed.

“I can see Nawab Ali,” he said, after a brief scrutiny. “He is moving quietly about among the people—”



“Thank Heaven!” muttered Mr. Mottram, in an undertone, which did not escape Guy’s ear; and then he said, more loudly: “Never mind about the Nawab, Guy; it is all right now; and above all things don’t delay me by questioning. I have some instructions to give you, and the time is short. In the first place I am going to Meerut at once on a matter of urgent necessity. I will take one of the horses. In a very few moments—as soon as you can leave without exciting suspicion—get Jewan to harness the other horse into the dogcart and return to the plantation. Go to the secretary that stands in the library, and open that inner row of drawers—here are my keys. Take out all the papers you will find there and put them safely away in your pocket. What money is there you had better take also. Don’t go to bed tonight, but stay up until four o’clock in the morning, and if I have not returned by that time start for Meerut at once. Tell Jewan you leave the plantation absolutely in his hands; he is a faithful fellow, and can be safely trusted, I think. Not one word of this to any one, remember. I can’t explain now, you will know it all later, either on my return tonight, or when you join me at Meerut in the morning. If it comes to that you must seek me at the residency. But I am wasting precious moments. Good-by, Guy, and God bless you! Don’t forget my instructions.”

With a quick, fervent clasp of the hand Mr. Mottram hurried from the shadow of the trees and made his way more leisurely across the lawn, heading in the direction of the stables.

Guy watched his father until he was out of sight, and then leaned back against a tree, overwhelmed with amazement and consternation. Where had his father spent the past two hours? Why was he so anxious to know the Nawab’s whereabouts? What had he heard to cause him such alarm—to necessitate this sudden visit to Meerut?

Thus question after question passed through the lad’s mind, and he puzzled himself in vain to find a solution to the mystery.

“But I am forgetting my instructions,” he exclaimed at length. “Instead of pondering over a secret which don’t concern me, I should be starting for home. After eleven o’clock now,” he added, with a glance at his watch. “I must go at once.”

Guy made his way carelessly across the lawn—noting as he did so that Nawab Ali had suddenly disappeared—and circled around the palace to the Nawab’s

stables which lay in the rear.

The compound was full of vehicles of every sort and close to the gateway stood the dogcart in which Mr. Mottram and Guy had driven over from the plantation. Two horses were harnessed to the shaft and at their head stood Jewan, Mr. Mottram's favorite servant.

"Why, how's this?" exclaimed Guy, at sight of the two horses. "Was father here, Jewan?"

"Yes, Guy Sahib," replied the Hindoo. "He took a horse from the stables—one belonging to a friend—and rode away to Meerut. He bade me harness the team and await your coming."

"Yes, that's all right," said Guy, considerably relieved. "Have any more of the guests started for home yet, Jewan?"

"None, Sahib, the hour is too early," answered the Hindoo,

Guy mounted the seat and took the lines, Jewan sprang in behind, and the dogcart rolled noiselessly out of the compound and turned southward along the smooth white road that skirted the bank of the Kalli Nudda—the exactly opposite direction from Meerut.

## CHAPTER II

While Guy Mottram and the faithful Jewan are making all speed toward home—which home is a vast indigo plantation lying three miles south of Nawab Ali's palace, and nine miles from Meerut—we will give the reader the brief introduction which is necessary to a complete understanding of this story.

Mr. James Mottram—the father of Guy—was an American, and twelve years before had been engaged in commercial pursuits in the city of New York.

He had many relatives in England, and one of these, who died at this time, left to Mr. Mottram his indigo plantation up in the northwest provinces of India. The estate being in charge of competent overseers, it was not necessary for Mr. Mottram to take it under his personal management, but this he nevertheless decided to do, being influenced by two motives. One of these was a latent fondness for change and adventure which a residence in India promised to gratify, and the other was a knowledge of Indian products acquired by a lengthy experience in the importing business.

So it happened that Mr. Mottram went to India accompanied by his wife and son—the latter being then eight years old and during the twelve years previous to the opening of our story he had found no cause to regret the step. The plantation was a productive one, and yielded a satisfactory income.

Guy's early education was attended to by a clergyman residing in Meerut, who had a number of English lads under his care. Then, in the spring of 1852, Mr. Mottram sent his son back to the United States to complete his studies at a famous American college of which he himself was a graduate.

Guy entered without difficulty, graduated with honors at the end of four years, and returned to India in the spring of 1857, shortly before Nawab Ali's ball, which has been described in a previous chapter. He was now twenty years of age and possessed of many admirable qualities—but it would be superfluous to describe the lad's character here; he will speak for himself in the ensuing chapters of this story.

During his twelve years sojourn in India Mr. Mottram had made many friends among the English residents in Meerut, Delhi, and the surrounding country, and

was also on terms of close intimacy with Nawab Ali, who paid decidedly more attention to his American friend than to the Englishmen of high rank—military and official—who were constant visitors at his palace.

The friendship of these high caste Hindoos, however, was but skin deep, as the terrible events of the mutiny proved so thoroughly. Here and there were of course exceptions.

One very great misfortune, which I must not forget to mention, had befallen Mr. Mottram when Guy was about half through his college course. His wife's health broke down owing to the strain of the climate, and she very reluctantly returned to America with the assurance of her physician that she could come back to India in a year or two.

This limit of absence had now been exceeded by almost a year, but Mrs. Mottram had regained her health and was expected to return during the coming winter. It was her husband's intention to go to New York in the fall and accompany her back—Mr. Mottram's own health needed the benefits of a sea voyage—and it was for this reason that Guy sailed from America without his mother, in order that he might learn and undertake the management of the plantation during his father's absence.

All things, however harsh they may seem at first, work for the best, and during that awful summer of '57 Guy could never feel grateful enough that his mother was safe in America.

But this peaceful digression has lasted long enough. Sterner things demand our attention and we must return to the breaking off point—to the light dogcart which is bearing Guy and Jewan along the flat bank of the Kalli Nudda.

This stream flows by the city of Meerut, by the palace of the Nawab, by Mr. Mottram's plantation, and then rolls on for two hundred miles or more past palaces and temples and ghauts and hovels until it mingles with the yellow tide of the mighty Ganges, the river of dim tradition.

The Ganges has witnessed many terrible events, but still greater horrors are destined to take place ere long on its historic banks.

But at present no muttering of the storm is seen or heard—unless it be that ill-defined shadow of fear in Guy's heart which he vainly tries to shake off—and at

last the dim outline of the plantation buildings rises from the smooth stretch of road, and the vehicle wheels into the stable compound.

Guy was first on the ground in spite of Jewan's agility. He glanced at his watch to see that it was nearly midnight, and then went quickly to the house, leaving the Hindoo to put up the horses. His brain was still in a whirl and he replied mechanically to the greeting of the house servants which met him as he passed into the long building with its many porticos and mat-screened windows.

He took a lighted lamp and went directly to the library. He opened the massive brass bound secretary, and ransacked it for everything of value, stuffing the money, papers and jewelry which it contained into a small morocco bag. He locked this up in the secretary, and then being uneasy at mind and not knowing what else to do, left the house and walked about the plantation, visiting each building in turn, the factory where the indigo was prepared, the storehouse where the boxes lay packed ready for cartage, the long row of vats that shone brightly in the moonlight, and finally the barrick-like buildings where the coolie laborers were sleeping off the lassitude of their day's work.

In this manner Guy idled away two hours, and on returning to the house he dropped into an easy-chair and placed his watch on the table before him, where the lamp was still burning dimly. With knitted brow he began to puzzle his brain over the strange and baffling events of the evening trying as vainly as before to find a plausible solution for his father's visit to Meerut. He thought and thought and thought, until a great weariness stole over him, and though he made a valiant effort to fight it off, he succumbed at last and fell asleep with his head resting on the padded back of the chair.

The old khansaman peeped into the room, and with a curious glance at his young master, took the lamp and went away. Then the punky wallah began to pull the fans, and the heated atmosphere gave way to a cool breeze which refreshed and deepened the lad's sleep.

But under even these favoring circumstances Guy's slumber was not a lengthy one. He awoke with a start to find himself in utter darkness. A flash of a match recalled his situation, and at the same time revealed the hands of the watch pointing to a quarter of four.

Guy was on his feet instantly, thoroughly awake.

“Father is not here yet!” he exclaimed, aloud. “He won’t return now it is too late. I must obey his instructions and start for Meerut at once.”

He called loudly for a light, and the khansaman quickly responded, bearing a lamp between his trembling hands. He had been rudely awakened from a sleep, as was seen by his blinking eyes and tottering walk.

Guy took the light and entered an adjoining room. He emerged a moment later arrayed in traveling attire, trousers and jacket of cool linen, a ponderous sun helmet, and knee boots of polished leather. A pair of revolvers peeped carelessly from his belt, the result of a sudden conviction that they might be needed.

He opened the secretary, took out the morocco bag, and locked it again, putting the keys in his pocket.

“Jewan will be in charge here until I return,” he said to the khansaman, who was standing with folded arms by the table. “You will take your orders from him.”

Then he passed out of the room—not seeing the low salaam of the old servant, who, though burning with curiosity, dared not ask any explanation of his young master—and went with all speed to the stables. Here he found Jewan just stretching himself after a nap on top of the compound wall.

“Saddle the black horse for me at once,” ordered Guy; and then, while the Hindoo performed this duty with celerity, the lad explained that both he and his father might be absent for some time, and added some brief directions as to the management of the plantation.

Jewan listened in silence, though once or twice he made a half effort to speak, as though something was on his mind. This Guy failed to notice, and the Hindoo did not repeat the attempt.

Jewan was well fitted to assume entire charge of the plantation. He had been in Mr. Mottram’s employ for the past twelve years in a sort of general capacity, and possessed far more intelligence than is usually found among men of his class.

Moreover, Mr. Mottram had on one occasion saved his life, and this probably formed the basis of Jewan’s loyalty and devotion, which had been tested many times.

So when Guy mounted his spirited horse and rode out of the stable compound, his mind was perfectly at ease so far as the welfare of the house and plantation was concerned—under Jewan's charge all would go well. He even felt a sort of exhilaration as he galloped along the hard-trodden road with the tide of the Kalli Nudda on his right, and on the left a hedge of wild cotton trees that cast their stunted shadow on the highway. He was going to Meerut and there he would meet his father, and hear the explanation of the mystery which had worn such a sombre hue for the fast few hours—the solution would perhaps be simple and harmless enough, and at the thought Guy laughed to himself and spurred the horse on more rapidly than ever.

Soon he went skimming past the palace of the Nawab, so recently the scene of such luxurious revelry.

Now the stately building was silent and deserted, and the first shimmer of dawn was glowing on the carved towers and minarets.

Just beyond the Nawab's stables the road led between two rows of well-trimmed trees, and as far as these continued was a stretch of shadow far beyond which the commencement of the open highway was marked by a visible streak of silvery light.

With no thought or premonition of danger, Guy entered the dark lines of trees, catching an occasional glimpse of the Kalli Nudda through the leafy screen.

Then his sense of security was rudely broken in upon. A faint rustle was heard among the trees to the left, and as Guy glanced in that direction a sharp report rang in his ears, and a brief, ruddy flash lit up the gloom.

The horse reared madly in air, and then plunged to the ground in a quivering heap, flinging Guy forward head first, upon the dusty road.

## CHAPTER III

So sudden and unexpected was this catastrophe that the lad found himself on hands and knees in the road, stunned and dizzy, before he could realize what had happened.

Even then he was conscious of but one thing; that some one, for some unknown purpose, had fired a shot from cover of the hedge. His next thought was one of anxiety for the horse, and, turning his head painfully around, he saw the steed lying a few feet behind him in an attitude that showed him to be lifeless beyond a doubt.

This discovery drove all thought of further peril from Guy's head, and caused him to forget the assassin that was yet lurking in the hedge. But that treacherous individual was by no means satisfied with his work, and now, unperceived by the lad, a dark form stole out from the shadow of the trees—a slim, villainous-faced Hindoo, clad only in a greasy waist cloth—and silently approached the lad from behind. The rascal had evidently lost the weapon with which he had fired the shot, or possibly he had possessed only one load—at all events, he was armed now with a gleaming tulwar, or short sword. He came steadily on, resolved to take the life of his defenseless victim, and it was easy to see that he would accomplish this without difficulty.

But just when the assassin was within a yard or two of striking distance, Guy, who was crawling on hands and knees toward the horse, heard the faint sound of the footsteps and wheeled around. An involuntary cry of alarm broke from his lips at the sight of the rascal brandishing the gleaming sword, and with an effort he staggered to his feet, throwing out his arms to ward off the blow—for in this moment of sudden fright he forgot all about the pistols in his belt.

The Hindoo uttered a low expressive cry of triumph, and bounded forward with his weapon lifted for the fatal stroke. Neither he nor Guy heard the quick tread of feet advancing from the side of the road that bordered the river. The lad staggered backward, still warding off the blow with his hands, and just as the sharp blade was descending with terrible force a revolver cracked shrilly. The Hindoo's arm dropped to his side, broken at the wrist, while the tulwar clattered to the ground.



The report and the pungent smell of the powder broke the spell, and brought Guy to his senses. He snatched a pistol with each hand and peered quickly ahead through the drifting smoke.

The Hindoo had disappeared—a violent rustling in the hedge told in which direction—and in his place was a lad a year or two older than Guy. He wore only a shirt and a pair of trousers; in one hand was a revolver, and in the other a sword. The young stranger advanced a step or two, revealing on close inspection a smooth, beardless face and a pair of twinkling dark eyes.

“Hold on! don’t shoot!” he exclaimed, as Guy unconsciously held out his pistols. “The rascal has gone, but he took with him a little memento in the shape of a broken wrist, and here lies his sword in the road. The dog came near spitting you with it, too—but what does all this mean? Tell me how it happened. I only arrived on the scene after the first shot was fired.”

“Then you know as much about it as I do,” replied Guy, as he put up his pistols and shook hands warmly with his new friend. “I’m awfully obliged to you. You saved my life beyond a doubt, for that rascal meant business, and his blade was just coming down on my head when you fired. I don’t know what the scoundrel was after, I’m sure. He fired at me from cover of the hedge, but killed my poor horse instead, and I was thrown out on the road, too stunned to realize what had happened until the assassin was almost upon me with his sword. But how did you happen to be here? Where did you spring from, and in such a—”

Here Guy paused, his eyes showing the curiosity that he hesitated to express in words.

“Oh, go on,” returned the stranger, laughingly; “where did I spring from in such a costume? you were about to ask. Well, I can explain that in a very few words. To begin with, my name is Robert Loftus, commonly called Bob, and I am a junior ensign in the Seventy second Grenadiers, stationed at Meerut—though I only came over from England three weeks ago, I am just returning from Furzabad, where I have been visiting a friend on a brief furlough, and about three hours ago as nearly as I can judge, my confounded rascally bearers got tired traveling and dumped me down by the roadside, palanquin and all, while they took a snooze. I don’t suppose they thought I would get awake, but that pistol shot roused me like a flash, and out I came without stopping to arrange my toilet. By Jove!— there are the scoundrels now, just crawling out of those bushes

—the cowards must have run off when the shooting began. I'll teach them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry."

Mr. Bob Loftus assumed a severely martial aspect and strode toward the cowering offenders, but Guy caught up with him and held him back.

"Let the poor fellows off this time," he entreated. "Where would I be now if they had not stopped for sleep?"

"By Jove! that's so!" exclaimed Mr. Loftus. "Well, I'll let them off this once, but another time—"

He scowled darkly, and slapped his hand against his thigh.

It was now almost daylight, and Guy suddenly remembered his errand to Meerut.

"Here is a pretty fix," he exclaimed. "That rascal has killed my horse—the poor beast is stone dead—and now I shall have to walk all the way to Meerut. I should have been there before this."

"Walk! Not a bit of it," remarked Mr. Loftus, cheerily. "My palanquin will easily bear double, and I'll make the cowardly bearers do penance for their sins by trotting as they never trotted before. I'll have you in Meerut in a jiffy, my boy. Get on board, now, and we'll start at once."

Guy thankfully accepted this offer.

A brief but unavailing search was made for the assassin; he was probably far away by this time.

"The fellow was bent on robbery and murder," suggested Mr. Loftus, and in default of a better theory, Guy promptly accepted this one, though he was amazed at the daring of the scoundrel.

Another puzzling thing was the fact that none of the Nawab's household had been drawn to the spot by the shooting—for the palace was very close at hand.

But Guy did not waste much time in reflections of this nature. He was too anxious to reach Meerut, and, with a lingering glance at the dead horse, which he had prized highly, he took his place in the palanquin beside Loftus, and the four

sturdy coolies bore them forward on a jog trot.

The journey was beguiled by pleasant conversation, which cemented a firm friendship between the two lads.

Guy told Loftus much about himself, but prudently made no mention of the occurrence at Nawab Ali's ball on the previous evening. He remembered his father's injunction of silence.

Loftus in turn rattled away about his life in England, his journey to India, and his aspirations of military glory—on which he dwelt with particular fervor. Little did he dream of the opportunities he was shortly to have.

Thus, while the gray light of dawn brightened on the flat, sun-baked country, and the wood and grass-cutters crept out of their villages to begin the day's toil, the distance from Meerut rapidly lessened, and the roof-tops and minarets of the city became visible in the distance.

But still another adventure was in store for the young travelers ere the full risen sun should pour down its burning heat. This was destined to be a wonderful day for Guy—a day to be remembered for all time, and not especially so to Guy, but to all the residents in yonder city as well. It was Sunday morning, too—a fact which was only recalled to the lads by the distant peal of a church bell, a strange sound, truly, in this land of idolatrous religions.

As the palanquin bearers drew near the place where the main highway from Delhi joined the road they were on—about a mile to the southwest of Meerut—their speed diminished—and they began to chatter among themselves.

Guy and Loftus drew aside the curtains and looked out. Just ahead, at the junction of the roads, stood an elephant, most gorgeously caparisoned, and seated in an elegant howdah on the animal's back was a most aristocratic-looking Hindoo not more than thirty years old, with a fat, round face, brilliant but restless eyes, and a complexion no darker than a Spaniard's.

“Some native prince,” observed Loftus. “But evidently not from this neighborhood, for I never saw him before. He appears to be waiting on some one.”

“Yes, he is,” said Guy, eagerly, as he leaned farther out of the palanquin. “Here

comes another elephant down the Meerut road. There! they are making signals; they will join each other in a moment.”

Loftus leaned out and looked up the road.

“Yes,” he said, “I recognize the second one; it is the Rajah Kunwar Singh, who lives near Delhi. I wonder what he is doing here? Move on, there, you stupid fellows!” he added, angrily, to the bearers. “Why do you go so slowly?”

At this they quickened their speed, and as the palanquin moved ahead, Loftus reached out and drew the curtains closer together, for a streak of sunlight was shining in uncomfortably.

Guy was just peeping through in the endeavor to catch a glimpse of the approaching Kunwar Singh, when a terrific noise was heard, like the shrill blast of a trumpet, and the next instant the palanquin went crashing to the ground and turned over, burying its occupants under a mass of rugs, curtains and splintered woodwork.

Guy was first to emerge from the wreck, and as he crawled to his feet, wondering what could have caused this new catastrophe, he saw the bearers running up the road with every indication of intense fright. Then that shrill scream fell on his ear again, and, wheeling in the opposite direction, he saw a most terrifying sight.

Kunwar Singh’s elephant was dashing at breakneck speed toward the other animal, trumpeting with rage, and the ground seemed fairly to shake beneath its ponderous tread.

Guy stood riveted to the spot as the enraged brute swept by him. Kunwar Singh shouted hoarsely, and the other Hindoo made an attempt to get his beast out of the way. But it was too late; the elephants collided with terrible force, and both howdahs went toppling to the ground, carrying their inmates with them. Kunwar Singh leaped agilely to his feet, and ran out of danger, but the stranger lay where he had fallen, evidently so stunned as to be incapable of flight. It was a dangerous position for him, as Guy was quick to see, and as the Hindoo himself realized to judge from his appealing cries.

All at once the smaller elephant, which belonged to the stranger, turned tail and fled down the road in the direction of Delhi, trumpeting with fear.

Kunwar Singh's vicious brute, thus balked of its victim, and being now in a state of most intense fury, glared wildly about for an instant, and then, with a shrill scream, dashed at the prostrate Hindoo.

At this critical moment Guy was seized with a desire to save the unfortunate man's life. Apparently blind to his own peril, he ran toward the elephant at right angles, uttering shout after shout.

The enraged brute was just about to trample the Hindoo under its ponderous feet, but at sight and hearing of Guy, it wheeled paltry [\_sic\_] round and with a fierce snort bore directly down upon the daring lad, who now realized his peril for the first time, and yet was unable to get out of the way. He stared in helpless horror at the huge gray bulk now looming above him, the tossing trunk, the glistening tusks, and the small, bead-like eyes blazing with wrath!

## CHAPTER IV

Guy's perilous position was witnessed by Kunwar Singh, his unfortunate friend, several native attendants, and Bob Loftus as well, who had that very moment emerged from the fallen palanquin; but their frantic shouts had no effect whatever, and the maddened brute only trumpeted the louder as he continued on his course.

Guy's face was deadly pale, and for an instant he must have lost all hope. Then, just when death in its most horrible form seemed imminent and the dangling trunk of the elephant was barely six feet away, the lad snatched a revolver from his belt, took a quick aim, and jerked the trigger.

A watchful Providence must surely have directed that shot, for as the report rang out, followed by a curl of smoke, and Guy threw himself nimbly to one side, the huge beast trumpeted with agony, floundered forward on tottering limbs, and then rolled over to the earth with a ponderous crash. The bullet had penetrated its brain through the eye.

"By Jove! what a shot!" cried Bob Loftus; and then he ran forward to help Guy, who was just rising up from the dusty road, very pale and tremulous, now that the danger was over.

The natives shouted with delight, and the Hindoo, whose life Guy had saved at the risk of his own, rose suddenly to his feet and limped forward. He did not seem to be much injured after all.

Guy shook the dust from his garments and glanced ruefully at the dead elephant.

"No, I'm not hurt any," he said, in reply to Loftus. "It was a terribly close shave, though."

"Did you aim for the brute's eye?" asked Bob.

"No," replied Guy, with a faint attempt at a laugh. "It was a chance shot. I could not do it again in a thousand trials—under the same circumstances. What an exciting morning this has been, anyhow! I wonder what will turn up next?"

Guy little dreamed as he uttered these words that something else was even then turning up, but he was speedily undeceived.

“You vile dog of a Feringhee,” cried an angry voice close at hand, “you have killed my poor Golab, and now your own worthless life shall make atonement. Infidel, heretic, prepare to die!”

The speaker was Kunwar Singh. His swarthy face was convulsed with rage, and he advanced toward Guy, brandishing a gleaming, naked sword. He meant murder—that was plain to see.

With a cry of “Run, Guy, run,” Loftus darted toward the palanquin to seek his pistols.

But Guy did not run. He stood his ground, wondering at this new turn of the situation, and did not attempt to draw the revolver that still remained in his belt.

He could not comprehend the Hindoo’s anger at the death of the elephant, since otherwise the brute might have slaughtered all present.

Kunwar Singh was in no mood to hear reason. He no doubt prized the elephant most highly, and its death stirred his hot blood to a blind fury. He came quickly on, swinging his weapon, and still Guy made no attempt to avert the threatened danger.

When Loftus came running from behind the palanquin, pistol in hand, it was too late to fire, for Kunwar Singh was about to deal the fatal blow; and, moreover, Guy was between the two. But aid was at hand, nevertheless. The Hindoo whose life Guy had saved darted suddenly between Kunwar Singh and his victim, and seized the former’s arm in time to arrest the blow. Then ensued a struggle between the two, and an interchange of angry words, during which Guy and Loftus withdrew to a safe distance. It terminated in the apparent pacification of Kunwar Singh. He relinquished his weapon to his companion and walked sullenly over to the dead elephant.

The other Hindoo—who presented a very aristocratic appearance in spite of his limp and dust-stained garments—now approached the lads and effusively grasped Guy’s hand.

“You are a very brave man,” he said, in a peculiarly pleasing voice. “Few would

have dared to do what you did. You saved my life, and I shall not forget it. The conduct of my friend, Kunwar Singh, I beg you to overlook. He has long been attached to his elephant Golab, and he feels his loss deeply. Of course you did right to shoot the animal, or you yourself would have died. And now will you tell me your name?"

"Guy Mottram," replied the lad.

The Hindoo started, and a strange gleam flashed from his dark eyes.

"Are you a son of Mr. James Mottram, the indigo planter?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Guy, "I am."

"And where are you going at this early hour of the day?"

"I am going to Meerut," replied Guy, calmly.

"For what purpose?"

Strange as it may seem, the personal nature of these questions did not arouse the lad's suspicion, nor did he know until long afterward how fortunate it was that such was the case.

The friendly manner of the Hindoo put him perfectly at his ease, and so he replied, without embarrassment:

"My father went to Meerut last night, and I am going there to join him."

"Do you know why he went to Meerut?"

Even this pointed question failed to disturb Guy.

"No," he replied, calmly; "I do not."

The Hindoo's knitted brow relaxed and his face assumed a nonchalant expression again. He drew Guy a little aside, and taking a magnificent ruby ring from his finger, gave it to the lad.

"Put this carefully away," he said. "It is a token of gratitude for saving my life. If you ever find yourself in a position of danger this ring will be of great service.



Tell no one that you have it. I must also give you a word of warning concerning my friend Kunwar Singh. His disposition, I regret to say, is revengeful. The death of the elephant has made him your enemy, and he will lose no opportunity of doing you harm. So I warn you to be constantly on your guard. You and your father are Americans, I believe. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said Guy, "we are."

He went on to express his gratitude for the gift of the ring, but the Hindoo indicated by a grave bow that the interview was ended, and walked off to join Kunwar Singh, who was now overhauling his broken howdah.

Guy was spared the necessity of making any explanation to Loftus, for that individual was too much worried over the smashed palanquin to think of anything else.

"I'll beat those cowardly bearers of mine till they can't stand up," he cried, angrily. "Are those the rascals coming here now?"

Guy glanced down the Delhi road, where amid a cloud of dust, the runaway elephant was visible, returning ignominiously in care of a group of natives.

"No," he said, "those are the Hindoo's attendants; they started after the brute as soon as it broke away—and, besides, your coolies fled in the other direction, Loftus, toward the Kalli Nudda."

"The scoundrels won't come back," muttered Loftus, ruefully; "at least not while we are here. They may return later for the wreck of the palanquin. There is nothing for it but to walk the rest of the way, and I have a lot of luggage, too."

He sadly began to overhaul the debris in search of his traps, and Guy, seeing one of Kunwar Singh's attendants standing near, walked up to him—not without some trepidation—and inquired the cause of the elephant's sudden fit of rage.

"Golab was a bad animal, Sahib," answered the man, very civilly. "In the ten years that I have had care of him he has taken these mad spells more than a dozen times, and many a narrow escape have I haad [\_sic\_]. He has killed many people, too—but he won't kill any more. Between you and me, Sahib, I am glad that the brute is dead, but I fear my master will be inconsolable. He was greatly attached to Golab."

By this time the recaptured elephant had reached the spot, and the native hurried away to assist his companions, who were trying to replace the howdah on the animal's back. This was finally accomplished, after a vast amount of trouble, and then the two Hindoos mounted together and rode off in the direction of Delhi, followed by all their retinue save one—who remained behind to look after Kunwar Singh's howdah, and the trappings of the dead elephant.

Guy followed the cavalcade with his eye and caught a backward glance from Kunwar Singh so full of hatred and malignity that the lad shuddered.

"I have made a friend and an enemy to-day," he said to himself. "But I would willingly part with the friendship if I could get rid of Kunwar's enmity at the same time. It would be a good bargain for me, I imagine. It is not likely that ruby will ever benefit me—unless through its mercantile value, which is certainly very great. I wonder who that Hindoo can be! He certainly belongs to the very highest rank."

Guy's reflections were interrupted by a summons from Loftus.

"Come on now, old fellow, I am ready to start. I want to get to Meerut as soon as possible. The sun is broiling hot for one thing, and then you see my time is up. Here is your luggage. I found it in the corner of the palanquin."

Guy gladly took possession of the morocco bag—the recent excitement had banished all thought of it from his mind—and then the two lads started briskly away toward Meerut, whose roofs were now plainly visible a mile along the broad sunburned road.

They walked rapidly and almost in silence, for the terrible heat drenched them with perspiration and destroyed all inclination to talk.

But at last, to their great relief, the native portion of Meerut was reached, and the young travelers passed through the ruined walls—which shelter a population of between thirty and forty thousand—into the narrow, crowded and ill-smelling streets. Here was no sign of Sunday. On all sides were the open and picturesque shops of the diamond merchants, the sellers of shawls and cloth of gold, the goldsmiths, the silversmiths, the workers in enamel and bronze, the miniature painters and the braziers with their glittering displays. The windows were full of spangled petticoats, paper kites, bright colored muslins and chintzes, and cummerbunds of gorgeous pattern.

The lads passed on through the main thoroughfare, glancing with ill-concealed aversion into the side streets where dwelt the dregs of the population—murderers, thieves, poisoners, and men of the bow string—ready to ply their craft for hire. Ah! how soon their lustful passions were to be glutted!

But Guy and his companion were still some distance from their destinations. The former was bound for the Sudder Bazaar, a mile north of the native town, where the English residents lived, while the latter's goal was the cantonments situated two miles north of the town and one mile beyond the Sudder Bazaar. Here were quartered a great number of native troops—among them the comrades of the eighty-five mutinous troopers now confined in the Meerut jail—and a sprinkling of European cavalry.

“I can't stand this heat any longer,” said Loftus, as the end of the native town was neared. “I have two miles yet to go, and you have one, Mottram. Suppose we take a palanquin, and I can drop you at your destination as we go by.”

“Good!” exclaimed Guy. “There is one now. I'll hail it.”

A satisfactory arrangement was soon made with the bearers, and off they trotted, carrying the heavily burdened structure lightly upon their shoulders, and at such a rate of speed that Guy was at his destination almost before he knew it.

With mutual expressions of good will and to meet again very shortly, the lads separated, Guy leaving the palanquin at the Sudder Bazaar, while Loftus continued on to the cantonments, still a mile away.

Little did either dream of the circumstances under which that new meeting—so lightly spoken of—would take place.

## CHAPTER V

The Sudder Bazaar, though Oriental in name, was thoroughly Anglicized in its nature. It consisted of a cluster of very pretty bungalows—more or less imposing—and quite an array of shops similar to those of London, though on a smaller scale. In this favored section of Meerut, which lay midway between the native town and the cantonments, dwelt the government officials, and English traders and wine merchants and public clerks.

Guy knew the place and its inhabitants well, but this morning he looked neither to right nor left for familiar faces. With buoyant steps he pressed on toward the residency, that rather imposing building with the Venetian awnings at the windows, which stood out so conspicuously among its neighbors.

It was just ten minutes of nine o'clock when he entered the well-kept grounds, and a moment later a servant was leading him through a dark, refreshingly cool hall.

Mr. Jervis, Chief Commissioner for the District of Meerut, was clad in his usual Sunday morning unofficial attire—a soft dressing gown and slippers. He was smoking a cigar, and his reclining chair was pushed back so that the current of air from the fans drifted across his face. From another part of the house came a subdued murmur of voices—the commissioner's wife was teaching the children their Bible lesson.

At sound of footsteps in the hall Mr. Jervis elevated himself to an upright position, and a muttered exclamation of surprise escaped his lips as he saw the weary dust-stained figure in the doorway.

“Well, what is it?” he asked, rather sternly, for he was not partial to visitors on Sunday morning, and, moreover, he did not recognize the intruder in the dim light.

“Is my father here, Mr. Jervis?” demanded Guy. “Don't you know me?—I am Guy Mottram.”

The commissioner sprang to his feet.

“Bless my heart!” he exclaimed, loudly. “Come right in; take a seat. You must have had a hot journey. Let me order you something cool to drink. Here, Barak,” he added, to the servant, “bring two lemon squashes at once.”

Guy moved to the proffered chair and paused with his hand resting on the back.

“Is my father here?” he asked a second time.

“Your father?” Mr. Jervis looked curiously at the lad. “No, I have not seen your father. Did you expect to find him here?”

Guy turned pale, and clutched his chair for support.

“Then something has happened to him!” he cried, hoarsely. “He told me to meet him here this morning. He started for Meerut last night. But perhaps you were absent and have just returned?”

“No, I have not been away from the residency for two days,” returned Mr. Jervis. “Sit down, and tell me all about it. Don’t worry; nothing can have happened to your father.”

“I hope not,” replied Guy; “but the circumstances all point the other way. Your judgment is better than mine, Mr. Jervis. I will tell you the whole story, and perhaps you can find a satisfactory explanation of the mystery.”

With a strong effort, Guy recovered his composure, and related in a clear manner the strange occurrence at Nawab Ali’s ball on the previous night. He told also of his escape from the assassin, and from Kunwar Singh’s maddened elephant, but made no mention of his conversation with the mysterious Hindoo, or of the ruby ring that had been presented to him. Had he done so the events of that day might have been greatly changed. The wrinkles in the commissioner’s brow deepened as the narrative drew near its close, and when the end came he folded his arms and leaned far back in the chair—a favorite attitude when he was perplexed or worried.

“Strange, very strange,” he muttered. “If any one but you had told me this, Guy, I should believe it a fairy tale. You say your father came to you in the Nawab’s gardens last night, after being mysteriously absent for some time; that he was visibly excited and anxious to know if Nawab Ali was in sight; that he started off post-haste for Meerut, telling you to remain at home until four o’clock this

morning, and if he had not returned by that time to meet him here at the residency?"

"Exactly," replied Guy. "You now know as much of the matter as I do. What does all this mean, and what has become of my father?"

"Your first question I cannot answer," returned Mr. Jervis, slowly. "As to your father's whereabouts—I will look into that at once. If he had anything of importance to communicate he would have come direct to the residency, and yet he certainly was not here. Important business kept me from going to Nawab Ali's ball last night."

"Could that murderous attack on me have had any connection with the matter?" asked Guy.

"I think not," said Mr. Jervis, hesitatingly. "Robbery was probably the assassin's motive—the neighborhood is full of evil characters just now, you know. However, I will do all in my power to trace your father, and that without loss of time. Meanwhile my house and servants are at your disposal. A breakfast, a bath, and a good sleep are what you need at present, and by the time you have taken all these, I hope to have good news for you."

Guy offered no objections to this arrangement. He was thoroughly worn out, and the bruises sustained in falling from his horse were beginning to make themselves felt. He handed his morocco bag over to Mr. Jervis for safe keeping, and then followed the servant to the dining-hall, where he managed to do justice to a tempting breakfast. A few moments later he was sleeping soundly in a darkened room, while a punky wallah pulled industriously at the fans.

While the hours of that eventful Sunday wore on, Mr. Jervis put in motion all the machinery of his official power, and Meerut was thoroughly searched for Mr. Mottram, from the cantonments to the extremities of the native town; nor was the highway by which the missing man should have come overlooked—that, too, was examined as far as the Nawab's palace, and the natives dwelling along the road were closely questioned. But all this labor proved fruitless. No one had seen or heard of the lost planter. Mr. Jervis took an active part in the search, which was so conducted that none of the inhabitants of Meerut knew anything of the affair. The commissioner was more deeply worried than he chose to let appear. He was a shrewd man, and his innate conviction, based on the facts of Guy's

narrative, was simply this: Mr. Mottram had overheard some startling and portentous conversation at Nawab Ali's ball, and started for Meerut at once with the tidings. But the Nawab had discovered the eavesdropping, and taken steps to intercept him on the way. The missing man was probably a captive in the Nawab's palace at the present time.

But, on the other hand, Mr. Jervis was one of the foremost of those who scorned and scouted the possibility of danger to the English rule in India. He ridiculed the so-called signs of the times, and believed that the country had never been in a more generally prosperous condition.

So now, in the face of this almost convincing evidence—which was a terrible shock to him—he hesitated to take any decided step in the matter, though prudence whispered to him that all the native troops in Meerut should be disarmed without an hour's delay. Had he obeyed this dictate of conscience the Sepoy Rebellion might never have occurred.

But the commissioner chose to temporize, and when he rode back to the residency late that afternoon he had decided on and partially carried out a satisfactory course of action, which will appear a little further on.

Guy awoke between five and six o'clock, and was much surprised to learn how long he had slept. After a hasty bath he went straight to the library, where Mr. Jervis was seated at a desk in the act of blotting and sealing a letter.

"Have you found him?" demanded Guy, eagerly; and then he paused, for the sight of the commissioner's grave face told its own story.

"No, your father has not been found," said Mr. Jervis, and he gave a brief account of the search that had been made. "I don't think you need be alarmed though," he added; "your father will turn up safe and sound—"

"Perhaps I missed him in some way, and he has returned to the plantation," interrupted Guy. "Why did I not think of that before? I will start for home at once."

"I don't think that is the case," said Mr. Jervis. "He would have come straight to Meerut, in search of you."

"Yes, that's true," assented Guy; and the hopeful expression died out of his face.

“It is far more probable,” continued the commissioner, after a brief pause, “that your father changed his mind and went direct to Delhi.”

Mr. Jervis made this suggestion in all earnestness. He more than half believed that Mr. Mottram had done this—mainly because Delhi was the chief city of the northwest provinces and the proper place to take information of any especial importance. Mr. Mottram might have remembered this on second thought.

“To Delhi?” repeated Guy, in amazement.

And then he caught eagerly at this fragment of hope as Mr. Jervis explained his views, though a little sober reflection must have shown him the improbability of the theory.

“A chance is open for you to go to Delhi at once, if you wish,” resumed the commissioner. “I was going to send a special messenger, but you can take his place. What do you say?”

“I will go gladly.”

“Very well.” Mr. Jervis picked up the letter he had just written, and a folded paper that was lying beside it. “Here,” he said, “is a letter for Mr. Leveson, the chief cummissoner [\_sic\_] at Delhi. It contains an account of this strange affair, an official report, I might say, which he can act upon as he sees fit. If your father has gone to Delhi the letter will be of no value—and I sincerely hope that such is the case. This other paper you will have the kindness to leave with the officer in charge of the Meerut jail as you go by. It is an order authorizing the native guards to be removed and a detachment of our own men to be put in their place. The order comes from Colonel Bland. He thought it best under the circumstances, as some sympathy has been shown for the mutineers who are confined therein. You can start in a very few moments. I have directed a good saddle horse to be brought over from the stables. You will have the cool of the night for your journey and ought to reach Delhi before daybreak. I would have you stay and take dinner, but I know you are impatient to be off. You will find a lunch in the saddle bags.”

“Yes,” replied Guy, “I would prefer to start at once. I will see that both letters are safely delivered.”

Five minutes later, while the English church bells were ringing for evening



service, the lad mounted before the residency and rode away to the south. To him those church bells had no special meaning, but to the dusky Sepoy troops in the cantonments the musical pealing had a significance of its own. It was the signal for riot, and bloodshed, and slaughter.

On the previous Saturday morning, at general parade, these Sepoys had seen their eighty-five comrades—who had refused to accept the degrading cartridges three days previous—publicly stripped of their arms and accoutrements, and marched away to prison to serve out their long sentences. In the opinion of the whole army the men were martyrs to their religious faith, and must be saved at any cost.

So it happened that this eventful Sunday evening was selected as the time for action—and to some extent fortunately, as was seen later; for this outbreak at Meerut was a premature one, and forced the main conspirators to show their hand before the plot was fully ripe. Had the Sepoys at Meerut restrained their passions and waited, the horrors of the Indian Mutiny might have been magnified tenfold.

## CHAPTER VI

As Guy rode quickly through the Sudder Bazaar he met many of the English people on their way to evening service, among them not a few ladies and children who were enjoying the air after the long day's confinement in the house. A little farther on he noted with some surprise that many of the native servants were leaning over the compound walls and gazing earnestly in the direction of the cantonments.

But more important reflections soon crowded this circumstance out of Guy's mind, as he left the Sudder Bazaar behind and rode on toward the native town. He had covered half the intervening distance, and had just caught a glimpse, through the gathering dusk, of the long low prison building, when the distant blast of bugles fell on his ear, causing him to turn in the saddle and look toward the cantonments, whence the unwonted sounds came.

As the echo of the bugling died away it was succeeded by a very different noise, a dull, ominous rattle that Guy recognized only too well.

It was a volley of musketry fire.

For an instant his heart seemed to leap into his throat, and he reined up his steed, uncertain whether to return or to go forward. The firing still continued in a straggling manner, and Guy was at no loss to divine its meaning. Incredible as it seemed, the Sepoys must have revolted, and were probably shooting down their English officers.

"I must return at once and spread the alarm," he thought; and he actually did turn his horse's head clear around before he remembered that the residents of the Sudder Bazaar must be fully warned by this time. A hoarse sound of voices and the ringing of an alarm bell gave him ample proof of this.

Then he suddenly remembered something that thrilled him with excitement and instantly decided his course of action. The Meerut prison contained—in addition to the eighty-five condemned troopers—nearly twelve hundred inmates—criminals of every grade, the very scum of the province. With the exception of the commandant the guards in charge of these prisoners were all natives. If—as Guy assuredly believed—the troops in cantonment had mutinied, they would

first of all make for the jail and attempt the rescue of their comrades. Such a disaster must be prevented at all hazards.

With a last look toward the cantonments, whence the sound of musketry still came, Guy wheeled his horse about and spurred over the plain.

“It is too late for this order to do any good,” he muttered, aloud, as the noble animal bore him with great leaps. “The mutineers will reach the prison long before the English cavalry. If the guards only remain loyal they can be held at bay—but just there is the rub. What madness it was to put native guards in charge of those prisoners!”

Ay, madness, indeed! Many more than Guy realized this fact when it was too late, and cursed their own blindness and stupidity.

Without a twinge of fear, as far as his own safety was concerned, the brave lad galloped on through the twilight, his horse’s hoofs pounding dully on the sun-baked ground, and in a brief time the outline of the prison loomed before him. A guard challenged him at the entrance, and a second came forward and took his horse as he sprang lightly from the saddle.

Guy drew the document from his pocket and waved it in their faces.

“I must see the commandant at once,” he cried. “Where is he?”

“This way, Sahib,” replied a voice at his elbow, and following his guide, Guy was ushered through the gloomy portals into the main corridor of the prison.

A slender figure in a British uniform came quickly forward, and by the dim lamplight Guy recognized his new-made acquaintance of the morning—Bob Loftus.

“By Jove! is it you, Mottram?” exclaimed the latter. “I’m awfully glad to see you. What news do you bring? tell me, quick! I saw you coming and hurried down from the watch tower. What does all the firing mean? Have the Sepoys revolted?”

“Why—are you in charge here?” cried Guy, breathlessly; and as Loftus nodded he handed him Colonel Bland’s order, which was instantly torn open and read.

Loftus dashed the paper to the floor with a groan.

“Too late to change the guard now,” he exclaimed, huskily. “Between you and me, Mottram, that should have been done long ago. By Jove! this is enough to turn a fellow’s head. Captain Lucas was taken suddenly ill this morning, and I was assigned temporarily to his duties. The whole responsibility is now on my hands.”

“There is no time to lose,” said Guy. “The Sepoys have mutinied beyond a doubt, and are likely to reach the prison at any time. God help the poor people in the Sudder Bazaar—and yet the villains will hardly dare to harm them. But murder will surely be done if all these prisoners here are liberated. I will help you to defend the place, Loftus, if you will accept my services. Are you sure the guards can be trusted?”

“I don’t know,” was the reply, “but I think so. You are a brave fellow, Mottram, and I accept your offer with gratitude. If these mutinous dogs dare to attack the jail they will meet with a warm reception. Listen! do you hear that?”

A dull, muffled sound penetrated the thick walls of the prison.

“Musketry fire!” exclaimed Guy, looking at his companion, with blanched cheeks. “It can’t be farther away than the Sudder Bazaar.”

“Then they are murdering the English residents,” cried Loftus. “They will be here next.”

For a moment he seemed in danger of losing his self-control—and little wonder, for he was a mere lad in years—but the soldier’s instinct asserted itself and a grim, stern look came over his face that showed what mettle he was made of.

In a clear, ringing voice he summoned several native officers who were standing near, and gave them a few brief orders. These were obeyed with an alacrity that seemed a fitting proof of the loyalty of the guards, and an instant later small pieces of artillery were being trundled over the stone flooring and placed in position before the doors, and native troops were hurrying to and fro with arms and ammunition.

“The fellows will do their duty,” said Loftus, in a relieved tone. “The jail is safe against a small army now. I was in terrible suspense for a moment or two,

though. Come, Guy, we will go up to the watch tower and make a survey.”

Guy followed his conductor up the massive stone staircase, and thence through a short corridor into a circular tower with narrow embrasures and an opening which gave access to an outer walk protected by a low parapet. This looked directly down on the space before the prison entrance. Even as the lads hurried through the tower a strange light seemed to shimmer on the rugged gray walls, and when they passed out to the parapet the scene that met their eyes was quite terrible enough to chill the blood in their veins with horror.

Off toward the Sudder Bazaar the horizon was luminous with the blaze of a dozen conflagrations, and fresh fires were starting up every moment. Pillars of flame and clouds of ruddy smoke rose high toward heaven, and myriads of sparks swam amid the stars. But the roar of this gigantic furnace was lost in sounds of a far different nature—the intermittent roll of musketry varied by single sharp reports; the shrill, terrified cries of women and children fleeing—and in many cases vainly—from the maddened butchers; the hoarse shouts of brave men fighting for their lives; and the blood-curdling yells of the Sepoys as they surged to and fro, hacking, hewing, and shooting.

No mere words can picture the horrors of that scene as Guy and Bob Loftus witnessed it from the parapet of the watch tower. Their hearts bled for the unfortunate victims, perishing amid the flames of the Sudder Bazaar, and they chafed at their inability to afford them any aid. In a measure they felt stunned, unable to realize the extent and meaning of this awful calamity that had fallen from a clear sky.

“One-half of the bungalows seem to be on fire,” said Guy, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

“And the public edifices as well,” rejoined Loftus. “That large mass of flames must be the residency. God help those poor people! There is slight chance for any of them to escape!”

“But where are the English cavalry?—that is what I can’t understand,” cried Guy. “Why don’t they pursue the Sepoys and put a stop to the slaughter? They can’t be all dead, surely.”

“It looks that way,” muttered Loftus, gloomily; and then both lads were silent for a time, looking straight ahead with tear-dimmed eyes.

From the twelve hundred occupants of the long tiers of cells beneath them came cries and curses, as the sound of firing penetrated the massive walls and terrified the wretches.

“Here they come!” cried Loftus, suddenly, and as he spoke the tramp of hoofs was heard pounding rapidly over the plain that lay between the jail and the Sudder Bazaar. It grew louder and louder, until a dim body of horsemen could be vaguely seen, their arms flashing in the feeble glow that streamed far southward from the burning houses.

Still the lads watched and waited, standing side by side with their bodies bent over the parapet.

The mysterious horsemen spurred right up to the prison gates, and drew rein sharply. No one was there to challenge them, for Loftus had withdrawn all the guards inside. From the narrow embrasures on each side of the entrance a pale light shone on the well-known uniforms of French gray, and on the dusky faces distorted with passion and triumph.

“Sepoys!” whispered Loftus, as he clutched Guy’s arm in a grip like iron.

It was well that the horsemen did not hear him, or a rifle volley would have riddled both lads.

Fortunately none thought of glancing upward; their eyes were riveted on the prison gates.

Their leader, a soubahdar of the light cavalry whom Loftus knew well, spurred his horse clear up to the embrasures, showing a fearless disregard of the cannon that peeped through, and cried in aloud voice:

“Ho!, you guards of the prison, we bring a joyful message for you. The rule of the English in Meerut is ended, and soon the whole land will be free from the tyrants. Come! join with us. Throw open the prison doors and help us to liberate our brave comrades who faced the displeasure of the English sooner than lose their caste by taking the defiled cartridges. Be quick! There is much to be done, for tonight we march to Delhi, and ere sunrise the Great Mogul will be seated on the throne of his fathers. Murder your Feringhee captain and let us in. Hesitate not, or we shall serve you as we have already served all the English in Meerut.”

The speaker ceased, and for a moment there was utter silence—a silence that was more terrible than words can tell to the watchers on the parapet above.

Then a hoarse cheer broke from the guards within the prison, and a harsh, clanking sound was heard.

Loftus staggered back against the wall of the tower.

“Good heavens, Mottram !” he cried. “The traitorous fiends are unbarring the gates!”

## CHAPTER VII

Bob Loftus spoke only too truly when he declared that the traitorous prison guards were unbarring the gates to the clamorous mutineers without. However loyal they may have been a few moments before, when they so readily obeyed the commands given out by Loftus, their good resolutions had melted away like wax before the cutting eloquence of the soubahdar's speech, and they now resolved to a man to cast in their fortunes with the mutinous Sepoys. It must be admitted that the soubahdar's words were well calculated to lead them to this decision. It stands to reason that they must have had a lurking sympathy for the eighty-five condemned troopers—their fellow-soldiers, be it remembered—who were incarcerated in the lower dungeons of the jail; and on the other hand, if they believed the s[ou]bahdar's assertion that the English residents of Meerut were all dead—as they most assuredly did, in the face of such convincing evidence as the conflagration and the musketry fire—the instinct of self-preservation must have warned them to offer no resistance to their victorious comrades, but to aid them in their designs as much as possible.

And so, with willing hands and loud cheers, they proceeded to remove the bolts and bars that secured the heavy doors of the prison. It was the clanking sound of these as they fell that proclaimed the terrible truth to Loftus. Guy was no less quick to divine its meaning, and he shuddered to think of the terrible position in which this placed himself and Loftus. The soubahdar's fierce command, "Slay the Feringhee," was still ringing in his ears.

Both lads were, for the moment, badly scared. They drew back from the parapet, fearing discovery, and crouched against the wall of the tower.

"We must do something," cried Guy. "It won't do to remain here long, for the scoundrels will search for us, and shoot us without mercy."

Loftus ground his teeth with rage.

"I only wish there was a powder magazine in this building," he hissed. "I would blow these fiends to atoms, every man of them, and myself, as well—"

By Jove! there is still a chance left. Come on, Mottram; let us see what our influence will do with these rebellious guards. We may quell the affair before the



gates are opened, and hold the prison after all. There are surely some who will side with us.” He darted into the tower, followed by Guy, and took down two loaded muskets from a rack. He retained one and gave the other to his companion. Guy accepted it readily, and at the same time took a look at his pistols. He considered himself under Loftus’ orders, and had no intention of offering any remonstrances to the plan that had just been proposed —though in his own heart he regarded it as the height of madness. He knew what the temper of the guards must be by this time.

As the lads passed quickly through the tower and entered upon the corridor which led to the staircase, a hoarse yell arose from all quarters of the prison and fairly drowned out the cheering of the guards and the fall of the iron bars as they were torn from their sockets. Here and there a voice rang above the rest and the words could be distinguished.

“Let me out!” “Break open the cell doors!” “Blow up the walls!” cried some; while others merely pounded on their iron gratings and yelled as hard as they could.

This sudden outburst on the part of the prisoners was easy to understand. Those nearest the main entrance had heard the soubahdar’s speech, and the words had been transmitted from cell to cell, until every one of the prisoners knew what was taking place without.

The uproar was at its height when Loftus and Guy reached the end of the corridor and put foot on the staircase with the intention of descending to the lower floor of the prison. It must be remembered that hardly a minute had elapsed since the first clang of the bolts proclaimed the intention of the guards to open the doors, though it takes a much longer time to tell it. Loftus had the best of reasons for believing that the work was not yet accomplished, since, by his own orders, the doors had been secured in a very intricate manner, and therefore it was all the greater a surprise to him, when he had taken two steps down the staircase to see the dozen or more Sepoys who had been waiting without pour into the jail with much clamor and shouting. They were led by the crafty soubahdar himself, whose face was aglow with triumph.

Loftus turned pale and dodged quickly behind a stone pillar, pushing Guy before him.

“All is lost!” he groaned. “The fiends are inside, and they will liberate all the prisoners. We must watch our chance and make a break for freedom.”

“But how?” whispered Guy; “we can’t pass through that ravenous mob.”

“I will show you when the time comes,” rejoined Loftus. “But hold on; I have an idea. If none of the scoundrels are outside the prison we can drop from the parapet to the ground and escape without difficulty—”

“I will go and see,” interrupted Guy, and without giving Loftus a chance to reply, he darted quickly along the corridor, bending low to escape observation, and then disappeared in the tower. He was back in an instant with an expression of gloom on his face.

“No chance in that direction,” he whispered; “a dozen Sepoys are in front of the entrance, keeping a sharp lookout and watching the horses.”

“I feared as much,” replied Loftus, calmly; “all we can do is to keep out of sight until our chance comes. When I start off keep close behind me, and be ready to use your weapons.”

“All right. I will stand by you,” answered Guy; and then he became silent, though he was curious to know what plan of escape Loftus could have in mind.

From their position at the head of the staircase the lads could see plainly what was taking place in the main corridor of the prison below them. The Meerut jail was a two-story building, not counting the basement dungeons where the eighty-five mutinous troopers were confined.

On the first floor were the office, the arsenal, and a number of large cells, each of which contained from one to two dozen inmates. The second floor was constructed as many of our modern prisons are to-day. Here were long rows of isolated cells—reserved for criminals of a deeper dye—all of which opened on narrow galleries, and were thus in plain view of the guards on the first floor. The arsenal, which contained a large supply of muskets and ammunition, was locked, and the key was where it always belonged, in Loftus’ pocket.

The great bunch of keys which opened the various cells, was unfortunately in the office—an oversight which Loftus deeply regretted, and these were at once handed over to the mutineers by the guards.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the soubahdar and a handful of his companions surged down into the basement, and presently reappeared, followed by the eighty-five condemned troopers, who were frantic with the joy of their release.

Meanwhile, the other mutineers had been opening cell after cell on the first floor, and from these emerged, with hoots and yells, as motley a crowd as could have been gathered together in all India—Hindoos of every caste, some gaunt and powerful, others dwarfed and hideous, assassins, thieves, stranglers, and petty criminals, Mohammedans, a few low-grade Englishmen—who were in evident terror of their lives—and a sprinkling of Afghans and Chinamen.

As fast as these wretches were liberated they made a break for the prison entrance, eager to taste the greater freedom that lay beyond the massive iron gates, and giving little thought to the causes that had opened their cell doors.

But the soubahdar was too quick for them. With half a dozen of his men he invested the entrance and turned a small cannon against the approaching rabble, who halted instantly in the face of the staring black muzzle.

“If you come any farther I will blow you to atoms!” cried the soubahdar, harshly. “Is this the way ye would reward my kindness—by fleeing in panic like the cowardly dogs that ye are? Wait until I have given ye arms. Then go forth and do your worst—kill, slay, murder. Let no Englishman that ye meet escape, and when ye have ravaged the country roundabout Meerut, follow us to Delhi, and more work will be found ready for your hands.”

This brief speech was received with cries of applause, and as these died away a hundred voices clamored loudly for arms.

“To the arsenal! to the arsenal!” shouted some, and then ensued a rapid scurrying of feet. In a moment it was discovered that the door was locked and the key missing. Its whereabouts must have been instantly communicated to the mutineers by the guards, for a hoarse cry broke forth:

“Where is the Feringhee? Kill the Feringhee and take the key!”

Guy and Loftus glanced at each other with startled faces. During all these exciting events no chance of escape had offered, and now it was too late, for hundreds of dark eyes were scanning the galleries of the upper floor, and a general movement was in progress toward the staircase.

But the danger was for the moment averted by the soubahdar, who knew well how to handle this turbulent mob. His tall figure moved quickly forward to intercept those who were about to ascend the staircase, and he cried in a ringing voice:

“Stop! Let no man go any farther! It is important that the arsenal be opened without delay. When that is done we will drag the Feringhees from their hiding place and spill their blood on the floor. There is no way by which they can escape from the prison. If ye follow my directions the arsenal shall be opened at once. Bring forward those pieces of artillery that stand by the prison entrance.”

Once more the soubahdar had gained his point. With cheers of approval and a ready comprehension of what was intended the rioters swept down the corridor and then surged back with the cannon borne in the arms of a dozen sturdy men, who stationed themselves before the arsenal door.

Crash! crash! crash! went the heavy steel battering ram against the stout timbers, and before a dozen blows had been struck the shivered hinges gave way and the arsenal was at the mercy of its invaders.

## CHAPTER VIII

It must not be supposed that while these events were taking place the prisoners confined in the upper tier of cells had been forgotten. The soubahdar was well aware of their existence, but he also realized the importance of arming his new recruits with the least delay possible, and so his concentrated energies were directed at the seizure of the arsenal.

As soon as the door fell inward, beneath the blows of the cannon, he stationed himself beside it, and directed the distribution of the muskets and cartridges, and so cleverly was this done that in five minutes every inmate of the corridor exulted in the possession of a weapon and ammunition.

Then it was that the cries of the other prisoners were heard and heeded for the first time, and, moreover, it was recalled to mind by the guards that not one, but two Englishmen were concealed somewhere in the prison.

Guy and Loftus had witnessed, with feelings of mingled indignation and terror, the sacking of the arsenal by the mutineers, and the latter were just beginning to realize that this hoped-for chance of escape was farther away than ever, when a general rush was made toward the various quarters of the jail and cries of, "Slay the Feringhees! Release the prisoners!" were caught up and carried from mouth to mouth, until the hollow walls echoed with the hoarse, muffled roar.

"They are coming," whispered Loftus, with trembling lips. "In a moment they will be in every corridor of the jail. We must run the gantlet, Mottram—it is our last and only chance. Are you ready?"

"Yes," replied Guy, firmly.

"Go ahead."

Even as he spoke, the situation had assumed a more critical nature. Half a dozen bronzed Sepoys were ascending the staircase—lusty fellows in well-fitting gray uniforms, but with faces of fiends. Some carried the regulation cavalry sabres, and others had cast these aside for muskets. At their head was the soubahdar, panting for breath after his recent exertions.

“Now!” whispered Loftus, sharply. “Run for your life.”

He darted from the friendly shelter of the pillar, and sped like a flash down the long, narrow gallery, which was in plain view from the main corridor below.

Guy followed closely at his heels, and both lads were almost at the first turn before the inevitable discovery came. Then the soubahdar uttered a fierce yell, which was caught up by those below.

“There go the Feringhees! slay them! slay them!” shouted the bloodthirsty mob, and instantly a score of muskets were discharged at the fleeing figures.

The hollow walls rang with the report, and a shower of balls pattered against the gallery railing and the iron cell doors; but excitement spoiled the aim of the mutineers, and the fugitives passed through the fusillade without injury.

A second later they turned into a gallery which followed the rear wall of the prison along its whole length, and for a brief time were out of danger.

“We have gone through the worst,” panted Loftus. “Everything now depends on haste. Run your best, Mottram.”

“Don’t fear for me,” rejoined Guy. “I’ll stick with you.”

But fast as they ran, even faster came the patter of feet behind them, nor did they dare to look around for fear of tripping on the uneven stone flooring. A fall just then would have proved fatal.

They held their breath for an instant, as the second corridor on the first floor—which lay parallel to the main corridor and was separated from it by a built-up wall of cells—yawned beneath them. A number of the mutineers had already made their way to this, and catching a glimpse of the fleeing figures on the gallery above them, they fired a few shots at random, which went wide of the mark.

The fugitives ran on, breathing more freely after their narrow escape, and a moment later the gallery terminated at the southwest angle of the prison, bringing them to an abrupt halt.

Here was visible a frail iron ladder, which rose straight up from the gallery floor

to the roof of the jail, terminating at a trap-door which could be seen but faintly in the dim light that shone from the scattered prison lamps.

Loftus drew a brass key from his pocket, thrust it between his teeth, and then, seizing the lower rungs of the ladder with both hands he glanced quickly down the gallery which had just been traversed.

What he saw there was quite enough to drive hope from his heart. Scarcely ten yards distant were the soubahdar and his half-dozen followers.

They were coming on at full speed, with lusty yells, and close behind were more of the fiends, fairly choking up the passage with their forms.

It fortunately so happened that those in advance—the soubahdar and his men—were armed only with sabres, and their location prevented the mutineers behind from firing at the fugitives. Even at this critical moment hope did not desert Loftus.

“Don’t stop to fire,” he cried, hoarsely, to Guy, who was in the act of leveling his rifle at the foremost of the enemy. “Follow me up the ladder. I have the key to that trap.”

He sprang nimbly up the rungs, cleverly retaining his rifle at the same time, an example which Guy followed with equal success as he mounted behind his companion.

Never was Bob Loftus in a position that called for greater celerity and nerve, but he proved himself fully equal to the ordeal. Quick as a flash, the key turned snappingly in the lock, and a second or two later the heavy trap-door was flung upward on its hinges. Bob was out on the roof in a trice, and kneeling by the side of the hole he extended both hands to Guy, who was right at the spot, and drew him quickly to a place of safety. Then he turned like a flash to close the trap, and was horrified to see the head and shoulders of the soubahdar already above the level of the roof.

With a sharp cry, Bob seized the door and flung it downward. Quickly as this was done, the soubahdar had time to throw himself forward, and, as a result, the heavy frame of timber caught him about the middle and pinned him to the edge of the trap. There he stuck, swearing horribly, and calling on his comrades for aid. His legs dangled through the hole, while his head, breast and arms were

sprawled out on the roof. One hand still clutched firmly his naked sabre.

But the soubahdar was a strong man, and after the first shock of surprise was over, he threw all his energies into a desperate attempt to free himself. Inch by inch he struggled out on the roof, while Loftus threw himself heavily on the trap-door in a vain endeavor to hold it down. From below floated up a babble of angry voices.

The soubahdar, left to himself, would have gained his object; but his struggles were summarily cut short by Guy, who brought the butt of his musket down on the fellow's head with no little force.

Loftus sprang off the trap and seized the motionless body of the soubahdar under the arms.

“Guy,” he cried, loudly, “when I pull him out and the door falls in place, jump on it and slide the bolt.”

“Go ahead,” rejoined Guy, and the next instant Loftus hauled his burden clear out on the roof. Quick as the trap fell, Guy was on it, but before he could stoop to grasp the bolt a sudden shock nearly threw him off his feet, and, to his horror the door began to rise slowly up. Several of the mutineers were pushing on it from beneath.

“Help! help!” he cried, loudly, and the call was instantly responded to by Loftus, who saw the new danger that threatened, and took prompt measures to frustrate it. He seized and cocked his musket, thrust the muzzle into the rapidly widening space between the trap-door and the roof, and pulled the trigger.

With the report came a sharp cry of agony, followed by a heavy fall, and then the door slipped into place with a little thud.

Guy rammed the bolt home and stepped quickly aside. It was well that he did so, for the baffled mutineers fired a volley of musketry from below, and several of the balls tore their way through the woodwork.

Guy and Loftus drew long breaths and looked at each other. The night air blew refreshingly over the broad, flat roof of the prison, and overhead countless stars were shining serenely. To the north the sky was yet red with the flames of the Sudder Bazaar. The roll of musketry was still heard, and occasional bugling, and



the wails of frightened people. Barely half an hour had elapsed since Guy entered the prison, and the butchery was not over yet.

“Come!” cried Loftus, “we must make haste if we want to complete our escape. The fiends will lose no time in circling around to the rear of the prison to cut us off—fortunately they can’t get out except by the main entrance.”

“But how will we reach the ground?” demanded Guy, walking to the edge of the roof, and peering down into the gloom. “It is too far to jump.”

“Nevertheless, that was what I first intended to do,” rejoined Loftus, “but the presence of this fellow makes things easier.”

As he spoke he plumped down on his knees beside the unconscious soubahdar, and began to unwind the silken cummerbund that was wrapped about his waist. It proved to be quite long—ten feet or more—and made of stout, handsomely decorated material. The soubahdar had evidently been a dandy.

“Is he dead?” asked Guy, in a tone of concern.

Much as the man deserved it, the lad regretted the necessity that made him strike the blow.

“No,” replied Loftus, “only stunned; he will be all right in a short time. Now, come on,” he added, as he rose to his feet and approached the roof, trailing the cummerbund behind him.

## CHAPTER IX

During troublous times guards were wont to be stationed on the roof of the Meerut jail, and it was surrounded by a low stone parapet with battlements. To one of these Loftus secured the cummerbund; the other end he knotted and cast down, so that it dangled along the prison wall, which was not a very lofty one.

“We must slide down as far as it goes,” he said, quickly, “and then drop. The fall won’t be more than ten or twelve feet, and the ground is soft. But we must act at once if we want to escape. Will you go first, or shall I?”

Guy hesitated an instant, and before he could reply a terrific thumping noise was heard. The mutineers had mounted the ladder and were pounding with their muskets on the bottom of the trap-door.

“Do you hear that?” cried Loftus “The planks won’t stand such a strain long.”

He clutched the cummerbund, threw himself over the parapet, and disappeared. A second later a dull noise was heard as he struck the ground, and then his voice came up to Guy in an audible whisper:

“Toss down your musket and mine, and come yourself. The coast is clear.”

Guy carried out the first command, and just as he lowered himself over the edge of the roof a splitting sound told him that the mutineers had smashed the trap-door. He slid down to the knotted end so rapidly that the skin was rubbed off his hands. There he swung for a second or two, and then, letting go, he came rather roughly to the ground, and fell over on hands and knees.

Loftus pulled him to his feet and thrust a musket into his hands.

“Not hurt, are you?” he demanded, anxiously.

“No,” replied Guy, “I believe not. I feel a little dizzy--”

“That will soon wear off. Come on, now, and run as fast as you can.”

Even as Loftus spoke a torch flared suddenly through the darkness, and a group of Sepoys swarmed around the angle of the prison, bent on cutting off the escape

of the fugitives. At the same moment half a dozen mutineers appeared on the edge of the roof, and discovering the dangling cummerbund, which told its own story, they discharged their muskets at random toward the ground.

Guy and Loftus clasped hands and dashed away at full speed, with the bullets whistling angrily about their ears. Fortunately they had not been close enough to the torch to admit of their being seen by the enemy, and their footsteps made no noise on the soft ground. The mutineers, therefore, were unable to tell how much start the fugitives had, and as more urgent matters than the chasing of two lads demanded their attention, they contented themselves by yelling fiercely and shooting a few volleys into the darkness. Then the torch vanished, and the rear wall of the prison was shrouded in darkness.

The fugitives ran on and on over the sandy plain, gradually relaxing their speed as they became satisfied that the Sepoys were not in pursuit. At last they halted midway between the prison and the native town, and intently scanned their surroundings.

The outlook was rather startling than otherwise. To the north the sky was still red with flames, and both from the prison and the Sudder Bazaar came a hoarse shouting and the roll of musketry—the latter less continuous than before, and varied by single reports.

To the south were also heard confused shouts, and through the night shone torches, a dozen or more in number. The meaning of these was plain. The population of the native town was swarming out of the gates, and hastening to the Sudder Bazaar to complete the bloody work which the mutinous Sepoys had begun—to mingle and fraternize with the twelve hundred convicts that had just been released from the prison.

Even as the lads looked, the flashing lights came closer, spreading east and west over the plain, and the hoarse, savage voices could be plainly heard.

“We must get away from this locality,” cried Loftus. “It is all up with us if we are discovered.”

“Yes, that’s true,” assented Guy; and then both hesitated, perplexed to know what action would be best.

Guy remembered the letter in his pocket addressed to the commissioner at Delhi,

and the possibility of finding his father in that city.

“If the English at the Bazaar and the cantonments are all dead,” he ventured, “we might as well push for Delhi at once. If we travel rapidly we may arrive soon after dawn—and then you know there is a chance of finding horses on the way.”

Loftus brightened at the suggestion.

“It is a good plan,” he said. “I am afraid that all of our friends have perished, even the English troops—though I can hardly believe that possible. If it were otherwise, though, we should have heard from them before this. They would have followed the revolted Sepoys to the jail and prevented the release of the prisoners.

“Hold on! I’ll tell you what we must do,” he added, in a voice that stammered with excitement. “Why did I not think of it before? You heard what the soubahdar said when he rode up to the prison gates—that he and his men were going to march on Delhi? Why, good Heaven! Mottram, they may be starting by this time, and not a soul will know of their coming. The magazine is at Delhi, and the arsenal, and the residency of the province—and the native troops there outnumber the English fifty to one. We must reach there before the mutineers—must, I tell you. Think of the lives that will be sacrificed if we fail. Come on; don’t lose a second. At the first village or plantation we will procure horses—take them by force, if necessary.”

Guy was only too willing to follow his friend’s leadership—he reflected, with a chill of horror, that his father was probably at Delhi exposed to this terrible danger—and without delay both lads turned their faces westward and ran swiftly over the plain, leaping through the scattered grass and bushes.

They were soon beyond the track of the inflamed rabble who were advancing from Meerut, and as they glanced backward, from time to time, they saw the scattered line of torches pass beyond the prison where all was now silent and finally lose themselves in the glare of flames from the Sudder Bazaar. If any remained alive there, or in hiding, God help them now! Even worse than the Sepoys were these pariahs of native Meerut, stained from their infancy in ever conceivable crime.

The fugitives pressed on for half a mile, and then Loftus came to a sudden halt.

“We are keeping too much to the westward,” he exclaimed. “Delhi lies to the southwest, and we must head straight for it. We will only lose time if we try to circle round Meerut and gain the highway. The straight course will take us to the road, anyhow, after we have gone three or four miles.”

“And we ought to strike it just about at Mr. Jackson’s plantation,” said Guy, who possessed a more accurate knowledge of the country than his companion. “There we can procure horses, I am sure.”

The lads paused for a moment, in order to gain breath for the long run that was before them, and as they were about starting off again a rumbling noise came indistinctly to their ears from the direction of the Sudder Bazaar. The sounds grew louder and clearer, until their origin was beyond doubt. A body of horsemen, and by no means small in number, was coming over the plain toward the lads. The tramp of the hoofs was so muffled that the danger was almost at hand before they could realize what it meant, or take steps to save themselves.

The plain at this point was level and open. The clumps of grass and bushes were few and far between. One such cluster, however, was visible a few yards away, and as Loftus cast a despairing glance around, he saw it.

Already the horsemen were so close at hand, looming sharply out of the gloom, that it was a risky undertaking to run any distance. There was great danger of being seen.

But to remain where they were was equally perilous, so Loftus seized Guy’s arm, whispering a quick injunction of silence as he did so, and then both lads bent low and ran swiftly toward the thicket of bushes.

They gained the shelter without discovery, and plunged into its thickest recesses.

As they crouched down, panting for breath, the pounding of countless hoofs rang in their ears with startling distinctness. Every second made the sound louder and closer.

With trembling hands, Loftus parted the screen of foliage and peeped out.

“We are lost,” he exclaimed, in a terrified voice. “Here they come, riding eight or ten abreast. They are less than thirty feet away, and are heading straight for our hiding place. They must have seen us.”

## CHAPTER X

Loftus was wrong when he told Guy that they had been discovered, though it was true enough that the horsemen were riding straight for the clump of bushes. Had the lads remained in their former position and dropped flat to the ground they would have been entirely safe, but Loftus had acted on the spur of the moment, and without trying to ascertain in just what direction the enemy were moving.

It was too late now to take to flight, or to escape the threatened danger. They must face the worst.

The Sepoy horsemen—for such they undoubtedly were—probably did not observe the low line of bushes that lay in their path. They were far too intent on other matters to pay attention to such trifles. So they spurred rapidly on until barely six feet separated the foremost line of horsemen from the spot where Guy and Loftus lay hid trembling with acute fear.

Then the officer at their head, who was riding on the right flank, jerked his horse sharply with one hand, so that the animal swerved abruptly to the west; and, with the other hand, he pointed at the cluster of bushes.

“This part of the plain is full of poisonous serpents,” he exclaimed, in tones that rose clearly above the muffled pounding of hoofs. “Some are likely in yonder thicket. We must take no chances with our horses this night.”

It needed not the officer’s words to carry out his object, for the instant that he swerved to the west the foremost column of horsemen followed suit just as sheep will follow a leader, and each succeeding column wheeled in turn as it reached the obnoxious clump of bushes. How furiously they would have spurred through them with drawn sabres had they known of the presence of the two lads crouching there in the shadow!

Company after company rode swiftly past, each trooper, in the familiar gray uniform, sitting erect on his horse, with his sabre dangling at his side. Many of those blades were reeking with human blood.

Guy and Loftus watched the scene eagerly from their shelter, greatly relieved to

find their lives spared so miraculously, but saddened and indignant at the frustration of their plans—for chance words from the lips of the Sepoys told plainly the object of their hasty march. They were going to Delhi, there to reenact in the early hours of the morning the bloody deeds so recently committed in the Sudder Bazaar. As the rear company rode by on a gallop, Loftus sprang recklessly to his feet and shook his rifle toward the long column, which was now fast vanishing in the dim southwest.

“There go the fiends,” he muttered, angrily, heading straight for Delhi, and riding for all they are worth! By George! Mottram, this is horrible! simply horrible! Not a word of warning can reach those poor people at Delhi, and all the English there will be slaughtered—men, women and children!”

“My poor father!” cried Guy. “Can nothing be done to save him? If we had horses we might outdistance the mutineers yet.”

“Your father—is he at Delhi?” exclaimed Loftus, in surprise.

“Yes,” said Guy; “at least, I think he is. I can’t say certainly. It is a long story,” he added, as he observed his companion’s surprise. “Too long to relate now.”

“For your sake, I hope he is not there,” rejoined Loftus. “It is impossible to carry out our plans now. As you see for yourself, the mutineers are heading for Delhi in the straightest possible course. They will strike the main highway three or four miles from here, and follow that for the balance of the way. Even if we had the swiftest horses in India we could do nothing to thwart their plans. We might overtake them, it is true, but could we pass them on the highway without detection? Could we circle around and get safely ahead of them? I have heard that the country to right and left of the main road to Delhi is in many places impassable for horsemen. How true it is I can’t say.”

“It is true enough!” replied Guy, with a groan of despair. “I can vouch for that myself. There are swamps and morasses, many of which are not bridged. No, you are right, Loftus; we can do nothing. Our only hope was in getting the start of the Sepoys.”

“At any rate, let us get away from these bushes,” said Loftus, nervously; “that officer may be right about the snakes, and I have no desire to be bitten.”

He stepped cautiously out into the open plain, and Guy followed him. There they

both stood for two or three minutes, straining their eyes to catch a last glimpse of the receding mutineers, and when the trample of hoofs had faded entirely away they turned wearily toward the Sudder Bazaar, where the horizon was still red with flames, and whence came cries and hoarse shouts, and occasional musket shots.

The sight and sound made their blood boil. The escaped convicts from the prison, assisted by the scum of the native town, were completing the work of destruction that the victorious Sepoys had begun.

“I can’t stand this!” cried Guy. “We are well armed, Loftus, and have plenty of ammunition, while the rabble surely can’t have many firearms. We may do some good work there. What do you say—shall we go?”

For answer, Loftus swung his rifle across his shoulder and started briskly over the plain.

“Just what I was going to propose,” he said, grimly. “We will do some good work, God willing. By Jove! Guy, I wish we had you in our regiment; you have the right stuff in you for a soldier.”

Then Loftus brushed a tear from his eye as he remembered that the regiment of which he was so justly proud had probably ceased to exist, and the next instant his teeth clinched in a firm resolve to avenge the fate of his comrades in arms.

Guy made no answer, but his companion’s words had sunk deeply into his heart. It was the dream and desire of his life to be a soldier—a taste probably inherited from a revolutionary ancestor—and now he felt vaguely that in some manner his ambition was in a fair way to be realized. His hand tightened on the stock of his musket, and he followed Loftus with a prouder and quicker step.

But neither of the lads had lost sight of prudence in their determination to aid the few inhabitants of the Sudder Bazaar who might yet be alive and at the mercy of the frenzied mob. They circled far out to the westward, and then, with great caution, approached the English quarter from that direction.

As they drew near the situation made itself plain. Many of the bungalows and public edifices were in ruins, but no fresh fires were being started, and those buildings which were already in flames were burning themselves quietly out, for there was not sufficient breeze to spread the conflagration.



In the ruddy light hundreds of dusky figures could be seen moving about, and from every quarter of the bazaar rose exultant yells as the fiends looted the shops and bungalows. Fortunately, they were more intent on plunder and robbery than on the quest for human life, and indeed there seemed little chance of gratifying this latter passion, for of the English residents who had dwelt here so peacefully an hour or two before not a trace could be seen or heard.

True, an occasional shot rang out, mingled with shrill cries but, as Loftus suggested, this was probably caused by quarrels among the rioters themselves over their stealings.

Carefully the lads approached the verge of a narrow street that led directly into the bazaar, stealing along behind trees and compound walls. No one was visible in the immediate vicinity. The rabble were still a little distance off, though moving closer every moment.

“We will penetrate as far into the bazaar as possible, and reconnoitre,” said Loftus. “It looks now as though all of our friends were dead, and if that proves to be the case we may as well turn back. We will have plenty of chances in the future to risk our lives to better advantage.”

“Yes, at Delhi,” muttered Guy. “We can reach there in time to do some good.”

“Here we are,” said Loftus. “No more talking; we may be overheard. Follow me closely, and have your musket ready for use.”

As he spoke the mouth of the street opened before them. It was very narrow, with a few straggling trees on each side, and less than fifty yards up a building had fallen in ruins, choking the thoroughfare with a smoking mass of charred timbers, and of course screening the daring lads from view.

A sickening sense of horror took possession of them as they crept forward foot by foot. On each side were dark, silent bungalows, with broken casements, and doors that had been torn from their hinges, and lay in front of the gaping entrances.

Guy and Loftus shuddered as they passed each one of these, not having courage to enter. The Sepoys had plainly been here, and inside would probably be found the terrible evidences of their visit.

A little farther on their worst fears were confirmed. In front of one of the bungalows lay the body of an English officer only partially dressed. His sword was still clasped tightly in his hand. A few feet away was another body—that of a merchant evidently—and out in the street lay a dead Sepoy, his face drawn with pain, and his sightless eyes turned toward the sky.

More dark objects were visible, lying in the shadow of trees, and by bungalow doors, and in the dusty road; but the lads had seen quite enough.

They could endure no more of it, and so they stopped and looked at each other, in no wise ashamed of the hot tears that were rolling down their pallid cheeks. The angels must have wept over the horrors that were enacted in Meerut that night.

## CHAPTER XI

“I can’t stand this any longer,” said Guy, huskily. “The place is like a slaughter house.”

“Nor I,” replied Loftus. “Let’s go back. We can’t do any good here—they are all dead. One duty I must perform, Guy, and then we will strike for Delhi, or any place you want to go to. I must visit the cantonments and find out what has become of the English troops.”

“You will find their bodies, that is all,” replied Guy.

“I fear so,” said Loftus, gloomily; “but I must make sure of it. Come on; we had better not lose any time.”

They turned to retrace their steps, but had not moved more than two or three feet when a loud shouting was heard close at hand, and the hurried tramp of many feet.

Loftus drew his companion into the dark doorway of a bungalow, and there they waited in great anxiety, for the tumult was so close at hand that they feared to make a dash down the open street.

But the sound of running ceased almost instantly, though the hoarse cries deepened, and mingled with them was heard a furious hammering and shouts of “Break it down!” “Smash the shutters!” “This is my prize, I tell you!”

This last shout was instantly drowned in roars of opposition and then, to judge by the voices, the speakers began to quarrel fiercely.

“The devils have found some house that has not been broken into,” said Loftus. “One of the shops, I suppose, and now they are wrangling over the plunder. We had better take advantage of the row to get away. The mob will swarm around here next.”

As he spoke the pounding began anew, and an instant later there came a loud and ponderous crash. The door had given away.

A yell of satisfaction arose, and echoed briefly down the street; then a sharp crack rang over the din and that crack Guy and Loftus recognized instantly. It was the report of a revolver.

Bang! bang! Twice more the weapon went off, and the shouting of the mob changed to yells of rage and of agony. Some one had gone down before the unknown marksman.

“What shall we do?” cried Guy. “They have found an Englishman. The poor fellow will be killed.”

“Do? What can we do?” exclaimed Loftus, fiercely. “We are two against a mob of at least a score. If we try to save their victim three lives will be sacrificed instead of one—that is all.”

“There goes another shot,” cried Guy.

“If we can’t help the poor fellow, let us at least get away from here.”

But before either could move out from the shelter of the doorway a startling thing occurred—a loud, shrill scream was heard, and then a woman’s voice called loudly, “Help! help!”—but in such pitiful, despairing tones that the poor creature must have realized the utter futility of her appeal.

Guy and Loftus glanced at each other with horror-stricken faces, the one remembering his mother, the other thinking of a dear sister that was far away in peaceful England.

“Good heavens! a woman among those fiends!” cried Loftus. “I can’t stand that!”

“Come on, then! we’ll save her or die in the attempt!” shouted Guy, hoarsely; and he dashed into the street, slipping an extra cartridge into his mouth as he ran.

Loftus was by his side instantly, and, with great leaps they plunged up the middle of the street toward the angle of a cross thoroughfare whence the tumult seemed to come. All thought of personal risk was forgotten in the resolve to save the unfortunate English woman.

In an instant they were at the corner of the next street—a very narrow one—and

the struggle was in plain view. A dozen half-naked Hindoos of the very lowest type were surging about the door of a small bungalow, trampling ruthlessly over two dark forms that lay on the ground, and waving weapons of every sort from a curved tulwar to a knotted staff. The door hung on broken hinges, and from the piercing screams that were heard it was plain that some of the fiends had already entered the bungalow. Those outside were probably waiting for their comrades to reappear.

Guy and Loftus were fairly beside themselves with rage as they realized what was taking place.

Crack! crack! went the two muskets, as the lads swept down the narrow street, and under the circumstances it was almost impossible to have missed.

They did not miss, but each found a living target, and when a second later the revolvers began to crack the rioters lost heart, fell into confusion, and then fled precipitately toward the next turning of the street. Their rout was not surprising, since they themselves possessed no firearms, and were at heart arrant cowards. Moreover, in the uncertain light they were misled as to the strength of their assailants.

But three of the mob—big, burly, desperate fellows—did not flee. They waited for Guy and Loftus with huge swords, but at sight of the lat[t]ers' clubbed muskets, and in the face of a revolver ball which Guy sent whizzing by one fellow's head, the scoundrels thought better of their purpose, and slunk back into the shadows.

In a trice the lads were through the bungalow door, and peering eagerly about the front room. It was empty save for a revolver that lay on the floor.

The piercing screams still continued close at hand.

“The other room!” cried Guy. “We shall find her there.”

“This way!” shouted Loftus, springing like a tiger at a loose bamboo screen that stood before a narrow door.

Down went the screen with a crash, and the lads burst in to the rear apartment, jostling each other rudely in their haste.

At last what they sought was before them. The room was lighted feebly by a bronze lamp that rested on a bracket high up on the wall. The floor was strewn with soft rugs; easy-chairs stood about, and a table holding books and papers and a piano, with sheets of music lying on its ebony top. In front of this was a beautiful young girl struggling in the grasp of two gigantic ruffians—the one a villainous-faced native, the other a Sepoy, wearing a torn and blood-stained uniform. The fiends had no intention of killing the girl. They wanted to take her alive.

With a yell that was more like a wild beast than a human being, Loftus dashed at the native, seized him by the throat and bore him heavily to the floor. Loftus was far stronger than most men supposed—he had been a great boating man at Oxford—and never did he use his strength in a better cause.

Guy sprang for the Sepoy with clubbed musket, and as the scoundrel turned on him with a drawn sabre he sent him stunned and bleeding to the floor by a well-directed blow.

Loftus was by this time on his feet, having pounded his assailant into unconsciousness, and both lads turned to the girl whom they had rescued from such a terrible fate. She was leaning against the piano, with her hands clasped in a supplicating attitude, as though uncertain whether the new arrivals were friends or enemies—a very natural doubt, considering the dim light and the unkempt condition of the lads.

She wore a gown made of some light pink stuff that clung tightly to her graceful figure, her deep brown eyes had a fixed stare of horror, and her hair, which was also a golden brown, had been torn from its fastenings in the struggle and floated about her shoulders. Her face was colorless save for two glowing red spots, one in the centre of each cheek. She appeared to be no more than sixteen or seventeen years old.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Loftus, noting the girl’s hesitancy. “You are safe now—at least for the present. But we must leave here at once, or we are all lost. Do you feel able to walk?”

She tried to speak, but the words were choked in a flood of tears, and dropping into a chair she covered her face with her hands and wept without restraint for two or three moments.

The lads glanced at each other uneasily. Under such circumstances they were at a loss to know how to act. Out in the street hoarse shouts could be heard. The rioters were returning.

“We must do something,” said Guy. “Escape is cut off in front; we must find a way out by the rear.”

The girl heard the words, and also the cries of the returning mob. She sprang to her feet with flashing eyes, and a few tears still rolling down her cheeks.

“Oh, forgive me!” she said. “My thoughtlessness has put your lives in peril. It is a poor return for your great bravery and kindness—which I shall never forget—but I really could not help it. My poor uncle lies dead in the front room, murdered by the Sepoys. They shot him through the window when he refused to let them enter the house. I was afraid they would kill me, too, but after a while they went away. Then these others came and broke in the door, though I kept them off as long as I could with my revolver. I had no cartridges left, or I would have killed myself. Thank God that you came in time to save me—”

Here the poor girl broke down and could say no more. She looked about the room and shuddered violently.

“Who was your uncle?” asked Guy.

“Dr. James Brydon,” she replied, with an effort. “Did you know him? My name is Mary Brydon. I came to visit him only a week ago, and to keep house for him. His wife is dead, you know.”

Yes, I knew him,” said Guy. “I recognize the house now. Dr. Brydon was one of the best friends I had in Meerut. I can hardly believe that he is dead.”

He made a motion to go toward the other room, but before he could reach the door a great shouting was heard, and a trampling of feet. The rioters had returned and were entering the bungalow.

## CHAPTER XII

The girl snatched the burning lamp from the bracket and started toward the rear door. Her fear had vanished, and she displayed more courage than most men would have shown under the same trying circumstances.

“Quick! Come this way,” she said; “you spoke of escaping by the rear. I will show you the way to the compound.”

She tore down the fastenings of the door and ushered the lads into what was evidently the dining-room of the late Dr. Brydon. The table was spread with snowy linen, delicate china, and pieces of silverware. A massive sideboard that stood against the wall gave Loftus an idea.

“Hold on!” he cried; “we will barricade the door with this. It will keep the fiends back for a time.”

With Guy’s assistance, he trundled it up against the doorway leading to the apartment they had just left, and which by this time, to judge from the noise, was already in possession of the mob. Then they followed their guide into the next room—an airy kitchen built entirely of bamboo.

Thence a door opened upon the compound, which they entered very cautiously. The girl blew out the lamp, and all three waited at the edge of the porch, straining their ears to catch the slightest sound and glancing keenly through the gloom.

From behind came a muffled pounding as the rioters beat against the dining-room door, which the sideboard seemed to be holding in place. But in front the coast was clear. Not the slightest sound was heard, either in the doctor’s compound, or in those which lay parallel with it on each side.

The lads silently reloaded their muskets and started down the garden walk between the well-kept flower beds and sweet-scented bushes which the good old doctor had always tended with such pride and delight. Miss Brydon followed them with her tiny hand clinched on the ivory handle of a revolver which, at her earnest request, Guy had given to her.



The compound walk ended before a low brick building with an iron door, and at sight of it Loftus uttered an exclamation of delight.

“The stable! I wonder if there are any horses in it?”

“Yes,” said the girl; “there are two. The Sepoys tried to get in, but the doors were too securely fastened. My uncle once had some horses stolen, and after that he built a much stronger stable. Here is the key. I picked it up as we came through the kitchen.”

Loftus took it eagerly and inserted it in the lock.

“This is luck,” he said. “I did not expect to find any horses left in Meerut. We will soon be safe and away if those scoundrels who are up in the house now will only stay there for a few moments.”

“I will take care of that,” said Guy. “The kitchen door is a narrow one, and the first fellow that tries to come through I will shoot down. That will at least keep them back for a while. Whistle when all is ready.”

So saying, Guy strode off up the compound walk, musket in hand, and Loftus entered the gloomy stable, somewhat perplexed at the task before him, for it would be dangerous to strike matches.

“Wait a moment,” said the girl, and with quick steps she passed through the stable to the rear door, which she unbolted and flung wide open. A faint light entered—just enough to show the vague outline of the stalls where the horses were tethered.

Loftus first stepped outside to reconnoitre. A narrow lane ran past the stable, bounded on each side by other stables, and by compound walls. The thoroughfare was deserted, but the tumult in the bazaar was drawing steadily nearer, and the racket in the doctor’s bungalow was also on the increase.

When he re-entered the stable the girl had already saddled and bridled one of the horses—a small, trim-looking bay.

“This is my horse,” she said, with a touch of pride. “My poor uncle gave him to me a short time ago. The other one is very large and powerful, and will easily bear two. Uncle often rode him on dress parade. He was a military surgeon, you

know.”

Loftus was perfectly accustomed to horses, and in less time than it takes to tell, he led the other animal—a magnificent black charger—out on the stable floor, and threw over his back the saddle that his fair companion pointed out to him.

“Now for Guy,” he muttered, aloud, and was about to give a low whistle when the sharp crack of a musket was heard, followed by a chorus of hoarse yells.

Then came a crash, as of some heavy body falling.

Loftus started to dash forward, believing that his friend was in peril, but before he reached the compound Guy appeared, breathless and excited.

“Are you ready?” he panted. “The fiends will be here in a second or two. I dropped one fellow as he came through the door, and then the rest battered down the whole kitchen wall—threw a table or something against it. There! do you hear them shout? They are running down the compound walk.”

Loftus did hear them shout—only too plainly—and so did the girl, for, with a bound, she vaulted lightly into the saddle.

Loftus reached the black charger in a couple of leaps, and mounted with the aid of the stirrups. He helped Guy up behind him, and balanced both muskets over the pommel of his saddle.

“Get up!” he cried, and the steed’s hoofs pounded for an instant on the hard stable floor, then sank lightly into the dusty lane.

The girl was waiting for them, holding her impatient, prancing animal with a firm hand.

“You must take the lead,” she cried, appealingly. “I know nothing of the country about Meerut. I will follow you. My horse can keep up, I think.”

“There they come!” shouted Guy, wheeling partly around as a rush of feet was heard on the stable floor. “Quick, Loftus, don’t delay.”

For a second or two the situation was critical; then Loftus leaned out and snatched the bridle of the bay horse, drove his heels into the flanks of his own

steed with a fierce shout, and away went both spirited animals down the lane, bearing their riders to safety and freedom, just as the rioters surged out of the stable doors making night hideous with their cries of baffled rage.

The fugitives rode on and on, little heeding the tumult behind them or the dark figures that frequently darted across their path with uplifted weapons, and soon a turn in the lane led them into the open country. They pushed on straight to the west until fallen Meerut and her savage invaders were far in the rear.

“I hardly know what to do now,” said Loftus, as the horses changed their pace to a gentle trot. “I ought to go to the cantonments and learn the fate of the garrison, but on the other hand this young lady should be conducted to a place of safety and I rather think that our first duty is to her.”

Before Guy could answer a way out of the difficulty suddenly presented itself. A crouching figure crossed the path just ahead, bending low to escape observation. It was the work of an instant to run the fellow down, and Loftus dismounted and bent over him with his drawn sabre. It proved to be a half-naked Hindoo fleeing to a place of safety with plundered goods from the town. His arms were wrapped about a bundle of rich rugs and gold and silver vases.

The wretch howled with fright, convinced that his last moment had come.

“See here!” said Loftus, in a stern voice. “I will spare your life on one condition—that you answer my questions truly. You have come from Meerut, and you know what has taken place there. Where are the English soldiers—the Grenadiers who were stationed at the cantonments?”

“They are dead, sahib, all dead,” replied the Hindoo, in trembling tone. “The Sepoys have slaughtered every man of them, nor is there a single English sahib yet living in Meerut—man, woman, or child. All have perished at the hands of the Sepoys.”

Loftus turned away, too sick at heart to question the fellow more, and not doubting the truth of the statement. He and Guy mounted the horse and rode slowly back to the spot where they had left Miss Brydon, while the Hindoo slipped away in the grass, no doubt exulting over the false answers that he had given to the hated Feringhees.

The lads held a brief consultation over the emergency which now faced them.

“We ought to push right on for Delhi,” said Loftus, “and yet that plan is attended with great risk. We may meet bands of mutineers on the way, and as for Delhi itself, every European in it may be dead before the sun rises. To turn back to Meerut is equally hopeless.”

Guy pondered a moment, and then exclaimed, gladly:

“I have just the plan we want, Loftus. We will go directly to our plantation—the Hindoos there are loyal to a man—and Miss Brydon will have every comfort and convenience. We ourselves can get food and clean clothes, and after we are there it will be time enough to decide what to do next.”

“Good!” said Loftus, briefly. “Nothing could be better.”

A moment later the three fugitives were riding swiftly to the south toward the distant plantation. Little did they dream of the ending that journey was destined to have!

## CHAPTER XIII

A few words must be said here concerning those English troops whose absence from the scene of destruction Guy and Loftus had found so hard to understand, and whom they now believed to have perished to the last man. Such was far from being the case. The Hindoo had lied most infamously to Loftus—lied through ignorance, for he could have known nothing of the situation.

The true state of affairs was simply this: incredible and disgraceful as it may seem, when the Sepoys broke into mutiny, shot down their officers, and fled from the cantonments, the authorities at Meerut, both civil and military, simply lost their heads and behaved like a flock of silly, panic-stricken geese. The brigadier in command ordered off the Carbineers, the best troops available, to guard a distant jail some miles away, and all through that awful night, while the dregs of the native town were murdering and burning and pillaging in the Sudder Bazaar to their heart's content, the English infantry slept calmly on their parade ground hardly a mile away, with their arms stacked beside them.

When morning dawned on the smoldering bungalows and the stiffened corpses that lay in streets and compounds, the authorities saw the result of their vacillating policy. Let us hope that it taught them a life-long lesson!

But not all of the English residents had perished. Many escaped death by hiding in cellars and gardens, and on the roofs of buildings. Others escaped to the open country, and some few were saved by the loyalty and devotion of their native servants. The Recording Angel that night jotted down more than one deed of heroism to the credit of dark-skinned Hindoos who were proof against the wiles and threats of the Sepoys.

It was shortly after midnight when Guy, Bob Loftus and Miss Brydon started on their long ride to Mr. Mottram's plantation. At that hour the work of destruction had reached its climax in the town behind them, and many miles to the front were the revolted Sepoys, hastening as fast as horses could carry them, to the imperial city of Delhi, where the last scion of the long line of Mogul emperors lived in gilded captivity, possessing not a tithe of the power that had belonged to his ancestors.

Two causes spurred the mutineers to excessive speed, the one a natural desire to

tell their wondrous tale to their comrades at Delhi, the other a deadly fear that the English cavalry were in close pursuit. But as the hours wore on and the dreaded rattle of hoofs was not heard, they became reassured and rode on their way flushed with triumph, until at daybreak they caught sight of the minarets of the Jami Musjid glittering in the morning sun. A little later they were crossing the bridge of boats that spans the waters of the Jumna, and the open gates of the imperial city were before them.

But it is not with these men that our story deals, though their deeds on this eventful Monday would make interesting and soul-stirring reading. We must join the three fugitives who are rapidly increasing the distance between themselves and the city of Meerut. They have circled far around the native town—which is by this time in a state of tumultuous disorder—and gained the bank of the Kalli Nudda without encountering any one save a few frightened natives.

Now they are riding swiftly along the highway which follows that beautiful stream—the same highway on which the two lads had met and passed through such strange adventures less than twenty-four hours before. Momentous events are oftentimes compressed into a very narrow space of time.

The fugitives talked as their horses trotted side by side—talked in faltering tones of the terrible things they had witnessed that night, for as yet a great horror was on them all, nor did they realize the full extent of this storm cloud that had burst so suddenly upon peaceful India.

They spoke hopefully of the stern retribution that would soon be meted out to the mutinous Sepoys when the English troops from the nearest stations would march on Delhi and Meerut. Nothing was further from their thoughts than the possibility that the spirit of insurrection would spread throughout the whole native army.

Guy was curious to know something of Mary Brydon. He had been acquainted with Dr. Brydon a long time, but had never heard him speak of his niece. The girl volunteered the information of her own accord, and related her story to her companions as briefly as possible.

Her father stood high in the civil service [\_sic\_] at Calcutta. He had gone to England on business a few weeks before, taking his wife with him, and it was at Mary's own suggestion that she had gone to Meerut to keep house for her uncle,

whose wife had recently died. It had been her intention to stay with him until her parents returned in the fall.

Her situation was indeed a sad one, for the death of Dr. Brydon left her without a relative or friend in this part of India—none nearer, indeed, than Calcutta. The lads pitied her deeply, and all the more because it was out of their power to offer her any consolation. Her conduct under these trying circumstances aroused their admiration, for Mary Brydon was a brave girl, and faced the situation with heroic fortitude. Her actions showed, however, that she relied on her young protectors to see her through whatever dangers might arise, and the lads secretly resolved to show themselves worthy of the trust, and count no risk in guarding her from harm.

Guy suddenly chanced to remember that he had said nothing to Loftus about the strange mystery that was connected with his father, so he told him the whole story as they rode on over the smooth, white road.

Loftus was inclined to view the matter in a favorable light—if, indeed, it could be called favorable under the circumstances.

“It all looks pretty clear to me,” he said. “Your father must have overheard some alarming conversation—no doubt connected with this very outbreak that occurred tonight—and after starting for Meerut he changed his mind and went to Delhi instead—”

“And if that is the case,” interrupted Guy, eagerly, “the authorities at Delhi are warned and will be on their guard. The Sepoys will meet with a warm reception.”

“Yes,” assented Loftus; “your father was probably acquainted with that part of the plot which concerned Delhi only. If he is there you need have no fears for his safety.

“But there is another side to the question,” he added, more gravely, “though a less likely one, I admit. The Nawab may have been aware that your father overheard this plot, and intercepted him shortly after he left the place. In that event he is probably a prisoner. That would also account for your adventure yesterday morning, when we met so strangely. The Nawab may have feared that your father had imparted his information to you, and so he sent that scoundrel to waylay you on the road. But, remember, I am only surmising, Guy. I don’t

believe for an instant that these things have occurred. Your assailant was a mere robber who was after plunder, and as for your father, he will turn up safe and sound. Don't worry about that."

Guy's heart by no means echoed these confident words of his companion, but nevertheless he was disposed to look on the bright side, and, moreover, during the past half hour he had reasoned himself—as men will do in a matter on which their heart is set—into a conviction that he would find his father at the plantation.

As the foregoing conversation came to an end the palace of Nawab Ali loomed into view on the right hand side of the road, and the fugitives became alert and watchful as the horses trotted swiftly by the stately pile. But nothing occurred to cause them alarm. Every window was dark, and no sign of life was visible about the stables or the grounds.

Guy shuddered to think that somewhere behind those massive walls his father might be lying in captivity. Then he banished the unpleasant thought from his mind, as the horses left the Nawab's palace behind and entered on the long, clear stretch that led straight to the plantation.

As the fugitives rode swiftly on through the silence of the night the moon came up and shed a silvery light on the smooth surface of the Kalli Nudda, while far back on the northern horizon its soft beams blended with the red glare of the flames that were still having their own way in the Sudder Bazaar.

At last the plantation buildings came dimly into view, and the weary horses were pulled up at the stable compound. The lads dismounted and helped Miss Brydon to her feet.

Guy wondered at the absence of all the servants—Jewan especially—until he happened to catch a glimpse of the bungalow between the trees. Some one was within, for streams of yellow light shone through the crevices of the door and the bamboo matting at the windows. His heart leaped for joy.

"Come on," he cried eagerly to his companions; "my father must have returned."

He left the horses standing in the compound and hurried with great strides toward the bungalow, his musket thrown over his shoulder. Loftus and Mary Brydon followed closely, almost running to keep up with their impetuous



companion.

## CHAPTER XIV

As the little party of three wended their way across the inclosure toward the house, rejoicing at the prospect of safety, food and rest, they heard the shrill neigh of a horse—one of the animals they had just left in the compound—and then two or three similar sounds coming apparently from within the stable.

“There must be other horses there,” said Loftus. He glanced backward uneasily, and then, seeing that Guy was pushing unconcernedly ahead, he gave the circumstance no more attention.

The lights from the bungalow were now streaming directly across the path, and a low murmur of voices could be heard, mingled with the occasional rattle of glassware.

“Father has brought some friends with him and is giving them refreshments,” thought Guy, as he strode carelessly to the door, his heart throbbing with joyful anticipation.

With a cheery “come on now” to his companions, he lifted the latch and entered the hallway, which was quite dark. He waited here a second for Loftus and Mary Brydon to join him, and then, approaching the door of the dining-room, under which a bar of yellow light was streaming, he seized it boldly and threw it wide open.

A sharp cry escaped his lips. He staggered partly over the threshold, and then stood bolt upright staring into the brilliantly lighted room with eyes that were dilated with horror. Mary Brydon uttered a shrill scream, and fell back against Loftus, who caught her before she could reach the floor.

“Trapped! By George!” he muttered, hoarsely, as he held the fainting girl up with one hand, and with the other attempted to cock his musket.

Never were men more terribly surprised. The scene within that dining-room was well calculated to strike despair into the hearts of the two brave lads as they stood on the threshold, too stunned to think of flight until it was too late.

Around the table sat nine big, ugly Sepoys. Two massive bronze lamps lighted

the apartment, and shone into the fierce, dusky faces, and on the gray uniforms, with their polished brass buttons, and the spots of blood and dust that told their tale more plainly than words could do it.

The fiends had been dining; for on the table before them, with its array of fine linen and silver, were platters of bread and meat, and glasses half filled with yellow wine. Long-necked bottles, musty and cobwebbed—the choicest treasures of Mr. Mottram's wine bins—were stacked on a huge waiter amid chunks of ice.

Nothing was too good for these mutinous Sepoys in the first flush of their victory. They had even plundered [t]he ice pits. They had thrown off their accoutrements and unbuttoned their short jackets, the better to enjoy the feast. On one end of the table lay a heap of sabres and muskets and cartridge belts, and in a far corner of the room cowered the household servants, trembling for their lives.

Strangely enough, among these nine Sepoys were two officers—two soubahdars of the Seventy-second Light Cavalry—who sat at opposite sides of the table facing each other. Guy recognized both. The burly fellow with the heavy black beard was Namgay Paltu. His fellow officer was Matadeen Sircar, also a man of powerful build, but with a smooth face that was disfigured by a livid purple scar across one cheek.

This latter Guy knew well. He had come to the plantation one day with a great gash across his face inflicted by a cattle thief whom he was trying to arrest, and Mr. Mottram had fed him and dressed his wound, and sent him back to Meerut in a palanquin. At the time he had professed much gratitude—but would he remember it now?

All these things Guy saw and noted almost with the rapidity of a lightning flash, as he paused on the threshold of the room.

Of course, the opening of the door riveted the attention of the Sepoys instantly, and for a passing second they gaped in open-mouthed wonder at the strange spectacle—the two lads with their white, frightened face, and the fair-haired English girl.

Then nine pair of booted feet scraped the floor, wineglasses were dashed aside, staining the snowy linen with their amber contents, and in the twinkling of an

eye a cluster of steel barrels were staring Guy and Loftus in the face, while the room echoed with shouts of “Kill the Feringhees! Kill the Feringhees!”

The horrified lads could do nothing to avert the threatened doom. Everything seemed to swim before their eyes, and in imagination they felt the cruel musket balls tearing through their flesh.

Well it was for them that the Sepoys had been drinking just enough to feel in a good humor. Some impulse of mercy, or doubt, checked their fingers on the triggers, and before they could steel themselves for the murderous deed Matadeen Sircar sprang in front of the deadly muzzles and fearlessly thrust them aside.

“Stop!” he shouted. “Don’t shoot! We will take these Feringhees prisoners.”

Just at this instant Guy and Loftus stood a fair chance of making their escape through the dark hall behind them, had they chosen to take advantage of it. But each remembered that such action would leave Mary Brydon to her fate, and both firmly stood their ground.

An instant later they were roughly dragged into the room, disarmed, bound, and placed on their feet against the rear wall. Matadeen Sircar himself picked up the girl, who was mercifully unconscious, and placed her on a leather-covered couch.

“Go outside and reconnoitre,” he roughly commanded one of his men. “See if any more of these accursed Feringhee dogs are in the neighborhood.

If the coast is clear stay on guard. We might have been trapped through our carelessness.”

Namgay Paltu had witnessed these proceedings with a savage scowl on his bearded face. Now he turned to the soubahdar Matadeen, and demanded, angrily:

“Who gave you authority to take these people prisoners? I am in command here, and I intend to have the Feringhees shot. You have caused enough mistakes for one night. When the Jeniador sent us on a mission you offered to guide us and show the way. This is how you kept your promise—leading us to this place far off the track. Our comrades are many miles toward Delhi, and at any moment we may be surprised by the English cavalry. And now you desire to complete your

folly by saving the lives of these Feringhee dogs. I believe you are a traitor, Matadeen Sircar. I would do well to shoot you right here.”

As he uttered these bold words the soubahdar let his hand stray toward the gleaming hilt of a revolver that peeped from his belt.

Matadeen Sircar’s face flushed until the scar on his cheek was a deep purple.

“The Feringhees shall not die!” he said, doggedly, “and I am no traitor—no more of a traitor than you are, Soubahdar Namgay. If I lost the road it was no fault of mine, but rather the darkness. It is better, I say, that we should hold these people as prisoners and take them with us to Delhi. Our horses will bear their weight lightly. It was the wish of”—here he lowered his voice and pronounced the name inaudibly—“that we should do no more slaughter than was necessary.”

“That is not true,” said Namgay Paltu. “You need waste no more words on me. I have said that the dogs must die, and die they shall. Shoot these two Feringhees instantly,” he added, in tones of stern command, as he wheeled about and faced his men.

One of the Sepoys, it will be remembered, had been sent out on guard duty. Of the six who remained three raised their muskets without hesitation and took deliberate aim at Guy and Loftus; the lads faced the ordeal without flinching, though their white faces showed something of the mental agony they were enduring.

These three Sepoys were under the jurisdiction of Namgay Paltu; the other three belonged to the Soubahdar Matadeen’s company, and they showed proof of their loyalty by glancing toward him for orders.

Matadeen Sircar was furious with passion.

“Shoot the first man that pulls trigger on those Feringhees,” he shouted, hoarsely, and so promptly was the order carried out that before Namgay Paltu’s men could obey his command they found themselves covered by the muskets of their companions.

For a few seconds the situation was desperately critical. Then, by general consent, the Sepoys all lowered their muskets and regarded each other in a very sheepish manner. For them it was a drawn game, but to Matadeen Sircar it was a

complete victory. His first impulse to save the lives of the prisoners—undoubtedly through a sense of gratitude for past favors—had resolved itself into a contest for supremacy between himself and his fellow-officer. How he regarded the result was shown by the leer of triumph on his dark face as he turned to Namgay Paltu.

That individual was standing quietly by the table. His lips were tightly compressed, and his black eyes were snapping like living coals. Then his pent-up wrath exploded. With a swift motion he snatched a revolver from his belt and turned the muzzle on Matadeen Sircar's breast.

“Die, then, you traitor!” he cried, with a bitter oath.

But Matadeen Sircar did not die, though he made a very narrow miss of it. He had been watching his enemy very narrowly, and a quick leap carried him forward just in time to strike up the outraised arm. The pistol went off with a loud report, sending a bullet into the opposite wall, and then fell to the floor and rolled under the table.

Namgay Paltu had no time to recover the weapon. With a hoarse yell he pulled his shining sabre out of its sheath and dashed at Matadeen Sircar more furiously than ever. The ladder dodged behind a chair, thus warding off the first blow, and at the same time gaining command of his own sabre, which was the only weapon available, and then, with an equal show of fury and fearlessness, he dashed at his antagonist.

## CHAPTER XV

From their corner Guy and Bob Loftus looked mutely on, knowing well that the issue of the fight would determine their own fate—life—at least for the present—if Matadeen Sircar won; a speedy death if he fell by Namgay Paltu's hand.

The Sepoys made no effort to interfere either way. They drew back and ranged themselves along the wall so that the combatants would have as much room as possible. But in spite of their neutral attitude, they took a keen interest in what was going on, and their sympathies with their respective officers were plainly indicated by flashing eyes, and a sullen handling of their weapons.

The two soubahdars were both practiced swordsmen—that was plainly to be seen. Nor did they suffer their passion to render them careless—at least in the beginning of the struggle. They stood their ground, striking savagely at each other, and the only sound to be heard in the room was their deep, quick breathing, and the ringing clash of the blades.

With admirable skill each parried the strokes of the other, and at the end of five minutes neither had sustained so much as a scratch. Then their customary prudence began to desert them, and they made furious onsets, swaying backward and forward across the limited space which was allowed them, and smiting their blades until the sparks fell in showers.

Once the Soubahdar Matadeen was driven violently against an end of the table, and the concussion flung one of the massive bronze lamps to the floor, where it upset and made a pool of burning oil that tossed up a column of blue flames.

The soubahdar paid no attention to the catastrophe other than to turn on Namgay Paltu so desperately as to drive him clear across the room at the point of his sabre, and hold him at bay against the wall.

A Sepoy, with great presence of mind, smothered the flames by means of a rug that lay in the doorway, and all eyes were once more turned to the struggle.

It was destined to be of short duration now, for both men were growing reckless with passion. They slashed away for a few seconds, and then Namgay Paltu made a rush at his assailant, so impetuous and overwhelming that Matadeen

Sircar was driven back to the table once more, warding off his enemy's fierce sabre strokes as he retreated. Then, when he could go no farther, he halted and his face turned a shade paler at the near prospect of defeat and death, for Namgay Paltu was pressing him very closely.

But at this critical moment a happy inspiration flashed into his mind, and suddenly, to the amazement of the onlookers, he made a clever backward spring that carried him right up on the table.

"My turn now, you dog!" he shouted, hoarsely; and grasping his sabre with both hands he aimed a terrific blow at his antagonist, who was standing directly beneath him, not knowing what to make of this new move.

The keen blade actually dashed Namgay Paltu's sword from his hand, hurling it to the floor with a terrific clatter, and then, with but half-spent impetus, struck his left arm, cutting through the uniform and into the flesh so that the red blood was seen to spurt from the wound.

Namgay Paltu gave one hoarse yell of mingled rage and pain as his left arm dropped powerless to his side. He half stooped as though to pick up his fallen sabre but changed his mind and ran instead to the other end of the table, where half a dozen muskets lay. With his right hand he snatched one of these, catching it close to the end of the barrel, and the next instant he had leaped right up on the table not six feet from his enemy.

Matadeen Sircar had done a very foolish thing in not leaping down upon his antagonist, and following up his advantage at once, and he now realized the gravity, of the mistake, when it was too late.

The two soubahdars rushed at each other from their respective ends of the tables, trampling the frail wineglasses and the silver plate ruthlessly under foot. Matadeen Sircar's blade flashed in the lamplight as he raised it aloft with both hands, but before it could descend Namgay Paltu whirled the heavy musket overhead with all the strength of his powerful right arm, and down it came with irresistible force, breaking the Soubahdar Matadeen's guard, and striking him fairly on the forehead. Without a cry he collapsed, sank down on the table, and then toppled over to the floor, where he lay, to all appearances, a corpse.

Three of the Sepoys glowered with triumph. The other three looked at one another in mute consternation and half raised their weapons; but a sense of



prudence asserted itself—they were three against four now—and so they made no attempt to avenge the fall of their officer. It was off with the old, on with the new. They dropped their muskets calmly to the floor, signifying their acceptance of the inevitable.

As for Guy and Loftus, what emotions filled their hearts at this moment can be better imagined than written! They were at the mercy of the victor, and such mercy they might expect as a tigress shows to the slayer of her cubs.

Namgay Paltu coolly surveyed the situation for a moment, and then jumped lightly to the floor.

“The traitor has only got his deserts,” he muttered, grimly. “Bring water and bandages, some of you, and fix up this wound,” he added; and a quick spasm of pain distorted his features as he tried to lift his injured arm.

Two or three Sepoys sprang forward to obey. There was water in a carafe on the table, and the table cloth, rent in strips, made excellent bandages. The soubahdar submitted to the operation with grim fortitude, and while the Sepoys were clumsily dressing the wound Mary Brydon awoke from her faint, and sat partially up on the couch, staring with wide open eyes about the room.

She saw the lads standing in the corner with bound arms, the savage faces of the Sepoys, the motionless body of Matadeen Sircar, the blood stains on the floor, and then with a pitiful scream her eyes closed and she fell back as lifeless as before.

“Thank God for that!” muttered Guy. “She will be spared the worst.”

At that moment the Sepoys completed the dressing of the soubahdar’s wound, and Namgay Paltu turned to the lads with a half smile on his evil face. He glared at them for an instant without speaking.

“Shoot these Feringhee dogs!” he cried, loudly. “They have enjoyed life far too long as it is. But make haste, for the hour is late and we must be well on our way to Delhi by sunrise.”

Not a glimmer of pity was visible on the dusky faces of the troopers. They leveled their muskets instantly, and six black muzzles were focused on Guy and Loftus. Once before those weapons had been pointed at the lads and then

withdrawn, but they knew that no aid could come now—that the end of all was at hand.

But hark! As Guy and Loftus exchange a last look, the outer door of the bungalow is swung open and a quick patter of steps echoes across the hall. The Sepoys forget to fire, and turn their heads uneasily, with their fingers still pressed on the triggers. Even Namgay Paltu forgets to chide them, and glances sharply around.

Then the inner door flies open, and on the threshold appears the Sepoy who had been sent out on guard duty. He is panting for breath, and his startled eyes dilate still wider as he sees the red bandages on the Soubahdar Namgay's arm and the form of Matadeen Sircar—his own officer—stretched on the floor.

The sight is too much for the fellow. He stands there forgetting to speak—forgetting the errand that has brought him to the bungalow in such hot haste—and the Sepoys, who have partly lowered their muskets by this time, devour him with their eyes.

“Well, what is it?” cries Namgay Paltu, in a terrible voice; and that breaks the spell.

The Sepoy takes a step or two into the room, turning a terrified glance over his shoulder.

“There are horsemen coming,” he cries, huskily. “They are approaching from the direction of Meerut, and from the pounding of hoofs on the road they are not few. They are making a great outcry. I can hear the voices plainly.”

The words of the messenger terrify the Sepoys greatly, and they glance at one another and then toward the soubahdar, whose face wears a look of perplexity rather than of fear.

“If you are deceiving me your life shall pay for it, Rao Das,” he cries, angrily. “If the strangers are Feringhees what can have brought them in this direction? Yet it may be so. We dare take no chances. How far distant are these horsemen?”

“Half a mile—no, much less than that now,” answers the fellow, as he tries to watch the door of the bungalow and the soubahdar at the same time. He is an arrant coward, and so, for that matter, are the rest in the face of this unexpected

peril. They would endure any danger rather than meet a body of English troops just now. They wish with all their hearts that they were with their comrades on the road to Delhi.

Then Namgay Paltu swears a bitter oath.

“We will outwit the Feringhees—if such they are,” he cries. “But first shoot these dogs here—why do you disobey my commands? Be quick, now. It is time we were off.”

Again the six rifles are focused on Guy and Loftus, but fright has made the arms of the Sepoys slightly unsteady, and they hesitate for a second or two before they can take good aim.

That interval, short though it is, is fraught with undreamed of consequences. Right beside the doomed lads is a small door leading to an inner apartment, and now that door is suddenly flung open, revealing a dark figure on the threshold—a man only partially clad, and with a shining object in his hand. On one side of this stranger stand the bound lads, and on the other is Mr. Mottram’s massive sideboard, which holds the single lamp that yet lights the room.

The dark figure does not hesitate for a second, but springs forward with a bound, so swiftly that the Sepoys have no chance to pull trigger on their victims, and then all at once the ponderous lamp goes to the floor with a stunning crash that jars the flame from the wick, and a pitchy black darkness, unbroken by a gleam of light, pervades the apartment. Two or three muskets go off with a deafening report, and cries and groans are heard, and a scuffling of feet.

## CHAPTER XVI

Guy and Bob had recognized the dusky figure as it sprang into the room, but they were too dazed to avail themselves at once of the chance of escape—of this unexpected and wonderful reprieve from death. For a few seconds after the upsetting of the lamp they stood against the rear wall, listening to the clamor and scuffling of the Sepoys, the roar of muskets and the thud of bullets shattering the plaster. The red flashes showed them nothing, so dense was the powder smoke.

Then each was grasped by the arm, and the familiar voice of Jewan whispered, huskily:

“Have courage, sahibs—I will save you.”

The faithful servant was quite at home in the darkness, and, with a rapid movement, he thrust the lads before him through the rear door, which he closed softly. They now stood in a narrow hall that communicated with the kitchen. Two skilful strokes of Jewan’s knife severed the cords that bound Guy and Bob, and their arms were free.

“The girl!” cried Bob. “We forgot her!”

“Where is the mem-sahib?” asked Jewan.

“Lying on the couch, close to where we were standing,” replied Guy. “Save her, Jewan, quick! Or shall I—”

“No, the sahibs will remain here.”

As he spoke, Jewan pushed the door open, and, to the great relief of all, it was discovered that the mutineers were surging out of the apartment by the front entrance. Either they had forgotten their late prisoners, or they believed them to have been hit by the shots aimed in the darkness. The farther door was open, and, by the dim light that shone from outside, the dusky forms could be seen squirming in a mass.

“The Feringhees! The Feringhees are coming!”

It was Namgay Paltu's voice that shouted these terrifying words, and now the panic increased. With yells and curses, clatter of falling arms and crash of furniture, the Sepoys fought their way through the narrow exit.

Already Jewan had entered the room, and, a moment later, he was back in the hall with Mary Brydon's unconscious form in his arms.

"I have the mem-sahib," he exclaimed. "Come; we must waste no time if we would escape. The Sepoys think the Feringhees are riding fast to trap them, but they will soon learn otherwise. Follow me, sahibs, and be quick."

"Then you think the horsemen who are coming this way are not English soldiers?" asked Guy, as he and Bob dashed through the kitchen at the servant's heels.

"I heard them shouting," replied Jewan, "and the voices were not those of Englishmen. And now be pleased not to speak, sahibs—there is danger near."

The lads heeded this advice, and in silence the little party ran on—out the rear of the bungalow, over the wall of the garden-compound, and past the factory buildings. Then, turning to one side, they gained a thick hedge that led to the Kalli Nudda. Crouching low here, they watched and listened. Namgay Paltu and his men were by this time out of the house, but not a sound indicated where they were lurking. Beyond the stables—on the road leading from Meerut—the night rang with the clatter of hoofs and hoarse shouting. The mysterious horsemen were very near, and a flashing light here and there indicated that they carried torches.

"They are natives, not Englishmen," Guy said, bitterly. "Perhaps another body of mutineers."

"Very likely, sahib," assented Jewan, "and as soon as the other party learn that the search for us will begin. We must be off before the horsemen arrive, and the river offers the best chance. Wait here but a moment—it is necessary that we have arms."

With this, Jewan put the girl down in the thick grass, and hurried away. Mary was still in a swoon, and after looking with heartfelt pity at her white face and closed eyes, the lads turned their attention to the scene in front. They had not long to wait, and a few seconds later their worst fears were realized.

Around the corner of the stables galloped a troop of forty or fifty horsemen, and the torches borne by the leaders shone on the well-known uniforms of the retainers of Nawab Ali. With fierce clamor, they checked their steeds before the bungalow, and here they were met with cries of welcome by Namgay Paltu and his Sepoys, who were quick to discover that their alarm had been groundless.

“The scoundrels!” muttered Guy. “So Nawab Ali has a hand in the revolt. But what can his men be doing here?—and this is not the road to Meerut.”

“They were likely sent to loot the plantation,” suggested Bob.

“Yes, that must be it,” and Guy ground his teeth with rage. “I am beginning to think that Nawab Ali did carry off my father,” he added. “You were right in your suspicions, Bob; no doubt my father overheard something of the plot at the ball that night, and when he left for Meerut his purpose was suspected. That fiend of a Hindoo prince has murdered him—”

The lad broke down and ended with a sob.

“Cheer up,” whispered Bob. “I don’t believe Nawab Ali would dare to kill your father. He is more likely a prisoner in the palace—”

Just then Jewan hurried to the spot, almost breathless from speed. A musket was strapped over his shoulder, and to each of the lads he gave a pistol and a supply of ball cartridges.

“I got these in your father’s sleeping apartment, Sahib Guy,” he explained. “I feared to enter the dining-room. And now let us flee to the river. Yonder horsemen have been sent by Nawab Ali, and they and the Sepoys will be searching for us—”

“Where are the other servants?” asked Guy.

“Some fled long since,” was the reply, “and others have joined the mutineers. May the traitors burn forever!”

With this, Jewan took the girl in his arms, and motioned to the lads to follow him. It was high time the fugitives were off, for the horsemen had already dismounted, and were joining the Sepoys in the search for the escaped prisoners. The bungalow, the garden-compound, and the outbuildings were swarming with

dusky fiends, and loud on the night air rang savage shouts:

“Kill the Feringhees!”

“Hunt them down!”

“Slay without mercy!”

The little band ran fleetly along the farther side of the hedge, Jewan leading the way, and Guy and Bob keeping a sharp lookout in all directions. The possession of firearms gave them courage, and they were resolved to sell their lives dearly if caught.

But the distance was short, and soon they came to the swift and moonlit waters of the Kalli Nudda. Here a small row-boat—the property of Mr. Mottram—was moored amid the bushes. The shouting and clamor were coming nearer, and without an instant’s delay Guy and Bob seated themselves in the stern. Jewan placed the girl gently in the bow, and shoved the craft adrift. Then he took the oars, which were fastened to the gunwales, and pulled rapidly down the stream.

For several minutes not a word was spoken. On and on glided the boat, concealed by the screen of bushes which fortunately lined the bank at this point. Presently, on rounding a slight bend of the stream, Jewan pulled hard and fast to the opposite shore. Here the trees and undergrowth were thicker, and the boat rippled along in deep shadow.

It was well for the fugitives that they were invisible, and that the comparatively broad stretch of the Kalli Nudda was between them and the plantation. The clamor of voices rose louder and louder on the still air, and suddenly a red blaze stained the sky. Then came a burst of yells, and by the glare of the burning bungalow a group of dark figures were seen standing at the spot where the boat had been moored.

“Look!” cried Bob. “Our escape has been discovered!”

“They will soon be after us,” added Guy.

“Not so, sahibs,” declared Jewan. “I think we are safe for the present. The Sepoys are on the way to Delhi, and for the sake of a few victims they will not abandon the march. And the work of destruction and plunder will keep Nawab

Ali's men busy.”

“I hope you are right,” said Guy; “though I would give anything to shoot a couple of those murderous scoundrels.”

With unspeakable rage and grief the lad watched the destruction of his home. Higher and higher rose the flames, spreading right and left as the torch was applied to stables and factory buildings. Meanwhile Jewan pulled steadily at the oars, and after a time the clamor of the rioters died away, though the conflagration remained as vivid as ever. But there was no evidence of pursuit, and for this the fugitives had good cause to be grateful.

The cool night air now restored Mary Brydon to consciousness, and her companions told her of all that had happened. The girl wept hysterically for a few moments, and this did her good. She soon dried her tears, and displayed the same courageous spirit which the lads had so admired when they rescued her from her uncle's bungalow.

“Well, you were right, Jewan,” remarked Guy. “The fires are dying out, and we must be some miles below the plantation. I suppose the fiends have concluded to let us go, and are now on the way to Delhi. What a night this has been! It seems like a long and terrible dream, and I can't realize that but a few hours have passed since I rode away from Mr. Jervis' house in Meerut. And this is only the beginning! What will become of us all? I have lost father and home—”

He broke down and could say no more. There was a look of terrible resolve on his tear-stained face as he glanced behind him at the fading glow of the flames.

“Sahib, bitter and bloody times are indeed coming for India,” said Jewan. “I, who know, tell you this. But the God of the Feringhees, in whom I believe, will protect us. And what feeble aid I can give you—”

“You have been a hero, Jewan,” interrupted Guy. “I will never forget how bravely you saved us from certain death, and I hope to reward you as you deserve.”

“It was the pluckiest and neatest thing I ever saw,” exclaimed Bob. “It's a pity Miss Brydon didn't see it—no, I'm glad she was unconscious all the time.”

“And so am I,” said the girl, with a shudder. “It must have been terrible. I fainted



as soon as I saw those horrible men in the room—that is all I remember.”

“Jewan saved us,” said Guy. “He did what few of his race have done tonight in Meerut, or will do in the future, I fear.”

“The sahib speaks truly,” replied the Hindoo, “for most of the native servants in India were waiting for this uprising, ready to turn their hands against their masters. But I will be faithful to my salt—faithful to the Sahib Mottram who once saved my life.”

“I know you will, Jewan,” Guy said, fervently. “You have already more than repaid the debt of gratitude you owe my father.”

“It was but a simple thing to do,” the Hindoo protested. “I was hidden in the back hall of the bungalow from the time that the mutineers entered—long before the sahibs came themselves. And when the opportunity was ripe my hand was ready. In the confusion I had the lamp out before a shot could be fired.”

“Yes, it was done like a streak,” said Bob. “But did you hear any news about this uprising while you were listening in the hall? Did you know anything of it before tonight?”

“It is true that rumors had reached my ears,” replied Jewan, “but I believed that the time fixed upon was yet far off, else I should have warned the Sahib Mottram, even before he went to Nawab Ali’s ball. As to the uprising itself—I fear it is widespread, and will not soon be checked. I learned much from the conversation of the Sepoys. The massacre at Meerut was to be the signal for like massacres at every station in India, and the rebel army is to assemble at Delhi, there to place the Mogul king upon the throne of his ancestors. Within the next few days, sahibs, I greatly fear the rule of the English will be ended.”

“Hardly that bad!” Bob exclaimed, incredulously. “And yet if other places go as Meerut did—but did all the English perish there, Jewan?”

“So the Sepoys declared,” the Hindoo answered, gravely. “Every man, woman and child are said to be dead. And by this time the mutineers are approaching Delhi.”

## CHAPTER XVII

Though Guy and Bob were satisfied that the Hindoo was not wilfully exaggerating the situation, they were inclined to think that he might be mistaken. They knew, it is true, that the proportion of Englishmen and officers stationed at the various military posts throughout India was as one to hundreds of the native troops, and they had seen for themselves some of the horrors enacted at Meerut; but that an uprising of the whole Sepoy army was about to take place seemed too monstrous to believe. They had yet to learn the extent of the treason that had been brewing for months past, and they were destined to taste such horrors as would make recent events dwindle into insignificance.

Jewan, observing the doubting spirit of the lads, changed the subject, with a smile and a shrug of his shoulders. He drew from them the narrative of their adventures at Meerut, and questioned Guy closely concerning the disappearance of his father. Then he remained in deep thought for some minutes, allowing the boat to drift idly with the current.

“What is your opinion, Jewan?” Guy asked at length. “What are you puzzling your brains over?”

“Sahib, I am thinking of the best way to protect our lives,” was the reply.

“But my father?” exclaimed Guy. “I must find him if he is alive. And I won’t believe he is dead until I have proof of it. Do you suppose he is a prisoner in Nawab Ali’s palace?”

“Either that,” answered Jewan, “or he has gone to Delhi. Be which it may, Sahib Guy, we can do nothing to aid him at present. It would be madness to venture near Nawab Ali’s palace, for the whole country will be swarming with rebels by tomorrow morning, marching from all directions to Delhi. And that great city will fall at once into the power of the mutineers from Meerut, for the supporters of the Mogul king are ready and waiting. The English within the walls—soldiers and citizens—will be slain.”

The Hindoo’s reasoning was sound, as Guy reluctantly admitted to himself.

“If I knew my father was safe I would feel easy about the rest,” he said. “Do you

think his life will be spared if he is in Nawab Ali's hands?"

"The Nawab surely will not slay so old a friend as the Sahib Mottram," Jewan answered, with assumed confidence; "he will keep him a prisoner till this trouble is over."

The Hindoo believed at heart that his master was already dead, and spoke as he did out of pity for the lad.

"And suppose my father is in Delhi?" Guy went on.

"He may escape," was the reply. "There will doubtless be some fugitives to get out of the city, and they will come this way across country toward the Ganges."

"Yes, that's true," assented Bob, "if your father went to Delhi we'll pick up some information about him before long. And where are we going to steer for ourselves, Jewan? Guy and I will join the first detachment of English troops we run across, but a place of safety must be found for Miss Brydon."

"Do not let my presence hinder," said Mary. "I will share your perils, dear friends. And where would I go, if the whole country is in revolt? I have no relatives nearer than Calcutta."

"The mem-sahib must stay with us for the present," declared Jewan. "I, who know, tell you that no place of shelter may be found within many miles. The Sepoys will be rising at every post, and the native princes, the land owners and the inhabitants of the villages will be watching to slay the hated Feringhees. None will we dare to trust, sahibs."

"Then what are we to do, if the whole country is against us?" inquired Guy.

"There is but one plan, sahib," Jewan said, earnestly. "Two hundred and fifty miles to the south the Kalli Nudda empties into the mighty Ganges, and fifty miles below lies the town of Cawnpore. It is a large place, with a garrison of many English soldiers, and I have heard some predict that it will hold out against rebellion. There we will go for safety."

"But that is a journey of three hundred miles!" exclaimed Bob. "And you say the country will be swarming with rebels."

“True,” assented Jewan. “We must guard against danger as best we can. There is no town nearer than Cawnpore which it would be safe to approach.”

“And will we go by water?” asked Guy.

“Yes, in this boat,” replied the Hindoo. “We will travel only by night, when we can pass the towns and villages in the dark. By daytime we will hide under the bank, or in the mouths of small creeks. Food I shall obtain for you from the natives. I can safely go where the sahibs would not dare to venture.”

“I never thought of that before,” said Guy. “We won’t starve, for one thing.”

Jewan went on to explain his plans more fully, and while he did not conceal from the lads that countless perils might be met with, he showed clearly that the undertaking, hazardous as it was, offered about the only chance of safety. On reflection, Guy and Bob realized that this upper part of India, a thousand miles from Calcutta, might easily fall into the complete power of the mutineers, and that the English residents could one and all be butchered before a British force could come up from the coast. So for these reasons, as well as because their duty to Mary Brydon demanded it, the lads agreed to Jewan’s proposition. Guy was chiefly worried concerning his father, but he found partial comfort in the thought that he might glean some information on the way down the river.

“Fugitives from Delhi are likely to be encountered,” he said to himself, “and they will know if father went to that city. If I hear no word of him I will take it for granted that he is a prisoner in Nawab Ali’s palace. Rather than the other, for the English residents at Delhi may meet the same fate as those at Meerut. And if the Nawab has father his life will probably be spared; they were always the best of friends, as Jewan says.”

On and on drifted the boat, borne by a good current through a lonely and wooded region that was but little inhabited in the vicinity of the river. The yellow moonlight flooded water and shore, and the night echoed to the cries of prowling wild animals—strange contrasts to the red glare of incendiary fires and the clamor of bloodthirsty Sepoys. But Jewan’s vigilance did not relax, and as he plied the oars he paused occasionally to listen for sounds that his companions did not dream of.

Mary fell asleep, and after throwing his coat over her, Bob sat thinking sadly of his gallant comrades of the Seventy-second Grenadiers, and wondering if it

could be true that all had perished. To him, as it did to Guy, the past seemed a hideous nightmare. He was learning the difference between careless youth and stern manhood—a lesson that was forced on many young soldiers in that dread year of '57.

Guy took a folded paper from his pocket, tore it to bits, and scattered the fragments on the river.

“What’s that?” Bob asked, curiously.

“The letter to Mr. Leveson at Delhi,” was the reply. “It’s no use now.”

“No, I suppose not,” assented Bob. “What became of the morocco bag with your father’s papers?”

“I left it with Mr. Jervis. No doubt he was killed, and the bag was stolen or destroyed.”

“And was that ruby ring in it?”

“By Jove! I forgot all about it,” exclaimed Guy. “But I think I have it safe.”

He fumbled in his pocket, and presently produced the trinket. “It don’t fit any of my fingers, or I would wear it,” he added. “It is a magnificent stone, and worth a good bit of money—Hullo! here’s something I didn’t see before. There’s a sort of a crown engraved on the ruby, and over it a head that looks like one of the Hindoo gods.”

“Let’s see it,” said Bob, reaching out his hand. “Yes, that’s an odd sort of a device, but it’s a mighty fine piece of workmanship. I’d like to know who gave the thing to you.”

By this time Jewan’s tardy curiosity was aroused. He took the ring in his fingers, and examined it closely by the moonlight. Then he questioned Guy until he had learned the whole story, and, in addition, made him give a minute description of Kunwar Singh’s companion.

“The man was certainly of high rank,” said Guy, when he had exhausted his scanty fund of information. “I wish I knew his name. Do you know it, Jewan?”

The Hindoo shook his head.

“I know of Kunwar Singh,” he replied. “Beware of him now that he is your enemy, for there are few in all India so cruel and bloodthirsty, and it is said that none bear such hatred for the English.”

“I’ve been told that myself,” exclaimed Bob.

Jewan nodded gravely.

“As for Kunwar Singh’s companion,” he went on, “I know not who he can be, nor do I recognize the device on the ruby. But guard the ring well, Guy sahib, and it may do you a service ere long—even as he who gave it promised.”

“I haven’t much faith in its powers,” replied Guy; “but stranger things have happened, and I’ll take good care not to miss the chance.”

He took a piece of strong cord from his pocket, tied the ring to it, and strung it around his neck, so that the collar of his shirt hid both the jewel and the string. A little later Jewan persuaded the lads to lie down in the bottom of the boat, and they were so tired and worn out that they fell asleep almost instantly.

The faithful Hindoo was now the only one awake, and as the boat swung down the current of the Kalli Nudda, under the quiet strokes of the oars, he watched and listened for danger, glancing from shore to shore, and keeping a wary eye on the gray streak that was beginning to glimmer in the east.

## CHAPTER XVIII

A grinding jar, a lurch, a splash of chilly water on their faces—these things wakened Guy and Bob more speedily than gently, and, springing to their feet in alarm, they saw what had happened. The boat was just backing off a black, pointed object near the surface of the river—either a snag or a sharp stone. The collision with this had strained one of the bottom boards of the craft, and water was spurting in at two places.

Mary was awake, and huddled on the front seat with Bob's jacket wrapped around her. Jewan was at the oars, and pulling hard toward the west bank of the stream, which was no more than thirty feet distant. The sky overhead was rosy with dawn, and snowy mists were curling from river and forest.

“It looks as though our cruise was about ended,” said Guy. “Now we must take to land—”

“I am very sorry, sahibs, but it was not to be helped,” exclaimed Jewan. “I was pulling for the shore, since daylight had come, and not seeing yonder pointed rock, I ran the boat upon it. But the harm may be repaired—”

Just then the weakened plank, on which Bob was standing, bulged several inches at the stern. At once a flood of water poured through the gap, and the boat began to settle and sink.

“Jump, sahibs, jump!” cried Jewan. “And hold your weapons high!”

Snatching Mary in his arms, the Hindoo sprang overboard; Guy and Bob followed, not forgetting to thrust their pistols and cartridge belts overhead. These precautions would have been worthless in deep water, but the river was fortunately no more than three feet in depth at this point. Submerged to the waist, Jewan and the lads waded quickly to the west bank, and Mary was put down with dry feet. All turned to look for the boat, but it had disappeared; only a circle of ripples was left to mark the spot.

“That settles the water journey to Cawnpore,” muttered Bob, “unless we can get another boat.”

“Wait till evening, and we’ll get one,” replied Guy.

“Yes,” assented Jewan, “by the darkness of night we may approach one of the villages that lie farther down the river.”

“Then the next thing is to find a hiding place for the day, and something to eat, as well,” said Bob. “I’m ravenously hungry. We were lucky to have kept our pistols dry. How is your musket, Jewan?”

“It is not even damp,” was the reply. “As you see it is strapped high on my back, with the muzzle upward. And now, sahibs—”

He did not finish the sentence, for at that instant an alarming sound rang on the morning air—the clear but distant blast of a cavalry bugle.

“Sepoy mutineers on the march!” exclaimed Jewan. “We are in peril, sahibs. Come this way, quick!”

He led them back from the river, through thickets of low bushes, to a sandy ridge that was covered on top with rocks and vegetation. Crouching low in this shelter, at the risk of being bitten by poisonous serpents, the fugitives glanced in all directions. Immediately they made a startling discovery. At a distance of less than a mile a party of horsemen—probably half a dozen in number—were riding on a trot down the west bank of the Kalli Nudda. Their silver-gray uniforms proved beyond doubt that they were Sepoy sowars (native cavalry).

“Sahibs, it must be that rogue, Namgay Paltu and his men,” said Jewan. “After burning the plantation they came to search for us, instead of going to Delhi. It is well that we left the river.”

“Yes, or we should have been seen before now,” replied Guy. “But that bugle blast seemed to come from another direction—”

As he spoke the notes of the bugle were heard again, much nearer and from the left of the ridge. Then the beating of drums rose on the air, and at the same time the horsemen turned abruptly away from the river and vanished in the forest.

“Look!” whispered Jewan, pointing to the west; and when his companions glanced in that direction, they saw a thrilling sight.



Out of the jungle, half a mile away, emerged a troop of Sepoy cavalry. They were followed quickly by a regiment of native Infantry, and in the rear came camp followers, covered wagons, and elephants laden with spoil. Northwestward through fields of yellow grain rolled the grim procession, standards waving, arms gleaming, and drums beating the step. The forest soon closed around them again, van and rearguard.

“Yonder road leads to Delhi,” said Jewan, “and there the mutineers are marching to join the revolt. They have doubtless come from the station of Leypoor, after murdering their English officers.”

“And what of Namgay Paltu and his men?” asked Guy; “if such they are.”

“They heard the drums, and turned off from the river to meet the mutineers,” answered Jewan. “They will either join them and go on to Delhi, or continue their search for us. Did I not tell you, sahibs, that the country would be alive with rebels to-day? Behold, my words have come true! We must make haste to find a shelter where we may lie until nightfall. And in yonder forest, which stretches westward to the River Jumna, are many such places.”

At once the fugitives set off, the Hindoo leading the way. After descending from the ridge they kept parallel with the river for some distance, where the tall grass and bushes afforded cover. Then they turned to the west, and ran rapidly, knowing that they were in great danger until they had crossed the Delhi road and entered the forest beyond it.

Mary behaved courageously, but as she could not move fast the lads had to fairly drag her along. Her lovely face, now flushed and terrified, excited their pity, and they tried to cheer her with hopeful words. But Guy and Bob well knew how perilous was their plight. That glimpse of the mutineers, marching with orderly ranks toward Delhi, had impressed them with the serious nature of the uprising. They realized that Jewan was right—that within the next few days every English station for hundreds of miles around might share the fate of Meerut, and that weeks and months might pass before the insurrection could even be checked. Under these circumstances, what chance had the fugitives of reaching far distant Cawnpore, or of finding permanent shelter in a country infested with bloodthirsty foes?

But for the girl’s sake the lads hid their feelings, and tried hard to look cheerful.

Jewan hurried on in advance of the others, glancing keenly to right and left, and frequently stopping to listen. At last they reached the Delhi road, at a point some distance to the south of where the mutineers had emerged among the grain fields. Here the forest was dense on both sides, and nothing alarming was to be seen or heard. The highway was deep with sand, and to the north, at a distance of twenty yards, it made a sharp curve.

“Come!” whispered Jewan, and a quick dash carried the fugitives across.

They were about to plunge into the forest when the Hindoo caught sight of an object lying a few feet away. Leaving his companions by the roadside he darted forward, and hurriedly returned with, a goatskin bag.

“The fates have been kind, sahibs,” he exclaimed, opening the bag. “This was dropped by one of the camp followers, and it contains what we need most—chupatties (coarse bread) and rice cakes. So there will be no necessity to seek food this day—”

Tramp! tramp! Mary uttered a gasping cry, and Jewan and the lads looked up to see a terrifying sight. Six mounted Sepoys had just trotted around the bend of the road, the trample of their horses’ hoofs muffled until now by the deep sand. They wore the familiar uniform of sowars of the Second Light Cavalry, and at their head was Nagmay Paltu, his wounded arm bandaged across his breast.

Jewan snatched Mary in his strong arms and tossed the bag of food to Guy.

“Come, sahibs,” he cried; “and may the God of the English protect us!”

He plunged into the forest, with the lads at his heels.

Bang! bang! Two bullets whistled overhead, and there was a furious clatter of hoofs and equipments.

“The Feringhees! the Feringhees!” shouted the savage voice of the Soubahdar Namgay. “Let them not escape! Shed their vile blood!”

With the fierce clamor ringing behind them the fugitives tore on. To have sought the tangled part of the jungle would have destroyed the only hope, so Jewan led his companions by what open paths could be found. With the girl resting lightly in his arms, he dashed on like a deer, and Guy and Bob followed him with

difficulty. Each had his pistol out, prepared for the worst.

And it seemed that the worst would surely happen.

Nearer and nearer came the yelling Sepoys, forcing their steeds through grass and bushes and unerringly following the footprints in the sandy soil. Panting and breathless, the fugitives ran on, looking in vain for shelter. They heard the crash of hoofs close behind them, and the mocking voice of Namgay Paltu.

“We must die, sahibs!” cried Jewan. “We shall be overtaken in a moment.”

“Then we will fight to the last!” exclaimed Bob, hoarsely. “But don’t give up yet.”

“We will make a stand in yonder thicket,” cried Jewan. “Shall I shoot the mem-sahib first—it will be better for her than to be taken alive?”

## CHAPTER XIX

No words can tell the horror which Guy and Bob felt at Jewan's seemingly cold-blooded proposition; they had no time to reflect, else they must have seen that it would be an act of mercy to shoot the poor girl rather than let her fall into the hands of Nam-gay Paltu and his fellow ruffians. But before either of the lads could make answer an unexpected thing happened. On plunging into the thicket, where they intended to turn at bay, an open glade was seen in front. It was thirty feet across, and on the farther side, by the verge of the forest, stood a ruined Hindoo temple.

"Look! sahibs; yonder is a place of shelter," Jewan cried, eagerly. "If we can but reach it in time we may kill our enemies, for we are well armed."

"We must reach it!" gasped Bob. "Faster! faster! As soon as we get inside turn about and let the fiends have it."

It was a terrible race, for the Sepoys were almost at the thicket. But hope lent speed to the fugitives, and barely in time they scrambled up the steps of the temple. Just within the entrance were a couple of fallen columns, and behind these Guy and Bob crouched. Jewan delayed only long enough to thrust the girl to one side of the doorway and then he dropped flat beside his companions.

"There they come," muttered Guy. "Remember Meerut, and make every shot tell."

"If we can kill three at the first fire our numbers will be equal," panted Bob.

As he spoke the sowars dashed through the thicket and into the open glade. At sight of the temple they yelled ferociously, and urged their sweating horses forward on a gallop.

"Now!" cried Bob. "I'll take the leader, Guy, and you and Jewan fire right and left of me."

Crack! went Bob's pistol, but excitement must have spoiled his aim. It was the horse that was hit, and as the animal fell the Soubahdar Namgay turned a somersault out of the saddle.

At almost the same instant Guy's pistol and Jewan's musket went off together, and two troopers felt the sting of bullets in their bodies. One reeled dead to the ground, his horse dashing on past the temple. The other caught in the stirrup as he fell, and was dragged in the opposite direction.

With a yell of rage Namgay Paltu jumped to his feet and made a bolt for shelter. His three remaining comrades spurred their horses after him, but the rearmost one fell at Bob's second shot. He pitched head first out of the saddle, and was seen quivering in his death agonies amid the grass.

"Look out, sahibs!" warned Jewan. "Keep down!"

Just in time the lads ducked their heads, for a volley rang out of the jungle to the right of the glade; but the balls did no harm, and after a few more shots the Sepoys stopped wasting powder. A rustling noise told that they were leading their horses away.

"We are saved, thank God!" said Guy. "The ruffians are retreating."

"There are but three of them left," cried Bob, valiantly. "Let's rush out and finish them."

"No, the sahibs had better remain here," urged Jewan. "The Sepoys are not retreating—they will never give up so long as we are alive. They will now try to kill us by craft, and by craft we must meet them. But to do that we must keep watch on all sides."

Just then Mary crept out from her shelter, pale and trembling. She was relieved to find that her friends were not injured, and when Bob described the fight in glowing language a smile of hope brightened her face.

There was no time to lose—the Sepoys were probably now engaged in picketing their horses at a safe distance—and the temple was hurriedly examined. It was small in size, and the roof was supported by oval capitals, surmounted by grotesquely carved heads of stone. The rear wall was solid, and here was a sort of a covered gallery approached by a flight of steps. To this place of shelter Mary was sent, with instructions to sit quietly in the far corner.

The jungle grew close and thick on both sides of the temple, which had caved in here and there from age, leaving gaps large enough for an enemy to slip through.

So, including the main entrance, there were three sides to be defended against the Soubahdar Namgay and his comrades. The broken floor of the temple was littered with all sorts of rubbish—dried leaves and branches blown in by the wind, fallen columns, and heaps of masonry. A short consultation resulted in the following division of forces.

Guy and Jewan took the two broken sides, and Bob was put in charge of the entrance which point was least likely to be assailed. All were so hungry that portion of the chupatties and rice cakes were taken from the bag and eaten, a generous share being given to Mary. Then the Hindoo and his companions settled down to their posts of duty, in front of which they had stacked masonry and pillars in such a manner that they could see out without exposing themselves to danger.

“Now for a match of cunning,” said Guy. “I suppose the scoundrels will try to creep up on us, and we must watch for them and shoot them.”

“Yes, they will surely creep near in hopes of surprising us,” assented Jewan, “and it is important that we should shoot one or two of them speedily, so we may escape from here before worse perils befall us. We are not far from the road, and if more mutineers come by on the march to Delhi, a shot will bring them to the aid of our foes.”

“That’s true,” muttered Bob. “I hope none will come.”

Jewan went on to give careful instructions to the lads, and then he enjoined strict silence. The command was obeyed, and for a few minutes the temple was as quiet as though no human beings were within many miles. Several times the whinnying of a horse was heard from the direction of the road, an indication that the Sepoys had secreted their animals at a distance and were prowling about on foot. Once Guy, from his post on the left, detected a sound like the growl of a wild beast. The Hindoo also heard it, and suggested in a whisper that a panther or a leopard was probably lying near in the jungle, afraid to venture out after the recent firing.

The expected attack was long delayed, much to the impatience of the besieged. Bob reported all clear from the front of the temple, and Guy and Jewan strained eyes and ears in vain as they peered into the matted jungle beyond their posts of observation. Happily no mutineers went by on the road, or if they did it was

without music of drum or bugle.

“Jewan,” Guy whispered, suddenly, “could Namgay Paltu have sent one of his men to bring assistance from the rebels we saw marching to Delhi a bit ago?”

“Sahib, it is possible,” the Hindoo replied, in an anxious tone. “If I was sure of it we would try to escape at once.”

“We’d better take no chance, and make the break,” suggested Bob. “I’m getting nervous.”

Just then Mary came to the balustrade of the gallery and leaned over.

“I have been peeping out through a crevice,” she whispered, excitedly, “and I saw one of the Sepoys with a torch in his hand. He is creeping around to the left.”

“That is your side, Sahib Guy,” muttered Jewan. “In the name of Brahma shoot the fiend. We are lost if the jungle be fired, for the wind is blowing this way and the temple is full of dried leaves—”

Bang! Guy had detected the fellow and pulled trigger on him. A yell of agony followed the report, and the lad saw the Sepoy floundering convulsively in the bushes. He saw something else, too, but powder and ball were powerless against the torch that had fallen from the incendiary’s hand.

Swiftly the yellow blaze shot up and spread, devouring the undergrowth and grass like tinder. Fanned by the breeze a sheet of flame came crackling and roaring toward the temple. It was soon at the edge of the wall, sending sparks and smoke through the gap.

The situation of the fugitives seemed now more hopeless than ever. It was impossible to prevent the flames from igniting the inflammable stuff within the temple, for if they stood up to rake the rubbish out of the way they would offer a deadly mark to the two Sepoys. And should they rush out it would be to court the same fate, since Namgy Paltu and his surviving comrade were doubtless ambushed in some near-by spot.

So Jewan and the lads crouched in helpless terror at their posts, while the heat grew almost unbearable, and the smoke rolled thickly around them. Guy and

Bob were soon driven over to the Hindoo's position on the right, and at Jewan's summons Mary crept down the gallery and joined the three. The girl was outwardly composed, but the horror in her eyes was pitiable to see.

"Do you think we will be burned to death?" she asked of Bob, who was alongside of her.

"Yes, unless we make a rush," was the hoarse reply.

"And you won't let me be taken alive?"

She shuddered as she spoke.

"No, no," Bob muttered, not knowing what he was saying.

The flames had now actually entered the temple on the left side, and were licking up the dried grass and limbs.

"Sahibs, are we to die by fire or bullet?" exclaimed Jewan. "There is at least a chance--"

"Yes, let us rush out," cried Guy. "Bob and I will go first, and draw the fire of the Sepoys. Then you and the girl will be able to escape, Jewan."

"No, I shall be the first," declared the Hindoo. "Leave the mem-sahib till the last--"

He was interrupted by a frightful roar, and as the fugitives gazed in wonder through the opening they saw a strange thing. A huge black panther sprang from around the rear angle of the temple, where it had been lying all this time, until driven out by the flames. The beast crouched for a second, and then made a bound that carried it a dozen feet through the leafy jungle. Instantly a terrified cry was heard, and a pair of dusky arms were thrust out of the grass. The panther had lighted on top of one of the two Sepoys, who was lying there in ambush.



## CHAPTER XX

For a moment the little group in the temple watched the scene with thrilling interest, almost forgetting the flames behind them and their recent determination to rush out. It appeared that nothing could save the luckless Sepoy. His cries for help were growing weaker and weaker, and the panther could be seen biting and tearing him.

But of a sudden another figure started out of the rank grass ten feet to one side—that of Namgay Paltu. Like a flash he swung his musket to his shoulder, aimed at the crouching beast, and pulled trigger. It was a brave thing to do, for the ruffian had the use of but one arm, and he knew that he was exposing himself to the fire of those in the temple.

It was a clumsy shot, and if it hit the panther it was certainly not in a vital place. With a screech of fury the beast leaped off its victim and dashed at the Soubahdar Namgay, who had already turned to flee. When the powder smoke curled upward both had vanished in the jungle.

“By the head of Gunputty, we are saved!” cried Jewan. “But one of our foes is left alive, and him the panther will slay. To the forest, sahibs—”

“Yes come on!” shouted Guy. “But watch sharp for Namgay Paltu—he may escape the panther, and he has a brace of pistols in his belt.”

Not a moment longer could the party have remained in the temple, for the flames were at their very backs. Rising up amid the smoke and sparks they wriggled quickly through the gap in the broken wall, the lads going first and Jewan following with Mary in his arms. The jungle vegetation was thick, but it offered no obstacles to their reckless haste.

They reached the spot where the panther’s victim lay, and with a glance at the mangled and seemingly lifeless body they dashed on. A moment later they stumbled on the panther, lying motionless in the weeds; the soubahdar’s shot must have taken tardy effect.

And there was Namgay Paltu himself, just rising from behind a thicket. The ruffian’s face was distorted with hatred, and he swore a furious oath as he

leveled a pistol with his good arm and fired like a flash.

Crack! The ball whistled by Guy's head and tore a fragment from Mary's gown. Life was sweet to the soubahdar, and he had no intention of throwing it away on a chance of revenge. Seeing that he had missed, and that his enemies had their weapons ready, he turned and ran. He vanished quickly in the dense jungle, followed by a shot from both lads. But Namagy [\_sic\_] Paltu was evidently not hit; he could be heard bounding on at full speed.

"After him!" shouted Bob. "Don't let him escape!"

"Yes, let's run him down!" cried Guy. "He deserves death more than the rest did, and so surely as he gets away he will be after us again with another force."

"Sahibs, do not pursue," begged Jewan. "The soubahdar is a cunning fellow, and will lie in wait. He will shoot at least one of us, and escape in the bargain. It is true that he will seek men to follow us, but we can't help that."

The lads reluctantly stopped, and put up their pistols.

"The horses!" exclaimed Bob. "They are picketed not far off, and it will be a fine thing if we can take them."

Jewan shook his head.

"We must travel on foot," he replied, "so that we may conceal our tracks. The hoofs of the horses would surely betray us in the end."

This was so evidently true that the lads yielded without further words.

"Now let us go," said the Hindoo, "for every minute is of great value. The soubahdar will not seek far till he finds willing comrades to follow us. Have you got the bag of food, Sahib Guy?"

"Yes; here it is," and Guy showed the bag fastened to the rear of his belt.

At once they started, and in order to travel as rapidly as possible, Jewan—whose lean form was capable of great endurance—continued to carry Mary in his arms. Guy and Bob kept close behind him, and soon the crackling of the flames that were gutting the ancient temple had faded in the distance.

On and on they went through this vast forest that stretched for miles to the far-away Jumna. The saplings and shrubs of the jungle presently gave way to trees of enormous size—banians, mangos, and cocoa-nuts. In the limbs overhead were woven thousands of creepers, bright with flowers of blue and scarlet. The wild animals were in their lairs, and no sounds were to be heard save the chatter of monkeys and the singing of birds.

Enough of the sun was visible at intervals to guide Jewan on his course. Now he turned to right and now to left, taking every precaution to throw possible pursuers off the track. He chose the hardest ground, and made his companions walk on fallen logs and loose stones. Once they waded for half a mile along the channel of a stream, and left it at a spot where the grass was so short and firm as to retain no impression of their feet.

Thus the day wore on, and as no sound of pursuit was heard in the rear the lads felt more cheerful. They were satisfied that Namgay Paltu would not abandon the chase, but they knew the chances were against his finding and sticking to the route followed by the fugitives. But their confidence and hope were mainly due to the result of the fight at the temple. Out of six Sepoys they had killed four with their firearms, and since they had a fair supply of ammunition left they were ready to defend themselves again if driven to bay.

Early in the afternoon they stopped for a short time by a stream, where they washed down a lunch of chupatties with cold water. Before resuming the journey, Jewan, in answer to questions, told his companions that which made them still more hopeful of the future.

“It is just as well,” he said, “that we were driven away from the Kalli Nudda. That river and the Jumna, as you know, sahibs, flow within fifty miles of each other, in a southeasterly direction. Both finally empty into the Ganges, the Kalli Nudda near Cawnpore, and the Jumna at Allahabad, several hundreds of miles below.

“We are now going south westward toward the Jumna, and should reach it a score of miles below Delhi, which town stands on the river. There will likely be some English fugitives from Delhi and other towns traveling down the stream in boats, and if we succeed in joining such a party we may float safely down to Allahabad—which will be better than going by ourselves to Cawnpore by way of the Kalli Nudda, even though the distance be shorter.”

“Yes, that’s a fact,” agreed Bob.

“And when we reach the Jumna I may get some news of my father?” Guy asked, anxiously.

“I hope so, sahib,” Jewan replied. “And now let us be off; we have tarried long enough.”

Mary’s face looked brighter than her companions had yet seen it, and she refused to be carried any farther. She walked lightly behind the Hindoo, showing no signs of fatigue, and after marching all that afternoon the little party came at sunset to another ruined temple in the midst of the forest.

It was out of the question to go any farther that night, both on account of the darkness and of wild animals. So half of what was left of the food was divided, and a bed of dried leaves was made for Mary in a recess of the temple. The lads took turns with Jewan at sleeping and mounting guard, and the long hours of the night passed without serious alarm, though a hungry tiger lurked in the vicinity until dawn.

Jewan brought water from a near-by pool, and after eating the small portion of chupatties and rice cakes that remained, the fugitives resumed their journey in hopeful spirits. The forest continued lonely and dense until noon, and then, unexpectedly, a small clearing was reached, planted with a yellow crop of maize. Close by was a spot where native grass cutters had lately been at work.

“Sahibs, a village is near,” said Jewan, as he halted his companions. “Food we must have, and I will go there to seek it.”

“It would be safer to shoot some birds,” suggested Guy.

“No, the report of the firearms might bring foes upon us. And we must be very careful, for I am satisfied that we are close to a highway that leads through the forest to Delhi.”

“But won’t it be dangerous for you to enter a native village?” asked Bob.

“I will not be suspected,” replied Jewan, “for I shall say that I am a poor and hungry traveler who has lost the road to Delhi. I will leave my musket behind, and in a short time I hope to return with food. Remain here in these thick bushes,

and do not venture out or make any noise.”

Though the lads did not like this plan, the necessity for procuring provisions left no other course open. Jewan gave his musket to Guy and hurried off, promising to obtain what news he could of the insurrection.

The patch of jungle was cool and shady, and through the bushes a clear view was had of the grain field. The minutes slipped by while Mary and the lads talked in low tones of the horrors of the past two days, and discussed the chances of reaching a place of absolute safety.

At the end of an hour Jewan had not returned, and his friends began to feel worried. When another hour had passed they were sure that the faithful Hindoo had met with some disaster. They judged from the presence of the grain patch that a village was not far away.

“I wish I knew what to do,” Guy said, hoarsely. “If anything has happened to Jewan, it’s not safe for us to stay here.”

“But can you find the way to the Jumna?” asked Mary.

“I can with the sun to guide me,” said Guy, “but it—”

“Hark!” Bob interrupted. “What’s that?”

## CHAPTER XXI

Bang! That was what Bob Loftus heard when he bade his companions listen. Bang!—bang, bang— bang! Four muskets went off almost together. From the sound the shots had evidently been fired at a distance of less than a quarter of a mile, and over beyond the farther side of the grain field. A few seconds later another report was heard, and then a silence fell on the forest.

Mary gave a loud cry, and Guy and Bob exchanged looks of fear and anxiety. All three crouched deeper in their shelter, and peered warily out through the leafy crevices. Thus they remained in silence for several minutes, dreading they knew not what peril.

“Poor Jewan has been shot,” Guy whispered, huskily. “Natives don’t have firearms—he must have met a party of Sepoys.”

“Perhaps that wicked Namgay Paltu,” Mary suggested, in trembling tones.

“I don’t believe Jewan had anything to do with the shooting,” Bob declared, confidently. “He didn’t go in that direction—he went this way,” pointing to the left along the edge of the clearing.

“I hope you’re right,” said Guy; “but what did the firing mean?”

“Danger to us, for one thing,” answered Bob. “It’s more than likely that the road Jewan spoke of is just over yonder, and that some English fugitives from Delhi met a party of mutineers going the other way.”

“Oh, can’t we help the poor people?” exclaimed Mary.

“They’re dead by this time, if there were any,” Guy replied, bitterly. “But I still think the shots were fired at Jewan. If he don’t soon return—”

The lad stopped abruptly, and the faces of all three turned a shade paler as they heard hoarse and savage shouts ringing through the forest. The clamor grew louder and nearer. A musket roared, followed by the sharp crack of a smaller weapon. Then a dull crashing of bushes told that several persons were rapidly approaching the farther side of the clearing, and right in line with the hiding

place of the fugitives.

“It is Jewan!” cried Guy. “I am sure of it! He is pursued, and is running this way for shelter.”

“By Jove! I believe it,” exclaimed Bob. “I don’t think there are many after him, from the sound. We must save the faithful fellow—”

“Yes, at any cost!” interrupted Guy. “Quick! don’t lose a second—is your pistol loaded? Don’t fear, Miss Brydon. Get behind that tree back of you, and stay there.”

Mary obeyed the command without a word, though her eyes were dilated with terror. On hands and knees the two lads crept forward through the thicket, Guy dragging the Hindoo’s musket with him; and just as they reached the verge of the field the chase came in sight.

Out of the jungle on the farther side of the grain patch—which was no more than twenty yards in width—burst, not Jewan, but an Englishman. He was empty-handed, and was running with great leaps—a tall, slim man, with a brown mustache. His uniform, as Bob’s keen eyes recognized at a glance, was that of a sergeant of the ordnance department of the British Army.

And well might the poor fellow run! Close behind him, with frantic yells, swept four brutal-visaged, dark-skinned Sepoys—unmounted sowars of the native cavalry, for they wore the familiar uniform of silvery gray faced with scarlet, and white sun-helmets. Three of them had their swords drawn, but the fourth carried his carbine in his hands instead of slung across his back. They were evidently confident of their victim, and proposed to cut him down.

All this the lads saw in the space of a few minutes as they crouched out of sight behind the ripening maize; but they were none the less determined to prevent the murderous deed.

“Steady now!” muttered Guy, “they’re coming right for us. Don’t miss. I’ll take the first one, you the second—then load again while I let drive with the musket.”

“The poor fellow is in the way,” muttered Bob. “I don’t want to hit him by mistake—”

Just then the well-nigh exhausted fugitive swung a couple of feet to the left, and Bob was quick to seize the opportunity thus offered. The sowars were now within twenty feet, and it was almost impossible to miss. With the report of the lad's weapon the foremost ruffian tossed up his arms and fell on his face. Crack! went Guy's pistol, and a second pitched heavily amid the grain with a shrill cry on his lips.

Of the remaining two, the one with the unslung carbine stopped in dazed indecision, not knowing whence the attack came. The other, with a bravery that the lads could not help but admire, dashed on, yelling like a fiend. A couple of strides, and he was close at the heels of the fugitive, his naked sword uplifted for the stroke.

"Give it to him, quick!" exclaimed Bob, who was reloading his pistol.

"Here goes!" cried Guy.

He had Jewan's musket ready, and with a short, keen aim he fired. The bullet sped true. The Sepoy spun around, uttered a cry of agony, and fell like a log.

The lads now jumped to their feet, and at sight of them the Englishman uttered a husky "Thank God!" He tried to stagger toward the spot, but his strength gave out and he sank down on the ground.

"There's one yet to be reckoned with," cried Guy, pointing to the surviving sowar, who was crouching in the grain. "Watch sharp, Bob—he's going to fire."

At that instant the Sepoy's carbine cracked, and Bob's agile leap to one side was all that saved him from death, the ball passing within an inch of his head. Up went the lad's pistol, and he sighted along the short tube at the baffled sowar, who was now in full retreat across the field.

"He mustn't get away," cried Guy. "Don't miss!"

"I won't," promised Bob; and he kept his word.

Never had he aimed so carefully, and the result was seen the moment the weapon cracked. The Sepoy's feet went from under him like a flash, and the grain rustled as he came down full length. Incredible as it may seem, the brave lads had either killed or disabled all four of the rebel sowars.



They now turned their attention to the rescued man, who was sitting up, and their hearts were melted with pity as they looked at him. His uniform was torn and dirty, and his sun-tanned face was streaked with sweat and dust; along gash on his forehead was raw and bleeding.

“Thank God!” gasped the poor fellow, panting for breath. “English faces at last! You saved my life—I thought I was done for. I’ll never tell you how grateful I am. But where are the murderous fiends? You didn’t kill them all?”

“Every one,” Guy answered, hurriedly. “I hardly know how we did it. But let us help you over to the bushes—there are likely more Sepoys about.”

“Not if those four are dead,” was the reply. “There are no others near.”

“Are you sure of that?” Guy asked.

“Yes, I’m sure; we are safe for the present. And who are you, my brave lads? What are you doing here?”

Guy replied in a few words, telling of the escape of himself and companions from Meerut, and of their subsequent adventures.

“Did you see anything of the Hindoo?” he concluded.

“Not such a one as you describe,” was the answer. “All the natives I’ve seen were treacherous devils. It’s hard to believe that one was true to his salt.”

“You’ll believe it when you see Jewan—if he ever comes back,” Guy said, sadly. “And who are you, sir? Where have you come from?”

“I am Sergeant James Scully, of the ordnance department,” the man replied, “and I am a fugitive from Delhi. Have you heard the news—”

“From Delhi?” Guy interrupted, eagerly. “Then perhaps you can give me news of my father.”

He went on to relate, very briefly, all the circumstances connected with the planter’s disappearance.

Sergeant Scully shook his head.

“Mottram? Mottram?” he said. “I never heard the name, but for all that he may have been in the town—you know it’s a big place. If he was I hope for your sake he got away all right—But hold on! you say your father went to Delhi to give warning of the insurrection?”

“If he went there at all, it was for that purpose,” replied Guy.

“Then he never got there, my boy, for not an Englishman in Delhi suspected danger until the blow fell yesterday morning. It was awful! awful!”

The sergeant buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

“I’m glad I’ve learned that much,” muttered Guy. “Without doubt my poor father is a prisoner in Nawab Ali’s palace.”

He was about to ask for particulars of the mutiny at Delhi when he and Bob simultaneously remembered Mary. Accompanied by Sergeant Scully, they hurried into the thicket and found the girl lying unconscious on the ground.

“Poor child!” the sergeant said, compassionately. “She has fainted. Better let her alone until we get away from this bloody spot—she’ll come to after a bit.”

“Yes, and we had better be starting at once,” replied Bob. “Poor Jewan! I fear he is not coming back.”

“Well wait a few minutes yet,” Guy said, huskily. “We can’t be sure that Jewan is dead. Sergeant, do tell us the news from Delhi. We have heard absolutely nothing since we left Meerut.”

“It’s a terrible tale,” replied the sergeant, shuddering as bespoke. “I’ll tell you all at a better time. I’ve a piece of more important news for you just now—the four horses of the Sepoys are tied out yonder on the Delhi road.”

Guy’s face brightened.

“That’s luck!” he exclaimed. “Let’s get them at once. I’ll go with you—”

He was interrupted by a quick rustling of the bushes, and an instant later Jewan staggered to the spot, panting, breathless, drenched with perspiration, and with a look of terror stamped on his dusky features.

## CHAPTER XXII

For a few seconds the Hindoo was unable to utter a word. His heart was throbbing violently under his lean chest, and his dark, glittering eyes went back and forth from the lads to the stranger.

“What’s wrong, Jewan?” demanded Guy. “Tell us, quick!”

Jewan wiped the perspiration from his face, and gained a little breath.

“You are safe!” he panted. “I feared to find you slain—I heard the shots fired. And how comes the English sahib here?”

“We saved him,” cried Bob. “He was pursued by four Sepoys, and we shot them all. Their horses are tied out yonder on the road, and if we are in danger—”

“Horses!” exclaimed Jewan. “Brahma be praised! Now there is a chance of escape.”

“From what?” said Guy. “Are more Sepoys coming?”

“No, not Sepoys,” replied Jewan; “but what is almost as bad, sahibs—a rabble of evil natives bent on murder. I ran fleetly when I was pursued, yet I fear they are close behind. So we must lose no time in finding the horses.”

Sergeant Scully placed a hand on the Hindoo’s shoulder.

“I’ll take back what I said to these lads,” he muttered. “I didn’t believe there was a native in India who would be true to his salt, but I’ve found one now. My trusty fellow, I hope you’ll get your reward some day.”

“Sahib, I desire no reward,” said Jewan. “It is no more than a man’s duty to be true to those whose bread and salt he has eaten for years. But hark! the natives are coming.”

Jewan was right. The murmur of many voices was heard swelling on the air, and there was a crashing of bushes at no great distance. The clamor grew louder in the brief moment that the fugitives listened. The mob was approaching at right angles to the direction that led toward the Delhi road.

“I ran hastily,” muttered Jewan. “They are following my footprints on the soft ground.”

“Then this place will soon be too hot for us,” said Sergeant Scully. “Let’s get out. Come, I’ll guide you to the horses.”

Jewan snatched up Mary, and he and the lads dashed after the sergeant. They were barely across the grain field when a hoarse yell rang from the edge of the forest behind them. They had been seen by a native who was in advance of the rest.

“The wretches will be coming faster than ever now,” cried Sergeant Scully, as the shouting deepened to a roar.

He quickened his own speed, his companions keeping pace with him, and after a plunge through the jungle of less than a quarter of a mile they staggered out on the highway. And at just the right spot! The four horses, saddled and bridled, were tied to saplings twenty feet away.

“Look!” cried Guy, in a tone of horror.

He poin[t]ed to three ghastly objects lying in the road a little beyond the horses.

“They are my unfortunate companions,” the sergeant explained, huskily; “Captain Manners from Delhi, and his wife and daughter. I left them here an hour ago while I went into the forest to find water. When I heard the shots I hurried back, and recklessly blundered on the four sowars. After killing my friends they had dismounted in order to plunder the bodies. I was seen at once, and pursued. And you, my brave lads, saved my life.”

His voice choked, and he could say no more; tears rolled down his grimy cheeks. Guy and Bob were no less affected, and they felt a burning passion for revenge on all Sepoys whom they might meet. They shuddered as they glanced at the bodies. It was a horrible sight and one which the girl, in her unconscious state, was mercifully spared.

Already Jewan had untied the horses and it was evident that no time was to be lost in getting away. The bloodthirsty rabble were drawing near, hooting and yelling like fiends.

Sergeant Scully and the two lads each mounted a horse. The Hindoo threw himself into the saddle of the remaining animal—a big bay charger—and propped Mary in front of him. A sweeping survey of the broad, dusty road showed no peril in sight, and straight across it the fugitives bore on a gallop. Their fears had vanished now, and with arms and horses they were confident of escape.

As they entered the continuation of the forest they drew rein for a moment, and glanced back. Their pursuers had just surged out upon the road—a motley rabble of natives of all castes—Hindoos, Mohammedans, Bheels and Dacoits. Some wore cummerbunds and short trousers of every hue, while others had leopard skin tunics, with their bare arms thrust through holes. Not one appeared to have a firearm—their weapons were swords, tulwars, knives and bill-hooks.

“Lets [\_sic\_] shoot a couple of them,” cried Bob.

“No, no,” Jewan interrupted, eagerly. “Don’t fire; there may be mutineers at hand. Ride on, sahib, and we will quickly leave these budmashes (rogues) behind.”

So Bob thrust his pistol back into his belt, and away the little band went on a gallop, followed by a chorus of yells that seemed to shake the very leaves overhead. The forest was comparatively open, and the clamor soon died out in the distance. They pushed on for several miles, and then checked their perspiring steeds to a trot.

“No more to be feared from that crowd,” said Guy. “What an evil looking set they were! But tell us, Jewan—”

Just then Mary opened her eyes, and finding herself on horseback she gave a cry of fright. But she was reassured when she discovered who was holding her, and saw the lads riding on either side.

“Oh, I am so glad you are safe,” she said. “But what has happened, and where did you get the horses? Oh, I remember—you told me to stay behind the tree, and I crept out and saw the Sepoys coming. Then I must have fainted—”

“Don’t think about it, Miss Brydon,” exclaimed Bob. “It’s all over now, and here is another Englishman to help take care of you. But I don’t think we’ll need to do any more fighting.”

“I hope not,” replied the girl; “but if we do I intend to help. I am not a coward—please don’t think it. Next time I won’t faint. You will let me have a weapon if we are in danger again, won’t you?”

“We’ll see about it,” answered Guy. “And don’t call yourself a coward, Miss Brydon, for you are the bravest girl I ever knew.”

Turning to the Hindoo, the lad added:

“And now let us hear your story, Jewan. I see you brought no provisions. What kind of a trap did you blunder into, and what detained you so long?”

“Sahibs, I did not dream of danger when I entered the village,” was the reply; “though it was filled with those evil rogues whom we so lately left behind. They had gathered there for the purpose of starting out to rob and murder—as hundreds of other natives will be doing. I was roughly handled, and food was refused me. So I left the village, fearing for my life, and on looking back I saw the rogues creeping after me. Then I ran, and was hotly pursued.”

“But what grievance did they have against you?” Bob asked, in surprise.

“Sahibs I will tell you,” Jewan answered. “Early this morning Namgay Paltu and a dozen sowars were at the village, and they told the head man they were searching for three Feringhees and a native who was befriending them. The mob accused me of being that native, nor did they believe my denials. And they followed me because they hoped I would lead them to the spot where you were hidden.”

The lads turned pale at this news, and Sergeant Scully looked anxious.

“I wonder if the dead Sepoys belonged to that band,” he said.

“They did, sahib,” replied Jewan. “The sowars divided into two parties when they left the village, and though four be slain, the rest are doubtless searching for us under the command of the Soubahdar Namgay.”

“Whew! what a ride they must have made through the forest!” exclaimed Bob. “I’m afraid the survivors will give us trouble. It’s ten to one they’ll run across that rabble and learn of the death of their comrades, and which way we went.”

“That’s true,” Guy assented, anxiously.

“Then we’d better be moving faster,” added Sergea[n]t Scully.

“Sahibs, I was about to advise the same thing,” said Jewan. “Let us ride on a gallop, not stopping until we reach the river. That should be about nightfall, and then we may be able to procure food.”

The Hindoo’s suggestion was adopted, and though all were hungry they made no complaint, preferring starvation to running any risk of falling into the hands of Namgay Paltu. So they urged their horses to a gallop, and as the afternoon began to draw near its close they felt more relieved, knowing that the Delhi road was many miles behind.

Meanwhile, at her own request, the story of Sergeant Scully’s rescue had been told to Mary; and when the lads asked that officer for the news from Delhi the girl joined eagerly in the request.

“I can bear it,” she said. “I have seen so many horrors that I feel as if I could stand anything now.”

“Well, you shall all hear it,” the sergeant replied, gravely, as he urged his steed a little nearer his companions; “but I will make the narrative very brief. Man that I am, I can’t trust myself to speak fully.”

The sergeant paused a moment.

“It was yesterday morning,” he began, in a husky voice, “that the revolted Sepoys from Meerut rode over the Jumna and into Delhi. That was the first we knew of the outbreak, and the horrors began before we could realize that there was any danger. The native troops and the people of the town were prepared, and they rushed to greet the new arrivals. The old Mogul king was brought out from his palace, and proclaimed ruler of India.”

“And where were the English soldiers?” asked Guy.

“There were no English soldiers—only officers,” was the reply. “They were shot down at once by their own Sepoys, who rushed off to join the slaughter. All the European residents of the town—or nearly all—were butchered without mercy. It was horrible! horrible! I can hear the cries of the women and children.”

“Don’t tell any more,” interrupted Mary, with a shudder.

“I don’t want to, I’m sure,” said the sergeant. “The horrors I saw yesterday would fill a book. My own escape was due to chance. I and other officers were stationed in the magazine, in the heart of the city. When we saw there was no hope we blew it up, and most of us were killed, including Lieutenant Willoughby, who fired the train. I and two more succeeded in getting out of the Cashmere Gate, and before we could reach shelter my companions were overtaken and butchered. I escaped to the jungle, where I found Captain Manners and his family in hiding. We traveled in this direction all night, hoping to reach the station, where we knew there was a small English garrison. But we lost our way in the forest, and—and--”

The sergeant broke down, and could say no more. He turned his head to hide the tears that were in his eyes.



## CHAPTER XXIII

For some minutes the party rode on in silence, thinking of what they had just heard. To Jewan the news was no surprise, and to Guy and Bob it was a sign of the true and formidable nature of the insurrection of the native army of India—of this furious storm which had burst without warning from a clear sky.

The sergeant, on being pressed, finally gave further particulars concerning the massacre at Delhi. He declared that very few English people had escaped, and that these would almost certainly be hunted out and slain. He reported the country to be full of revolted Sepoys inarching to rally under the Mogul king's standard, and gave it as his opinion that the mutiny would be widespread and simultaneous, and that months would probably pass before the English could regain their lost power.

"We'll get it back, if it takes years," Bob said, fiercely; "and when the reckoning comes it will be a terrible one."

He gritted his teeth as he thought of his slaughtered comrades at Meerut, and the oath of vengeance that he swore was hardly fit for Mary's ears.

"By the head of Gunputty, these are terrible times!" sighed Jewan. "But tell me, sahib," addressing the sergeant, "are many mutineers marching up the Jumna toward Delhi?"

"I saw several regiments of horse and foot yesterday," was the reply, "before I turned off from the river."

"Then it is likely that the native garrisons for miles down have revolted," declared Jewan. "It will be the wiser plan for us to try to reach the Kalli Nudda again."

"And travel by water toward Cawnpore?" asked Guy.

The question was not answered, for just then a dull, trampling noise was heard in the rear. Without slackening rein the fugitives turned in their saddles and looked back. They could see nothing for the thickness of the trees, but they knew only too well what the ominous sounds meant. The Soubahdar Namgay and his

bloodthirsty sowars were in hot chase.

“The natives have put them on our track!” cried Guy.

“And they are riding like the wind,” added Sergeant Scully. “It’s a race for life now. On! On!”

The horses were urged to a gallop, and the flight began. Faster and faster the sturdy animals thundered over the turf, their riders leaning slightly forward in the saddle. Mary nestled close to Jewan, and true to her promise, she behaved as pluckily as on that awful night at Meerut.

There were no obstacles in the way, for the fugitives had turned without knowing it, into a vague sort of a road that traversed the forest. It led straight ahead, and was evidently but little used; but it was wide enough for the party to ride four abreast.

Twenty minutes slipped by, and now it was plain that the race was nearing its end. An occasional shout could be heard in the rear, and once, on looking back, Bob caught a glimpse of a silver-gray uniform against the green of the bushes.

“I fear it’s all up with us!” cried the sergeant. “There are at least eight of the ruffians. Their horses seem to be better than ours, and in five minutes more they will overhaul us.”

“Then let’s make a stand while we can,” urged Guy. “If we dismount in a hurry, and take shelter behind trees—”

He was interrupted by a loud and eager shout from Jewan. All looked ahead, to where a brilliant glare of sunlight was visible at a bend of the road. On galloped the panting steeds, and a few seconds later the fugitives swept from the forest and saw what at first was a terrifying sight. Right and left stretched waving fields of maize and cotton, between which a dusty road led straight for fifty yards to an arched gate in the centre of a high and frowning wall of masonry.

“A native village!” gasped Bob. “Foes in front and behind—now we are indeed lost!”

But before any of the party could draw rein, Sergeant Scully made a thrilling and amazing discovery. At some distance back from the wall the turrets of a small

tower rose in the air, and from this summit of the tower floated an English flag.

“Look!” cried the sergeant. “What does that mean?”

“Here lives a zemindar (landowner) who is loyal,” shouted Jewan. “It can mean nothing else, sahibs.”

“Then he will protect us,” cried Guy. “It is our only hope—we must take the chances.”

By this time the fugitives were fifty feet from the wall and the speed at which they were moving brought them to the arched gate before they could stop. A lusty shouting in the rear warned them that there was not a moment to lose, and they dismounted.

Jewan was first on the ground, with Mary in his arms; but Sergeant Scully pushed past him and began to pound on the gate with both fists.

“Open! Open!” he called, hoarsely.

“In the name of Brahma let us in!” added the Hindoo.

There were a few seconds of awful suspense, during which confused voices were audible beyond the wall. Then a rattling of bolts was heard and the gate creaked open on rusty hinges, revealing a picturesque scene of huts and gardens, and a score of dark-skinned natives of both sexes.

The fugitives hurried inside, leading their horses, and were instantly surrounded by a noisy mob, whose clamor, however, was more indicative of curiosity than of anger.

“Summon your head man,” cried Jewan, in Hindustanee. Quick! where is the zemindar?”

“Close the gates!” yelled Sergeant Scully, who had just looked back to see the rebel sowars spurring hotly out of the forest.

The natives either did not or would not, understand, and a couple of armed guards interfered when Guy and Bob tried to take hold of the gate. For a few seconds of uncertainty it seemed that the Sepoys would gain admittance to the

village, and then the much wished-for head man came hurrying down the little street of huts—a tall and aged Brahmin, with dignified features and white mustache and beard, dressed in a scant costume of linen and a sun helmet.

A glance showed him the situation, and he made an imperious gesture, accompanied by a couple of sharp words of command. In their haste to obey the natives nearly tumbled over one another. Crash! the massive gate swung shut on its hinges. Bang! Clang! Two heavy bars dropped into their sockets.

“Thank God!” muttered Sergeant Scully, and Mary devoutly echoed the words. Guy and Bob drew hard breaths of relief.

“Salaam, sahibs, and the mem-sahib,” said the Brahmin, turning to the little party, and speaking in perfect English. “Ye are welcome—I who am the zemindar of this village say it. But what do ye here?”

“We are fugitives in peril of our lives,” cried Sergeant Scully. “Mutinous Sepoys are in pursuit to kill us. We saw the flag floating yonder, and so sought admission here. For the love of heaven protect us—give us shelter, sir.”

“That you shall have, by the faith of my fathers!” replied the old Brahmin. “Never shall it be said that I, who shared the glory of British arms in many a fight, turned traitor in my last days. Yet I had been wise to have hauled down the flag ere this—”

Just then the shrill blast of a cavalry trumpet rang out, accompanied by a furious pounding on the gate. The Sepoys had arrived.

“Open, oh Havildar Mahmud Khan,” cried a savage voice. “I command you to let us in, and on your head be the consequences if you refuse.”

“The rogue knows my name and rank,” muttered the Brahmin. “Ay, and I could make a guess at his.”

He spoke a few reassuring words to his trembling guests, and made a sign to his retainers, a dozen of whom at once ran with loaded match-locks to a row of loopholes that were cut in the wall. Then, very slowly and deliberately, he mounted to a small watch tower that overlooked the gate.

“So it is you, Soubahdar Namgay Paltu,” he called down, exposing himself in

full view of the Sepoys. “You were always a brawling, insolent fellow—and what do you want now?”

Namgay Paltu’s reply came distinctly to the fugitives who could hear without seeing.

“Old man, be careful of your speech,” he cried, angrily. “That you have been a havildar in the Feringhee army will not protect you now. So give us civil words else a musket ball shall teach you manners.”

“At the first shot you and your sowars shall fall from the saddle,” the Brahmin calmly replied. “My retainers are watching with loaded muskets at the loopholes. Again I ask you, Namgay Paltu—what do you seek here?”

“The Feringhee dogs who have taken shelter within,” was the sullen answer. “For two days have I followed them and eight of my brave men have been slain. So give them up Mahmud Kahn and all may go well with you. I demand it in the name of the King of Delhi—”

“No, I will not give them up,” declared the Brahmin. “Having asked for my protection they are sacred to me. And know you this, Namgay Paltu—I shall not be false to the bread and salt of the English which I have eaten these many years.”

“Fool that you are!” cried the Soubahdar Namgay. “The rule of the English is over, and soon none will be left in the land. Already the King of Delhi is seated on the throne of his ancestors. Know you not these things?”

“Ay, I know and regret them,” the old Brahmin answered, bitterly. “The people may triumph for a time, but their rule will be short-lived. I tell you the English will come up from the sea in a storm of blood and fire.”

“Lies, all lies!” howled the soubahdar. “And do you still refuse to give up the Feringhee dogs?”

“Yes, I refuse.”

“On your head be it, Mahmud Khan. Think and repent. Is this your last word?”

“Ay, I refuse—once and for all.”

“Then I go to Delhi to denounce you as an infidel and traitor,” the soubahdar screamed in a passion. “I will return speedily with a force of a thousand—your village and fortress shall be razed to the ground, and you yourself will be blown from a mortar. Do you hear?”

“I am not deaf, Namgay Paltu,” was the reply. “Fare you well!”

An oath from the baffled soubahdar, the peal of a trumpet, and then the horsemen were heard riding away with a muffled clatter. Mahmud Khan leisurely descended from the tower and approached his guests, who were more relieved and grateful than words can tell.

“Sahibs, I invite you to partake of my hospitality,” he said. “Nay, do not speak now—you are weary and hungry. Come, follow me.”

He led them to the centre of the village, where stood his own house, and as they passed through the outer approaches they saw that the dwelling was strongly fortified by a wall, a palisade, and a ditch. Two pieces of cannon—eight pounders—stood at the gate.

The sun had now gone down, and after leading the party into a large room the zemindar lit a brass lamp. Servants, male and female, came at his bidding, and the weary fugitives were soon seated before a table bountifully provided with food and drink.

## CHAPTER XXIV

After the frightful perils of the past few days the shelter and comfort of Mahmud Khan's house were like a wonderful dream to Guy and his companions. They were too tired for conversation that night. Their hunger and thirst satisfied, they slept on soft beds, a young maid servant taking special charge of Mary.

The next day they were better able to realize their good fortune. They rose at a late hour, and after breakfast, and an offer of tobacco that was greedily accepted by Jewan and Sergeant Scully, the fugitives related their adventures to the old Brahmin.

"Sahibs, you have indeed suffered much," said their host, when the tale was finished; "and it is wonderful that you escaped with life. Be comforted now, since for the present you are safe. I do not fear the threats of the Soubahdar Namgay Paltu, and as for the King of Delhi—he will be too busy to send a force against my little village. To take it will require more men than the soubahdar can bring. With him it is a matter of personal revenge. I know the rogue well, having been in his regiment before I left the service."

Mahmud Khan paused to thrust a cud of betel into his mouth.

"I will tell you a little of myself," he went on, "so you may believe that my pledge of protection is sincere. I am an old soldier, and I am proud of having fought for years under the British standard. I was a havildar (sergeant) of the Eleventh Native Infantry, and participated in many battles of the past. In Afghanistan I saved the flag which surmounts the tower of my house, and it was afterward presented to me by my colonel. I ordered it to be taken down this morning, since it is not wise to court peril."

"And how did you come to leave the service?" asked Guy.

"I received a severe wound which still troubles me at times," replied the old havildar, "And then my brother, the zemindar of this village and the surrounding territory, died. He was unmarried, and I became his heir. It was ten years ago that I took possession, and by ruling the people well and kindly I won their attachment and affection."

“As for this sad mutiny, I heard but little of it, since the conspirators were aware that I would be true to my salt. But I knew it was coming, and when a messenger arrived yesterday morning with news from Meerut, I called my people together and urged them to take no part in the uprising against the English. I told them they might triumph in the beginning, but that they would surely be destroyed in the end. The greater part swore to do as I wished, but the rest clamored to go to Delhi. So I consented, not wishing to have any discontented ones in my little flock, and off they went.”

“It was wise, oh, most high,” said Jewan. “And may your servant ask if those left may be depended upon?”

“On my soul, I believe it,” replied the havildar. “They have been long in my service, and will do my bidding.”

“That may all be,” said Sergeant Scully, “but the peril most to be feared will come from outside. We owe you our lives, zemindar, and for that very reason we would not remain in the shelter of your house if we thought that by so doing we would bring destruction to yourself.”

“Bob and I are of the same mind,” added Guy. “We had better resume our journey in a day or two—as soon as we are sure that our old enemies are not lurking about.”

“That is not possible, sahibs,” replied Mahmud Khan. “Weeks may pass before you can safely leave my shelter. And do not fear for me—no large force will be sent from Delhi, and though the Soubahdar Namgay may bring a party of sowars to attack the village they will find my walls and cannon too strong to conquer. And where else would you find shelter? The whole country is in a state of insurrection, and I fear will long remain so. Mutinous Sepoys are marching toward Delhi from every direction, every hour witnesses fresh outbreaks and slaughter, and but few of the scattered English people escape. For the sake of the mem-sahib, you must stay here till better times comes.”

“And when will that be?” asked Sergeant Scully.

“When the land of India has been deluged with blood—not before,” was the earnest reply.

The havildar’s words bore conviction with them, and since it was but for his own



sake that the fugitives would have pushed on through the forest, they were the more ready to accept the shelter he insisted on giving them. So they remained in Mahmud Khan's house, leading from day to day a life that would have been happy and peaceful but for the thought of what was happening in the outer world.

Guy was distressed by his father's uncertain fate, and by the knowledge that his mother, far away in America, would not know what had become of either husband or son. Mary mourned for friends and relatives in Calcutta, and for the dear parents who had by this time reached England. Bob and Sergeant Scully, being soldiers, thought more of their dead or missing comrades-in-arms, and longed for an opportunity to join some military force and fight against the rebels.

Jew alone, perhaps, was contented. As there was a considerable difference in caste between himself and the zemindar, he took up his quarters with the villagers and shared their daily life, going outside with them to cut wood and grass, and to attend to the ripening crops. But the gate was never left unbarred, and a constant watch was kept for Namgay Paltu.

Meanwhile, though the zemindar and his guests led a life that was calm and monotonous as if no mutiny had broken out, they were not in total ignorance of what was taking place in the world beyond the forest. Mahmud Khan had trusty spies going and coming; and so the fugitives were kept pretty well informed of the events of that black and bloody month of May. Horror and incredulity changed to rage and despair as fresh tidings poured in.

They heard of mutinies and slaughters without number, of magazines and bridges blown up, telegraphs and railways destroyed, boats full of English fugitives sunk in the rivers, and gallant but hopeless resistance at isolated stations. All of upper India was lost to the British, and fifty thousand mutineers, horse and foot, were assembled in Delhi. In the south the insurrection had gained less ground, and the stupefied authorities at Calcutta were beginning to send troops up country in little detachments. As yet Lucknow and Cawnpore were said to be safe, and there were rumors of English soldiers being ordered in haste from Persia, Ceylon and China. The zemindar received much news of even a more horrifying nature, but this he considerably kept from his guests.

So the days slipped by, until nearly three weeks had been spent in the forest village. As yet there was no sign from Namgay Paltu, and in spite of the news of

rebel triumphs and supremacy Mahmud Khan's retainers remained apparently contented. Jewan mingled freely among them, and kept his eyes and ears open, but he saw and heard nothing to make him suspect treachery or dissatisfaction. There was one, it is true, who had shown an open dislike to the Feringhees. His name was Pandit Lai, and he was an evil-looking fellow. Much of the time he was out in quest of news, but on such occasions as he was in the village Jewan kept a keen watch upon him.

On the night of the first of June, after sitting up till a late hour to discuss the gloomy prospects for the future, the zemindar's guests retired to rest. Mahmud Khan occupied a front room, and Mary and her ayah (female attendant) were to one side. On the other side slept half a dozen guards and house servants. A large apartment in the rear was shared by Sergeant Scully and the two lads.

Bob and the sergeant fell asleep almost instantly, but Guy lay awake for some time before his eyes closed in a restless slumber. One hideous dream after another raked his brain, and when he was suddenly and roughly aroused he had to reflect for a moment before he remembered where he was.

Bob and Sergeant Scully were standing over him, jerking on their clothes with mad haste.

"Dress yourself, quick!" exclaimed the sergeant.

No need for Guy to ask what was the matter. As he hurried his garments on he heard shouts, shuffling feet, and the clatter of arms in the front of the house; a great roar—evidently from outside—a clamor of savage voices mingled with the jangle of equipments and the neighing of horses.

Then Mahmud Khan appeared in the doorway. With him were Mary and Jewan, and the latter's white cotton tunic was red with blood.

## CHAPTER XXV

The zemindar was pale under his dusky skin, and his voice was husky as he cried:

“Sahibs, prepare to leave the shelter of my house, lest I innocently have your blood on my hands. You must fly for your lives, and may Brahma preserve you! May he punish these evil and treacherous dogs as they deserve!”

“But what does it mean?” exclaimed Guy. “Has the king of Delhi sent a force—”

“No, no, sahib—it is that villain, Namgay Paltu, with fifty sowars at his back! Perdition seize him, and that black traitor, Pandit Lai!”

“But surely your men can hold the village against them?” cried Bob.

“And we will do our share of the fighting,” added Sergeant Scully.

“Alas! the rogues are inside!” hurriedly exclaimed the zemindar. “It is the doing of that fiend, Pandit Lai—he opened the gate of the outer wall, and very nearly slew your trusty servant, Jewan, who discovered the treachery and ran in haste to give the alarm—”

“But I am not hurt, sahibs,” interrupted the Hindoo. “I have but a cut on the forehead.”

“Great Heaven, this is terrible!” cried Sergeant Scully. “And what has become of your retainers, havildar? Are they doing nothing to help you?”

“No,” groaned Mahmud Khan; “the dogs must have been won over beforehand by Pandit Lai, who also spiked my pieces of cannon. All have joined the Sepoys but half a dozen of the house servants and guards, and at any moment they may treacherously unbar the gate of the inner wall. They are now yonder in the courtyard, making a show of resistance against the invaders. Even should they remain loyal, the gate will speedily be forced. So come quickly, sahibs! I will save you—”

“But how?” demanded Guy. “We can’t get to the horses and you say the

soubahdar and his men are inside the village.”

“We shall not need the horses,” said Mahmud Khan. “There is a better and safer way of escape, praised be Brahma for putting it into my dead brother’s mind! This direction, sahibs, quick!”

As he spoke, a furious clamor was heard from the wall beyond the court. The gate rattled under heavy blows, and angry voices were demanding admittance.

Without further words the fugitives followed the zemindar, wondering where he was about to take them. Mary’s face was stamped with courage, but it grew a shade whiter as the yelling and pounding increased. So far the retainers in the court seemed to be untainted by the treachery that had let the Soubahdar Namgay and his troopers into the village.

In a little room at one extremity of the house Mahmud Khan made a brief halt to arm his companions. He gave each of the four men a musket and a pistol, with ammunition for both weapons. To Mary, at her own request [\_sic\_], he handed a pair of tiny, silver-mounted pistols. Then he slid back a panel in the wall, disclosed a winding staircase and led the party quickly down; Jewan, who came last, closed the panel.

As they descended deeper they felt the air grow cool and chilly, and detected a damp, musty smell. The clamor of the Sepoys now sounded far away. There could have been no less than twenty steps, and at the foot of them was a small cellar squared by massive walls of stone.

“Are you going to hide us here?” Guy asked, doubtfully.

For answer the zemindar pointed to the wall behind the steps. He held the lamp high in one hand, and with the other pressed hard on what looked to be a slab of stone. But at the touch a small door of wood, painted cunningly to represent stone, swung open on concealed hinges, revealing a dark passage beyond.

“Behold!” whispered Mahmud Khan. “I alone know of this, which was made in times even before my brother resided here. The passage grows wider and higher as you enter, and leads underground for a mile to the bank of the Doab Canal.

“And now go, sahibs,” he added. “It is perilous to linger. When you have come out from the passage travel by night only to the Kalli Nudda, where you may

find a boat and get to Cawnpore. The canal is shallow at this season, and you may easily wade it. Take the lamp, but blow it out when you see the first glimmer of moonlight ahead. Now, go—and may Brahma give you merciful aid!”

As he spoke he handed the lamp to Sergeant Scully.

“But you will surely go with us?” cried Guy. “We can’t desert you in such peril. It is bad enough that we have brought ruin upon you—”

“My life is safe,” interrupted Mahmud Khan. “I am a Brahmin, and not without influence abroad. These Sepoys will not dare to harm me. I shall go above now, and tell them that the Feringhees have left my house long since. Of course they will not believe me, and I shall let them in. When they have searched to their heart’s content and found no trace of you they will go away, taking my disloyal retainers with them—and may they leave that dog, Pandit Lai, behind to suffer my vengeance! But my life is safe, sahibs—in that I speak truly.”

“I hope so,” Guy muttered. “God is just—he will reward you for what you have done for us!”

There was not an instant to lose. The clamor and confusion overhead were growing louder, and it was necessary that the zemindar should be upstairs, and have the secret panel closed, before any of the sowars forced an entry to the house. With a few brief words of gratitude and farewell to their faithful friend, the fugitives dove one by one into the mouth of the passage, and Mahmud Khan clicked the door shut behind them. The outcry faded to an indistinct hum.

At once the tunnel widened and became higher, and the floor and walls were seen to be of hard earth. Evidently there was a constant supply of fresh air, for the atmosphere, though somewhat close, was not oppressive. Sergeant Scully led the way with the lamp, followed successively by Jewan, Mary and the lads. They moved as rapidly as possible, both on account of the danger of the secret exit being discovered and entered by the Sepoys, and because they knew that a search would, in any event, be made in the forest adjacent to the village.

The way seemed very long, and once they stopped for a moment while Guy tied a bandage around the gash on Jewan’s forehead—a painful but not deep wound inflicted by Pandit Lai’s tulwar. Then they pushed on with increased speed, keeping steadily in one direction, but now descending a little, and now mounting

upward at a gentle angle. There was no sound to be heard from the front or from the rear.

“Loftus, you go ahead and watch for the opening,” said the sergeant. “While I am holding the lamp I can’t see anything for the glare.”

Bob did so, and after a quarter of an hour more of swift walking he announced that he saw a silvery gleam. It was visible to all as soon as the sergeant blew out the lamp, and a moment later they were splashing through shallow water. It gradually deepened to their knees, while the gleam of light grew larger, and at last, creeping through a thicket, they stood hip-deep under the sandy and bushy bank of the Doab Canal.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. Overhead, the moon was shining from a starry sky. Fifty feet in front stretched the sheet of water, the farther shore thickly shadowed by the trees of the forest.

“Safe at last!” muttered Guy. “I hope the zemindar is as fortunate. And now for the canal—how deep do you suppose it is, Jewan?”

“But five feet at the most,” replied the Hindoo. “Come, sahibs; I will lead the way.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

Lifting Mary to his shoulder, Jewan stepped into the water. His companions followed, holding their arms high overhead, and after being submerged to the breast at the deepest part of the canal, all waded safely out on the opposite bank. The night was still quiet, and they started off at once in line with the mouth of the tunnel, walking rapidly to dry their clothes.

But they had gone no more than a quarter of a mile through the forest, talking imprudently as they went, when they came to a sandy clearing surrounded by heavy thickets, and with a stream of water trickling across the middle of it. Here the embers of a fire were yet smoking, and the ground seemed to have been trampled by many feet and hoofs.

“What does this mean?” Guy asked, in a whisper.

“Danger, sahibs,” replied Jewan. “A party of sowars have lately camped on the spot—”

Even as he spoke the shrill whinny of a horse was heard, and a loud voice shouted:

“Surrender, Feringhees!”

It was such a sudden and terrible surprise that for a moment the fugitives were too dazed to think of resistance or flight. They were instantly hemmed in by at least a score of fierce-looking Hindoos, who burst from the thickets on all sides of the glade. They were not in the uniform of the Sepoy army, but their semi-barbaric attire of baggy red trousers, green turbans, and white jackets surmounted by mail breastplates proclaimed them at once for what they were—the bloodthirsty retainers of Nawab Ali.

Guy, discovering this, fancied he saw a gleam of hope ahead.

“Don’t resist,” he cried, quickly, to his companions. “Don’t fire a shot—we will be murdered instantly.”

There was no time to shoot, even had any thought of doing so. With eager yells

and brandishing of glittering weapons the savage band pressed closely around the fugitives, tore them apart from one another, and snatched their arms from their hands. Mary uttered a terrified cry, and Bob fearlessly sprang between her and a couple of the ruffians.

“Kill the Feringhees!” clamored a dozen voices. “Cut them down! Off with their heads! Slay the infidel dogs!”

The uproar increased. Pistols were leveled at the heads of the fugitives, and sword-points pricked their clothing. In vain Guy tried to make himself heard. All expected instant death. Bitterly they repented their folly in blundering into such a trap. Their voices and careless footsteps had betrayed them, and the enemy had formed an ambuscade so that they might determine if friends or foes were approaching.

“It is all up with us, comrades!” cried Sergeant Scully. “There is no hope—let us die bravely.”

But just then a commanding voice stilled the clamour, and a richly dressed native pressed through the crowd to the spot. The moonlight shone full on his evil, bearded face, and Guy recognized him as a havildar of Nawab Ali’s bodyguard—a man whom he had known intimately in the past.

“Pertab Das, I ask mercy for myself and my friends,” the lad cried eagerly. “You know me, don’t you?”

“Yes, I know you, Sahib Mottram,” the havildar sneeringly replied, “dog, infidel, heretic that you are! Such mercy as you deserve shall you and your friends have. By the head of Vishnu, but this is a stroke of luck!”

Turning to his men, he added:

“Stand the Feringhees in line, and cut them down. Let the sand drink their vile blood!”

There was a howl of approval, and with a ringing clatter a score of flashing tulwars leaped from their sheaths. Rough hands were laid on the prisoners to obey the havildar’s command.

But a sudden remembrance of something that he had forgotten inspired Guy with



a last and desperate hope. Tearing loose from the ruffians who held him he put a hand to his throat, snapped the ruby ring from the cord, and flashed it in Pertab Das's eyes.

“Look,” he exclaimed. “You dare not kill us! This token makes our lives sacred!”

With a mocking laugh Pertab Das took the ring in his fingers, but as he examined it intently his sneering expression changed swiftly to a look of disappointment and awed surprise. His own men and the prisoners watched him with feelings that were widely different, and Guy began to think that the trinket—to which he had pinned but little faith when he offered it—might in truth prove of service.

“Sahib Mottram, where did you get this?” demanded the havildar; and his voice was very eager. “No lies,” he added, “or it will be the worse for you.”

“I know not who gave it to me, Pertab Das,” replied Guy. “You shall judge of that for yourself.”

So he told briefly of the meeting with Kunwar Singh and the other Hindoo on the road to Meerut and of the death of the former's elephant Golab.

“I have heard of the affair,” said the havildar, “and I heard that a young Feringhee had saved the companion of Kunwar Singh from being destroyed by the infuriated elephant. Are you the lad?”

“I am,” declared Guy, “else how should I have the ring?”

“I know nothing of the ring,” muttered Pertab Das. “That was not related to me. But describe the companion of Kunwar Singh, and on your head be the consequences if you fail to do so correctly.”

Guy fortunately had a good memory for details, and the account he gave of the mysterious Hindoo seemed to satisfy the havildar. His face grew more perplexed, and for a moment he gazed thoughtfully at the ring.

“What was the word that was given you with this ruby, Sahib Mottram?” he asked.

A mistake would have been fatal just then, but Guy had no intention of saving

his own life and leaving his companions to perish: nor did he scruple to tell a falsehood under the circumstances.

“The word given to me was this, Pertab Das,” he replied; “that the ruby would be of service to me and to my friends should I show it at any time when we were in danger.”

There was a brief pause. The havildar looked from the ring to the lad, and then shrugged his shoulders with sudden decision.

“I must obey the token,” he said, sullenly. “You are safe.”

“All of us?” demanded Guy, in a voice that shook with emotion.

“Yes, all of you—if what you say be true. I can understand his highness doing you a service, Sahib Mottram, since you saved his life, but why he should include more of the hated Feringhees—”

Pertab Das paused abruptly.

“You are spared,” he added. “I have said it, and now you may go your way. And the ruby you shall have back,” handing it to Guy.

The lad was speechless with joy, and his fingers trembled as he retied the ring to the cord and thrust it under his shirt. Jewan muttered a prayer to Brahma, while Bob, Mary and the sergeant looked at one another in a dazed manner, as though they could not credit their deliverance.

But the havildar’s words had a far different effect on his men. They began to murmur and growl, demanding that the Feringhees should be put to death. They refused to sheath their tulwars, and crowded in a threatening manner about the prisoners.

“Chup-chup (silence), you pigs!” cried Pertab Das, losing patience. “Do you dare too murmur at my command? Were we to slay these Feringhees our heads might fall speedily. This much I will tell you, that you may understand. On the ring given to the Sahib Mottram was graven the head of Siva, with two tulwars crossed beneath it. What mighty lord hath the same device on his seal—do ye not know?”

Evidently the ruffians did know, for their complaints changed to mutterings of awe and astonishment. The glances they shot at the prisoners were less ferocious, and they resignedly sheathed their weapons.

Guy heard and saw all this and was curious to know what it meant.

“Pertab Das,” he asked, “will you tell me the name of the Hindoo who gave me the ring?”

The havildar shook his head.

“My lips are sealed,” he replied. “It is a name not to be spoken lightly, and had he wished that you should know it he would have told you himself. But this much I will say, sahib; he whose life you saved is one of the most powerful princes of India, and strong will be his voice in the new rule that has begun under the king of Delhi. And at the time you met him he and Kunwar Singh were on their way to visit my honored master, Nawab Ali.”

“With that I will be satisfied,” said Guy, who was nevertheless much disappointed, “and I thank you for your favor, Pertab Das. And now are we free to go?”

“Whither are you bound, sahib?”

“To the Kalli Nudda, where we hope to find boats.”

It was a bold answer, but Guy felt that the power of the ring would be far-reaching, and that no treachery need be feared.

“I and my men are bound from the south to Delhi on a mission of importance,” replied the havildar. “Our horses are tethered yonder, and we stopped here for but a brief rest. We are in haste, else I would see you safely to the river. So you must go on alone, but before we part I would learn where you have lain while bloodthirsty Sepoys were seeking your lives. I have heard of the grudge that is borne against you by the Soubahdar Namgay Paltu.”

A moment’s reflection and the thought of what might be happening even then at the zemindar’s village suggested to Guy that here was a chance to serve that faithful friend. So he hurriedly related the incidents of the past couple of weeks and begged Pertab Das to ride by way of the village and protect Mahmud Khan

from harm.

“That I will do,” declared the havildar, who was under the belief that the zemindar’s protection was due to a sight of the ruby ring. “I know the place and the man, and it is not right that he should suffer for doing what I have done tonight—since he did but obey the wishes of this mighty prince. Yet I fear he will fare badly at the hands of Namgay Paltu and his troopers—”

“Then go in haste!” exclaimed Guy. “Don’t lose a minute! When we left by a secret passage the house was being attacked—”

He was interrupted by a muffled clatter of hoofs and a couple of husky yells. The fugitives turned pale, and Pertab Das and his men looked toward the sounds, which came from the direction of the canal. Nearer and nearer dashed the approaching horsemen, and of a sudden they spurred right into the clearing, and with difficulty checked their perspiring steeds—a dozen rebel sowars with Namgay Paltu at their head.

## CHAPTER XXVII

The Soubahdar Namgay's black eyes twinkled as he took in the scene at a glance, brilliantly illumined as it was by the glow of the moon, and he breathed a sigh of relief as he wiped his face with the end of his cummerbund.

"Ho! is it indeed you, Pertab Das?" he cried. "And you have got there the dogs of Feringhees, who led me such a chase! Brahma be praised that I have come in time to see their blood shed! Very nearly did they outwit me, having crept by a secret tunnel from the village of that old rascal, Mahmud Khan. But in the house there was a servant who saw the trick done, and he told me of it. So, by good fortune, I got on the trail of the heretic dogs--"

"Chup-chup!" interrupted the havildar, angrily, who had been listening, with a quiet smile to the ruffian's speech. "Will you give me no chance to speak, Namgay Paltu? What have you done with the old soldier and zemindar, Mahmud Khan? Has harm come to him?"

The soubahdar looked surprised and uneasy.

"Mahmud Khan has suffered no more than a tulwar slash on the arm," he replied, "though I had done right to slay him for his treachery. I have him bound fast and shall take him to Delhi, to be blown from a mortar--"

"More likely that will be your fate," cried Pertab Das. "Pray to Brahma that this tulwar slash you speak of may not cost you dear. For in protecting the Feringhees Mahmud Khan did but obey the commands of one mightier than you or me, even as I obeyed. I tell you the Feringhees are safe—no harm may be done them by you or your sowars."

"You are a fool and a liar, Pertab Das," howled the soubahdar. "Either the madness is in your brain, or you are tricking me. Know you that I am not in a mood to jest. The Feringhee dogs must die—if not by your hand by mine. They have shed much blood of the faithful, and the slain are crying loudly for vengeance."

"Truly you have a cruel heart," said the havildar, in a mocking tone. "Would you put to death these young sahibs—the fair and beautiful mem-sahib—the loyal

servant of the house of Mottram?”

“Ay, I would tear them limb from limb,” snarled the soubahdar. “I would cut their eyes out and rip the flesh from their bones. Their death cries would be sweet music to my ears—”

“That music you will not hear,” interrupted Pertab Das. “You are a fool, Namgay Paltu—or perhaps you err through ignorance. Know you not why the Feringhees had a right to be protected by Mahmud Khan and myself? Have your eyes not seen the ruby ring that was given to Sahib Mottram before the fall of Meerut by one of high estate—the ruby -with the graven head of Siva and the crossed tulwars beneath it?”

The Soubahdar Namgay’s jaw dropped, and his eyes opened wide in astonishment.

“The head of Siva and the crossed tulwars?” he echoed.

“Even so,” replied the havildar. “I speak the truth.”

He crossed swiftly over to where Namgay Paltu sat in the saddle and for nearly a minute the two conversed in low and angry tones. Guy and his companions listened intently, but failed to catch the drift of the conversation. In spite of what had happened they feared that they might yet be delivered to the tender mercies of their old enemy.

“Lies, all lies!” the soubahdar finally burst out, angrily. “The cunning dogs have deceived you, Per-tab Das.”

“Not so!” declared the havildar, “though I would you were right, for it goes sorely against me to spare the infidels. But I have seen the ring and know it, and I know, also, that the story of Kunwar Singh’s elephant and the prince is true. The Feringhees must be spared.”

“The Feringhees?” cried Namgay Paltu. “You forget that the ring was given to but one—the Sahib Mottram. Him you shall save, and the rest we will slay—the traitorous Hindoo, the mem-sahib, and the two who wear the uniform of the Feringhee army.”

The havildar shook his head.

“The word given with the ruby was that Sahib Mottram and his friends should be protected,” he replied. “So we may slay none of them.”

“It is you who speak, not I,” growled the soubahdar. “Had I my way, it would be different. Think you news of the killing could come to the prince’s ears?”

“I take no risks,” replied Pertab Das, “and I warn you to heed what I have said. In times past you did me an injury, Namgay Paltu, and now fate has put it in my power to baffle your vengeance. So be off on your way to Delhi, and stop not at the village to molest Mahmud Khan. If you harm but a hair of his head, or seek hereafter to kill these Feringhees who are protected by the ruby ring, by the faith of Brahma I will charge you with the deeds to the prince himself. And where will your head be then?”

The havildar laughed mockingly, and turned away with a gesture of contempt.

“It is your turn to-day, oh, Pertab Das,” the soubahdar hissed, passionately, “but it will be mine tomorrow.”

He fixed a furious glance on the fugitives—a glance that each one of them felt and shuddered at—and then he gave a curt order to his men. There was a pattering of hoofs as the horses wheeled around, and an instant later Namgay Paltu and his sowars were galloping through the forest in the direction of the Doab Canal.

By the havildar’s command, their weapons were now returned to Guy and his companions, and they were given, in addition, a knapsack containing food.

Then the horses were brought out and one and all of Nawab Ali’s fierce retainers mounted to the saddle.

“Are you going to the village?” Guy ventured to ask of the havildar.

“We shall ride that way,” was the cold reply. “I have said that Mahmud Khan shall not suffer and I will keep my word. And now be off—you and your companions. For fear of the prince the Soubahdar Namgay will not dare to follow you for evil purpose, but there are other perils, and should you meet with any to whom the device on the ring is unknown you will surely be slain. And there is one who does know, and yet would not stay his hand if he found you—beware of Kunwar Singh.”

“I know there are many perils,” said Guy, “and we will do our best to avoid them. I shall not forget what you have done for us, Pertab Das, and before we part I would ask a further service of you.”

“What is it?” the havildar demanded, with a frown.

“Tell me what has become of my father? Did your master carry him off on the night of the ball?”

“Yes, Sahib Mottram,” was the hesitating reply.

“And he is alive? Is he still a prisoner in Nawab Ali’s palace?”

“Your father is still alive,” answered Pertab Das, “but he is not in the Nawab’s palace, and never was there. He is now at Cawnpore.”

“At Cawnpore!” exclaimed Guy.

But the havildar had already urged his horse forward, and with a jangle of equipments the whole troop vanished in the jungle beyond the clearing, leaving Guy and his companions free to continue their flight to the distant Kalli Nudda.

The following night found the fugitives adrift on the Kalli Nudda in a budge-row—a small native boat of bamboo, with a short rudder at the stern, and a low awning of rice matting over the top. After seeing the last of Pertab Das and his men they had traveled fast until dawn, when they hid themselves in the forest. Venturing out again at sunset they pushed on over a good road, and at a steady rate of speed that brought them to the river shortly after midnight. Here they found and took possession of the boat—which had probably been abandoned by its owner, since there was no sign of a human habitation near.

The events of the next two weeks may be touched upon briefly, since nothing of importance happened in that time. Fortunately, the Kalli Nudda flowed through a comparatively deserted country, and though the fugitives would not have dared to travel by day, they were able to do so safely through the hours of darkness. Night after night they floated on with the current—which was for the most part sluggish—and at the approach of each dawn they hid themselves and their craft in some dense bit of jungle along the bank and lay there until sunset.

From their hiding places they sometimes saw natives passing up and down the



stream in dhingees and canoes, or bodies of rebel cavalry and infantry crossing at the fordings; but of Europeans there were none. The hope of reaching Cawnpore and finding that important town in the power of the English, kept all in good spirits, and the color began to come back to Mary Brydon's pale cheeks.

As they traveled by night, keeping well in midstream, there was much to interest them. From the forest-lined banks came the roaring of the tiger and the leopard, and the noisy splashing and walloping of the elephant and the rhinoceros. In the bright moonlight they drifted by ancient fortresses, sleeping villages, gloriously beautiful temples of white marble, pagodas, ghauts, mosques, and tombs of kings whose memory lived only in tradition.

Food was scarce, and they subsisted mainly on fruits, and on what small quantities of rice and millet they could glean from the fields at night. Twice Jewan ventured into a native village in the daytime, returning with chupatties and cakes, and without exciting suspicion or drawing danger upon his companions. On these occasions he learned nothing of importance, though from the scanty intelligence he brought back it seemed that all of upper India was in the power of the mutineers, and that as yet the English had made no attempt to stem the tide of insurrection.

Guy was hopeful of finding his father at Cawnpore, thinking that possibly Nawab Ali, on account of the past friendship of the two, had sent Mr. Mottram for safety to that town. Bob and Sergeant Scully put a different interpretation on the words of Pertab Das, though they did not say so to Guy, while Jewan was inclined to think that the havildar had maliciously lied. The ruby ring was a subject of much discussion, but none could guess the identity of the native prince who had given such a valuable gift to Guy. They little dreamed of what further part it was to play in their adventures.

Thus the days and nights slipped by, and on the night of the fourteenth of June the stanch little budge-row swung out of the Kalli Mudda into the broader and deeper tide of the mighty Ganges. There was need of greater caution now, and that night and the next the fugitives were in constant fear of discovery and capture. About two o'clock on the morning of the sixteenth, when they knew they must be approaching the vicinity of Cawnpore, they suddenly heard an ominous sound in the distance—the rattle of musketry and the thunder of big guns.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

This discovery, coming at a time when they believed themselves nearly safe, was a great shock to the fugitives. To find Cawnpore in a state of siege meant the destruction of their hopes, the failure of their long journey down the Kalli Nudda, and a plunge into fresh and uncertain perils. At first they were too stupefied to speak. For a moment or two, while the budge-row swung on with the current, they listened silently and with anxious faces to the incessant fusillade of cannon and muskets.

“What are we going to do?” Bob asked, finally. “The firing surely comes from Cawnpore—it must be invested by the rebels.”

“Or possibly only a battle is going on,” suggested Guy.

“Not likely, at this hour,” replied Sergeant Scully. “I think Loftus is right. The town is probably in a state of siege, and the rebels are beginning the day with an assault on the works. Look, the dawn is breaking now.”

He pointed to a quivering reddish glow on the eastern horizon.

“Sahibs, we must find a hiding place at once,” declared Jewau. “It is not safe to go any farther.

We will lie in concealment during the day, and perhaps we may be able to learn what the situation is at Cawnpore. From the sound, the distance can be no more than three miles.”

“And what will we do if the town is really besieged?” asked Mary.

“That’s a hard question to answer,” replied the sergeant. “We can’t go back, and we can’t safely hide in this neighborhood for any length of time. There’s a slim chance of our getting to Allahabad, though the distance is two hundred miles, and the Ganges between there and Cawnpore flows through the most populous part of India. And I daresay the country is overrun with mutineers.”

“Sahib, even Calcutta may have fallen,” Jewan said, solemnly. “By the trunk of Gunputty! but I fear the English will all be driven out of India. As for floating

down the Ganges to Allahabad—that we certainly cannot do.”

“And I wouldn’t go there if I could,” exclaimed Guy. “I believe my father is in Cawnpore, and at all hazards I must get into the town. But that won’t hinder the rest of you from carrying out any plans you think best—”

“We’ll stand by you, old fellow,” declared Bob.

“Of course we will,” added Sergeant Scully, “for Mottram’s plan is the one that we must adopt. We will lie close all day, picking up what information we can, and if it turns out that Cawnpore is in a state of siege, we will try to pass through the rebel lines in the darkness tonight.”

This was sound advice, and all agreed to it, Bob and Jewan proving as warm supporters of the sergeant as Guy himself. By this time the budge-row had drifted half a mile farther down the river, and the growing light of dawn, and the more audible sound of the bombardment warned the fugitives that they must get to shore as quickly as possible. So the Hindoo poled over to the Cawnpore side of the Ganges, and by good fortune struck the mouth of a narrow creek that was densely covered with trees and bushes. Far into this the boat was driven, and a short search in the surrounding jungle disclosed a ruined mosque of white marble. It was still in pretty good condition, though it was well-nigh covered on all sides by the rankest and thickest kind of vegetation.

With much difficulty the fugitives forced an entrance, and once inside they felt that they were safe for the present. The floor and walls were dry, and but a feeble glimmer of light penetrated. Sitting down on some fallen columns, they first examined their weapons, and then made a scanty breakfast of what food they had. It was now fully light, and the firing had dwindled to a few straggling shots.

Jewan proposed to venture out in search of information, and wanted his companions to go to sleep so that they might be fresh for the night’s undertaking. But Sergeant Scully bade the Hindoo wait until his return, saying that he was going to visit a tall tower which he had noticed as they landed.

“It lies close to the river, and is probably part of a temple,” he explained. “From the top I think I will be able to see what is going on at Cawnpore. I won’t run any risk, or get the enemy on my track, you may be sure of that.”

His companions doubtfully agreed, and the sergeant slipped off through the

jungle. He was absent a long time—so long as to cause great uneasiness for his safety—and when he finally returned his eager face showed that he had news to communicate.

“I was right,” he declared. “From the top of the tower I saw over the surrounding country. And where do you think we are? Have any of you been at Cawnpore before?”

Jewan shook his head, and the lads replied that they had passed through on several occasions, but remembered very little of it.

“I was there on my way up country,” said Mary, “but it was at night, and I saw nothing.”

“Well,” replied the sergeant, “Cawnpore straggles for seven miles along the river, though one can see little of it from the Ganges for the trees and ghauts on the bank. That accounts for what happened last night. We are already two-thirds of the distance past the town.”

The sergeant paused a moment to enjoy the stupefying effect that the announcement had on his friends.

“It is a fact,” he resumed. “From the summit of the tower I saw the whole situation. Five miles to the north stretch the palaces and buildings of the town—I could distinguish the magazine, the residency, and other familiar objects. And two miles away; at the south end of the town nearest Allahabad, the English garrison seem to be occupying two barracks in the middle of a plain. As far as I can tell, they hold nothing else.”

“And the enemy?” Guy eagerly demanded.

“They have the place invested,” was the sad reply. “Their lines entirely surround the barracks, and are close to the earthworks that the English have thrown up. There is no fighting going on now, but I saw moving regiments of rebel cavalry and infantry, whole batteries of artillery, and native officers riding here and there on elephants. And from end to end the town seems to be filled with Sepoys.

“By chance I learned still more,” the sergeant continued, after a pause. “When I climbed down from the tower two rebel pickets were outside, and I listened to their conversation for some time. They were waiting there to cross the river, and

from what they said, it appears that Sir Hugh Wheeler, with a small garrison, has been holding the barracks against tremendous odds since the sixth of June, and that he is likely to hold out until a relieving force can arrive from Calcutta. And the leader of the enemy is the terrible Nana Sahib.”

“I have often heard of him,” said Bob. “It was predicted long ago that he would be the first to take part in an uprising.”

“Yes, he is the most powerful foe the English have in India,” assented the sergeant; “and they are partly to blame for it, too. Nana Sahib is an educated and cunning man, and he was the adopted son of the Hindoo prince, Baji Rao. When Baji Rao died in 1851 the government confiscated nearly all of his vast property, and left to Nana Sahib only a small income and the palace of his adopted father. He tried to get his rights, but was contemptuously refused by Lord Dalhousie. His home, the palace of Bithoor, is only a few miles over the river, in the province of Oudh; but he himself is here commanding the rebels.”

“He may have been wronged,” said Bob, “but that was no excuse for mixing up in this devilry. And about those rebel pickets, sergeant, what became of them?”

“A native ferried them across the Ganges in a boat, “was the reassuring reply, “and I hurried back here at once. We’re not in any danger at present, but it’s a good thing we got off the river at daybreak. All sorts of craft are moving about.”

“I wish night would come,” said Guy. “I’m in a hurry to enter Cawnpore.”

“But first we must learn where to pass through the lines,” replied Jewan. “Sahib,” turning to the sergeant, “does the jungle extend far down the river?”

“It stretches down to a point opposite the barracks,” was the answer, “as well as along the greater part of the town to the north. And it runs in from the shore for fully a quarter of a mile, a belt of undergrowth and trees, dotted here and there with temples and mosques.”

“Then I will depart at once,” declared Jewan, “and will seek the best place for passing through the lines tonight. Even if I am seen and questioned, there will be no risk, for I will go without weapons, and will say that I am a native of Cawnpore, and in sympathy with the rebels. And while I am gone, sahibs, be careful to remain in the shelter of the mosque, and to make no sounds.”

No objection was made, for though the Hindoo's companions were far from satisfied as to the safety of his proposed trip, they knew that the information he might pick up would add to the chances of entering the English lines that night.

Jewan hurried off, leaving his firearms behind, and half an hour later three of the rest were asleep. A couch of dried leaves had been made for Mary in a far corner of the mosque, and Guy and Bob were stretched full length in the middle of the marble floor. Sergeant Scully sat up for a time with his back against a pillar, listening to the hum of birds and insects in the surrounding jungle, and wishing with all his heart that the night's undertaking was done and over with. It was his intention to mount guard until Jewan's return, but drowsiness and fatigue mastered him, and presently he was sleeping as soundly as his companions.

It was late in the afternoon when Guy suddenly got awake, and sat up with a start of recollection. As he rubbed his drowsy eyes, he saw a dusky figure slip out the door of the mosque, and then he made a discovery that startled him and forced a gasping cry from his lips. His musket and pistol were gone.

Mary, who was hidden behind a couple of fallen columns, and was in deep slumber, did not stir. But Bob and Sergeant Scully were instantly roused by Guy's cry, and as quickly discovered that they, too, were without weapons.

"We have been robbed while we slept!" exclaimed Bob.

"And the thief may be here at any moment with a lot of Sepoys," cried the sergeant. "But where's Jewan? He can't have turned traitor and robbed us?"

"Never!" Guy declared, indignantly. "The thief was some rascally native, who was prowling about in the jungle and discovered us. Wake Mary up, and we'll get away from here at once."

Too late! There was a burst of mocking laughter and a clamor of savage voices close by, and through the entrance of the mosque poured at least a dozen Sepoys in silver-gray uniform, headed by no less terrible a personage than Kunwar Singh.

## CHAPTER XXIX

“Ho, how surprised the Feringhees look!” cried Guy’s old enemy, in a sneering tone. “Seize them and bind their arms,” he added, to his men, “but let no blood be shed.”

Without a single weapon, the fugitives were helpless, and though they struggled hard in their passion, they were quickly overpowered, bound with cords, and dragged from the mosque. But Mary remained behind, wrapped in a slumber so deep that all the clamor and confusion had failed to awaken her. The Sepoys did not see the girl, for the columns that were in front of her, nor did they think of making a search for more Feringhees.

Bob and the sergeant, knowing this, were careful to say nothing that might lead to Mary’s discovery and capture, while Guy could hardly conceal his satisfaction at such a fortunate blunder on the part of the Sepoys.

“There’s some chance yet for the poor girl,” he said to himself. “Jewan will probably come back and find her, and they will both reach the English lines tonight. But there’s no such luck for us—Kunwar Singh hates me, and won’t forget his old grudge. And the worst of it is that the ring will have no influence with him. Why are they stopping outside here? Mary may get awake at any minute—”

The lad’s reflections were cut short by Kunwar Singh, who pushed into the group surrounding the captives. His dark face was wreathed in a satanic smile, and in his hand he brandished a gleaming tulwar.

“Sahib Mottram, we meet again,” he cried. “Have you forgotten [\_sic\_] Golab—my poor elephant that you foully slew? Ha! you may well tremble and turn pale. No mercy for you, nor for the other Feringhees! Why don’t you show the ring, and call on its magic power to set you free? I know all, sahib—how you twisted about your finger the old havildar, Mahmud Khan, and how, with a flash of the ruby you charmed Pertab Das. But I am not under its spell, as you will soon learn. And where is this potent treasure that has lost its power?”

He roughly snatched Guy’s fettered arms, and examined the fingers of both hands. Then, after hastily and vainly searching his clothing, he angrily

demanded:

“The ruby ring? Where is it?”

“Ask Pertab Das,” muttered Guy, little dreaming what a service that careless answer was to do him.

“So Pertab Das has the trinket?” snarled Kunwar Singh, misunderstanding the words, and he seemed to be convinced. “The dog of a liar! Why did he deceive me? And the rest of your companions, sahib—where are the mem-sahib and the treacherous Hindoo?”

“Find out,” replied Guy, trembling for Mary’s safety as he spoke.

Kunwar Singh dealt the lad a cruel blow that made his face tingle with pain, and turned then to a sinister-looking native who was with the Sepoys.

“Are you sure no more Feringhees were in the mosque when you took the weapons?” he demanded.

“I saw but these three,” was the answer.

“And you looked everywhere?”

“Yes, by the soul of Brahma!” declared the ruffian.

Kunwar Singh hesitated, looked doubtfully at the mosque, and then gave the word to start. Off marched the Sepoys, taking the prisoners with them; and Guy and his companions almost forgot their own peril as they gratefully remembered that Mary was safe for the present at least.

It was a journey of more than a mile, and it was covered quickly. Kunwar Singh led the way, and for reasons best known to himself he kept to a hard and level road of flagstones that stretched southward through the belt of jungle and forest. Natives—men and women—watched the party curiously from the steps of temples and pagodas; they shouted vile names at the prisoners, but did not venture to follow. The road ran parallel with the town, and at intervals through the trees, a glimpse was had of splendid palaces, gardens, splashing fountains, minarets and towers and crowded bazars.



“What will become of that poor girl?” said Bob, in a low tone that did not reach the guards.

“Jewan will return,” Guy whispered. “He may be watching us now from yonder jungle. And he will find a way to get Mary into the English lines tonight.”

“And where will we be by that time?”

“Dead!” Guy muttered, with a shiver. “There’s no hope.”

Just then the Sepoys turned sharply off to the left, and five minutes later they halted at what was evidently the outskirts of the rebel siege camp. The ground was littered with debris—gun-carriages, broken muskets, clothing, spades, and shovels, and empty wagons. Scores of soldiers were sitting in trenches or under the shade of trees, some with bandages on their heads and limbs.

Without doubt this was Kunwar Singh’s headquarters, and the men near by were under his command. A handsome tent added further confirmation to the fact, and beyond it was a row of barracks—once occupied by the English—from which a horde of Sepoys now poured forth to surround the prisoners with mocking jeers and cries.

Guy and his companions choked down their passion, and stolidly confronted the rabble. Looking beyond the trees, they saw spread out before them a sight that for the moment made them forget their imminent peril. Right and left, the plain was dotted with brown earthworks, bodies of rebel cavalry and infantry, gayly caprisoned elephants, waving standards, and batteries of artillery.

And farther across the plain, half a mile beyond the remote edge of the enemy’s lines, the setting sun shone on the long and gallantly defended stronghold of Sir Hugh Wheeler and his little band of heroes—two long, low barracks, with earthworks thrown up on all sides, and over all, the British flag fluttering defiantly from its staff. At present there was a suspension of hostilities, and it was difficult to realize what grim and deadly work had been going on there for days.

But the prisoners had little time to think of such things. While they were looking Kunwar Singh had been busily giving orders; and now, from one side of the camp, three huge brass cannons were trundled forward, with their muzzles pointing south.

“Have you done as I told you, Abubeker?” Kunwar Singh demanded of a Sepoy wearing a soubahdar-major’s uniform. “Are they loaded with powder?”

“Even so,” was the reply; “two bags in each and the fuses are fixed for lighting.”

Kunwar Singh smiled maliciously, and turned to the prisoners.

“Behold!” he cried. “This is the way you shall die—such a death as two of the faithful suffered at the hands of the Feringhees at Agra a few days ago. How do you like it, sahibs? It will not be painful, but in the twinkling of an eye your bodies will be blown to fragments.”

Now Guy and his companions understood, and the shock almost unmanned them, brave though they were. Every vestige of color fled from their faces, and they trembled with horror of the terrible death that awaited them.

At a sign from their leader four Sepoys seized each of the prisoners, and in spite of their frantic struggling, dragged them to the cannons. Their backs were placed against the muzzles, and they were tightly bound in that helpless position.

“Thank God that Mary is not here!” exclaimed Guy. “It will soon be over—good-by.”

“Good-by, old fellow,” Bob answered, hoarsely.

“Farewell, comrades!” whispered the sergeant. “Let us die like soldiers. God will avenge us!”

Three Sepoys stepped to the rear of the cannons, each with a lighted torch in his hand. Kunwar Singh took his station at one side, where he could gloat over the pale and horrified faces of his victims, and prolong their torture until he chose to give the signal to the gunners.

A minute passed—a terrible minute of silence. With fiendish and expectant faces, the three-score or more of Sepoys who were present watched and waited. No words can describe the feelings of the doomed men, knowing that in a very few seconds they must be blown to fragments. Far beyond the rebel earthworks they saw the English flag floating over the barracks, and it seemed to mock at their misery.

“Dog of Feringhees, your time has come!” snarled Kunwar Singh. “Die! die! and may your mangled limbs feed the jackals and the vultures!”

He waited an instant longer, and was just about to lift his hand to give the fatal signal when a shout checked him. Around the nearest angle of the earthworks, walking rapidly, came a tall and light-skinned Hindoo, with huge mustaches twisted like buffalo horns. He was evidently a personage of most exalted rank and importance, for he wore trousers and a tunic of purple satin, his tulwar was studded with rubies and emeralds, and costly jewels glittered in his turban and on his fingers.

“Kunwar Singh, what means this?” he demanded, curtly. “It seems that I have come in good time, else I would have missed the sport you have provided for yourself and your men.”

Kunwar Singh swore under his breath, and over his vile face stole a look of both fear and rage.

“Salaam to you, most high Azim Ullah,” he replied, deferentially. “As you say, you have come timely. Here are three Feringhee dogs whom I have taken, and who are about to atone for their sins. Stand but a little back, lest their flying flesh and bones do defile you.”

Azim Ullah hesitated, showed his white teeth in a smile of satisfaction, and then stepped a little nearer to gaze at the prisoners. Kunwar Singh would have prevented him, but it was too late.

“For the love of Heaven save us!” Guy cried, hoarsely. “Spare our lives! Here is a token that will move you more than words or prayers! Take it from my neck and examine it closely. It is a ruby ring given to me by a prince of your race, and on the stone is cut the head of Siva, with two crossed tulwars beneath.”

## CHAPTER XXX

The first words of the lad's appeal provoked only a mocking and merciless smile from the Hindoo, but when the description of the ruby ring fell on his ears, his whole manner underwent a swift change, and he stepped nearer with eager interest.

"The head of Siva!" he exclaimed. "And the crossed tulwars! Feringhee, if thou art lying--"

"The dog does lie," Kunwar Singh howled, furiously. "Perdition seize his soul! Believe him not, Azim Ullah, but stand aside that I may speedily strew the ground with the fragments of these infidels."

"I am not lying," Guy cried, hoarsely. "I speak the truth—here is the ring fastened about my neck."

"Kunwar Singh, this needs looking into," Azim Ullah said, sharply. "No love have I for the Feringhees, but if this matter prove to be what I think it--"

He stopped abruptly, made an imperious gesture to the gunners to withdraw to a distance with their torches, and then strode directly up to Guy. His jeweled fingers tore open the front of the lad's shirt, and an eager exclamation escaped him at sight of the ring. He snapped it from the cord, and examined it intently.

The three captives trembled as they watched him, and they scarcely dared to breathe. It was a moment of terrible suspense, and whether the issue would be life or death was as yet uncertain. Kunwar Singh, standing off to one side, looked as black as a thunder cloud. His men were grinding their teeth in silent rage, fearing to miss the rare spectacle of three Feringhees being blown from the muzzles of cannons.

"It is the same ring!" muttered Azim Ullah. "And you," fixing his dark eyes on Guy, "are the lad to whom it was given?"

"Yes, on the highway near Meerut," Guy eagerly explained. "I met this Hindoo there, and saved his life by shooting the mad elephant of Kunwar Singh. So he gave me the ring, and told me that it would be of service to me and my friends.

But Kunwar Singh was merciless because I killed his elephant—”

Azim Ullah made a gesture of silence.

“Enough!” he said. “The affair is well-known to me. Feringhees, gladly would I see your fragments darken the air. But the token protects you—you are safe.”

Slipping the ring into the folds of his turban, he turned away, leaving Guy and his companions to murmur silent prayers of gratitude, and to look with thrilling joy into each other’s faces. In low and sullen tones, Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah conversed for at least a minute, and then the former reluctantly gave a couple of orders to his men. The gunners dashed their blazing torches to the ground and a number of Sepoys at once cut the prisoners loose from the cannons.

At a word from Azim Ullah, the two lads and the sergeant followed him, limping with the pain and stiffness of their cramped limbs. Amid ominous silence, broken only by a fearful malediction from Kunwar Singh, they threaded an embrasure of the earthworks. On they went through the very heart of the rebel camp, gazed at by hundreds of fierce Sepoys who came swarming about them from every direction. But the presence of the richly dressed Hindoo effectually prevented any outcry or threats, or any close following of the crowd, and finally the verge of the rebel lines was reached, and the last outpost was passed.

Now the prisoners suddenly comprehended the good fortune that was in store for them, as they saw, half a mile over the plain, the fortifications and barracks that sheltered the gallant little force of Englishmen. They trembled with happiness, and tears came into their eyes.

“Sahibs, you are free to go,” said Azim Ullah, pointing to the British flag. “Be quick, and hold up your hands as you approach, lest you be fired upon.”

“Sir, will you not tell me the name of the prince to whom we owe our rescue, through your intercession?” asked Guy.

“I will tell you nothing,” was the curt reply.

“And the ring? Am I to have it again?”

“No,” declared Azim Ullah; “the ring will return to him who gave it. Its mission

is over. And what service it hath already done you, Feringhees, may prove to be of naught before many days have passed. Fortunate indeed will ye be if ye escape the doom that hangs over yonder dogs of infidels. Now, go!—go! lest I repent.”

No further urging was needed. Without looking back, Guy and his companions hurried forward over the plain. Nearer and nearer they drew to the low earthworks shouting and waving their hands, and hearing hearty cheers that told them they were seen. At last they staggered through an embrasure into Sir Hugh Wheeler’s lines, and were instantly surrounded by an eager and noisy throng—men, women and children. English faces looked into theirs, and English voices poured out sweet words of welcome. That moment seemed well worth all the sufferings of the past.

Volumes could be written of the siege of Cawnpore, but for lack of space that terrible chapter of the great mutiny must be touched upon briefly. During the latter part of May, foreseeing the danger, Sir Hugh Wheeler and his scanty garrison had chosen the two barracks as the only suitable place of defense. The low earthworks he caused to be built were hardly completed when the outbreak came on the sixth of June, and from that time until the arrival of the three fugitives the station had been desperately besieged by the Nana Sahib and his constantly increasing army of Sepoys.

The English had but few provisions, and six field-guns, though they were plentifully provided with small arms and ammunition. Their fighting force numbered but four hundred and fifty men, and of these two hundred were officers, privates and civilian residents of Cawnpore, while the rest consisted of railway engineers, traders and clerks. In addition, there were more than three hundred women and children, reared in luxury and comfort, and ill-fitted to endure the horrors of a siege.

All this was related to Guy and his companions by Sir Hugh Wheeler, who interviewed them as soon as they arrived, and drew from them a brief account of their adventures. He told them what other news there was; of massacres at Lucknow, Barilly and Benares, as well as at dozens of minor points throughout the country. He held out no hope of a speedy relief, declaring that all of upper India was in the power of the rebels and that no word from Calcutta had reached him for weeks. Nor could he give Guy any word of his father, which was a crushing disappointment to the lad.

“I am sorry for you, Mr. Mottram,” said Sir Hugh, “but you must face the worst. Your father certainly did not reach Cawnpore, in spite of what the havildar Pertab Das told you. If he was captured by Nawab Ali, he is either dead or a prisoner in the palace of the Nawab, who is said to be taking an active part in the insurrection.

“And as for this poor girl, Mary Brydon, and your faithful servant—Well, I don’t believe you will see either of them again. Possibly they may meet at the mosque, and escape down the river, but they certainly will not be able to get through the rebel lines and into our position. It is equally impossible for any of us to get out, else I would have sent messengers long ago. We are quite cut off from the world, and God only knows what will be our fate.”

Sir Hugh’s words came true, for nothing was heard of Jewan and Mary. But their friends found little chance to worry over their uncertain fate, nor had Guy much time to think of his lost father. Every man was needed for defense, and the sergeant and the lads were plunged at once into the awful horrors of the siege, where they showed a pluck and endurance of sufferings that speedily won for them the respect and admiration of their comrades in arms.

Words cannot paint the picture of that terrible period. For a few days the enemy made attacks only at intervals, and were repeatedly driven off, but from the twenty-first to the twenty-fourth of June the bombardment was incessant by day and night. The heat was frightful, and the smell of dead horses sickening. Men, women and children were killed by bullets and bursting shells, and the barracks were so riddled and honeycombed that they threatened to crumble to pieces. The survivors were finally driven to seek shelter outside, where they crouched in holes dug under the entrenchments, and covered over with boxes and cots. The dead were kept inside the lines until dusk, and then taken stealthily out and dropped into an empty well that was near by. The well that furnished water to the garrison was in the middle of the entrenchments, and the spot being known to the enemy, they kept a hot fire upon it from morning till night. More soldiers were killed here than at any other point.

Sickness and privation were doing as deadly work as the bullet and the bomb, and all the time the Nana’s great army was increasing in numbers. But the gallant little band fought on, knowing that the place could not be held much longer, and yet hoping that aid would reach them in time. Guy and Bob cheerfully shared the general hardships, and though constantly exposed they had

as yet escaped injury. But Sergeant Scully had been less fortunate, and was suffering from a fever brought on by a bullet wound in the arm.

But a ray of hope was soon to pierce the clouds of despair; and it came on the evening of the twenty-fourth of June, in the shape of a message from Nana Sahib to the effect that if the garrison would surrender and give up their arms they should receive a safe passage to Allahabad. Word was sent to him that he would be given a reply on the morrow, and the succeeding negotiations concluded with the proclamation of an armistice for the twenty-sixth, and a meeting that day between three English officers and two appointed by the Nana. Of the latter, one was Azim Ullah, whom Guy and his companions knew by this time to be the right-hand man of Nana Sahib.

The meeting led to a speedy agreement, and Sir Hugh Wheeler's officers returned in high spirits. The Nana had consented to let the English march out with their rifles and sixty rounds of ammunition. He was to escort them to the bank of the Ganges, where, at the Suttee Chowra Ghaut, they would find boats waiting with provisions, and ready to take the whole party down the river to Allahabad.

That night the Sepoy guns were silent, and there were joy and gratitude in the English camp. None dreamed of treachery, for the Nana had sent word that he was sincerely sorry for the sufferings of the women and children. The officers and soldiers, though they regretted the ignominy of surrender, felt that they were paying a slight price for the safety of their dear ones.

In spite of cheerful faces, it was a sad procession that set out on the following morning across the plain in the direction of the Ganges. An escort of rebel troops accompanied the garrison, and the sick and wounded, the women and children, were borne in carriages provided by the Nana. Alongside inarched those who were able to walk—soldiers and officers, with pallid faces and shrunken limbs, some limping from bullet wounds, and others with bloody bandages on their heads. Sergeant Scully had refused to ride, and as he was still far from well, his feeble steps were assisted by Guy and Bob, who were on each side of him.

The distance was a mile, and for the latter half the road led through a deep and winding ravine. At last the mighty Ganges was seen glimmering through the trees, and a minute later the little band reached the river bank, unsuspecting the horrors that were in store for them.



## CHAPTER XXXI

The boats were there, true to the Nana's promise—eighteen long, wide budge-rows, with roofs of thatch, moored in a row along the bank, and with two boatmen to each. To the left, high up on the steps of a temple that stood beside the Suttee Chowra Ghaut, sat Tantia Topee, the Nana's military adviser.

He made a sign, and the work of embarkation began at once, the men patiently awaiting their turn while the women and children and the sick were lifted into the boats, to reach which they had to wade ankle-deep into the river. In the background the assembled regiment of Sepoys were drawn up in solid ranks, their dusky and emotionless faces betraying no knowledge of the instructions that had been given them.

“All this seems too good to be true,” said Sergeant Scully, who was leaning on the arms of the two lads as he watched the embarkation. “To get away from those shot-riddled old barracks and the whistle and crash of the shells is like leaving a fiery furnace. I'll get well now—I didn't think so before.”

“Of course you will,” declared Bob, in hearty tones. “There's fresh color in your face already. And how happy the women and children look. Poor creatures! it was their sufferings that hurt me the most during the siege. But the fresh air of the river will tone us all up, and we'll be a different lot of people when we get down to Allahabad. And we may find Jewan and Mary there.”

Guy shook his head.

“Not much chance of that,” he replied. “But I wish we were started and fairly out on the river—I don't like this delay.”

As he spoke he was glancing keenly in all directions, and after continuing the scrutiny for a moment or two he gave a sigh of relief.

“What were you looking for?” asked Bob.

“I—I thought that ruffian Kunwar Singh might be somewhere about,” Guy answered, with hesitation, “but I don't see him. He's not the kind of a fellow to forget his vengeance, and I am satisfied that he would risk a great deal to have us

in his power again.”

“That’s true enough,” said the sergeant; “only you see his hands are tied, my lad. I dare say he knows better than to try any treachery after Azim Ullah saved our lives.”

“Azim Ullah?” muttered Guy. “I was just thinking of him, too. Do you remember the last thing he said to us—that the service the ring had done us might prove to be of no account within a few days? Can it be possible that some devilish plot lurks under this offer of Nana Sahib’s? Here is a whole regiment of Sepoys with loaded muskets, and that savage-looking fellow up on the temple steps is smiling to himself—”

“Nonsense!” interrupted Sergeant Scully. “Lad, your fears are running away with your good sense. If any treachery had been intended it would have been carried out long before this—what an opportunity that wooded ravine yonder afforded. The Nana is bad enough, and he hates the English like poison; but he won’t stain his victory with needless bloodshed. No doubt he’s only too well satisfied to get us away from Cawnpore.”

“He can’t be as glad of that as we are to leave,” replied Bob. “I’ll never forget this week if I live to be a thousand years old. It’s a wonder our hair hasn’t turned gray. Hullo! here comes our turn. The women and children are all stowed away, and don’t those wounded fellows look happy under the thatch awnings?”

Bob was right. Sir Hugh Wheeler was now superintending the embarkation of officers, soldiers and civilians. The remaining budge-rows filled rapidly, the boatmen lending all the assistance they could. Guy and Bob eagerly helped the sergeant down the sandy bank, and waded with him to the nearest boat. It contained a dozen men, and they pulled Scully and the lads over the gunwale.

Five minutes later all was ready for the start, and every budge-row was full of joyous faces. Sir Hugh Wheeler and a couple of his officers had waited till the last, and as soon as they embarked Tantia Topee, who was watching the scene with sparkling eyes, lifted one hand and waved it.

Splash! went the poles of the boatmen into the shallow water, and slowly, and a chorus of eager voices, the heavily laden fleet moved out from shore toward the deeper and swifter current of the Ganges. At last they were off—off for Allahabad and safety, leaving behind the horrors of that little cantonment on the

sun-scorched plain of Cawnpore. The boats continued to recede from the bank, and still the silver-gray ranks of the Sepoys stood like so many stone images, the sunlight gleaming on musket barrels and equipments.

Suddenly Tantia Topee, from his perch on the temple steps, drew a trumpet from his tunic and put it quickly to his lips. Taranta! taranta! taranta! Hardly had the clear notes risen on the morning air when with one simultaneous movement all the boatmen sprang out of the budge-rows and spluttered waist-deep to shore. There was a noisy rattle of arms, a burst of ferocious yells, and the ranks of the Sepoys spread thinly to right and left. Swiftly they lined up on the river's brink and leveled their muskets. Crash! crash! crash! volley after volley was poured into the dazed and unsuspecting fugitives.

The scene that followed was one which no pen or brush can depict. Many were killed by the terrific musketry fire—men, women and children—and the rest were at first too stupefied to grasp what slight chance of escape there was. Some, remembering that they had arms, fired back.

Others tried vainly to push the boats into deeper water. Frightful cries and screams mingled with the triumphant yells of the Sepoys.

After the first few volleys the murderers plunged into the Ganges and waded rapidly out to recapture those of the English who were alive. The wadding of the muskets, fired at such close range, had by this time set fire to the thatch coverings over some of the boats. The occupants of these, driven by the heat and flames to jump out, were at once shot dead without mercy. Others of the budge-rows were boarded by infuriated ruffians, who killed all the men, but dragged the women and children to shore. In this work the treacherous boatmen joined, while from the temple steps Tantia Topee's bugle rang above the tumult.

Meanwhile half a dozen of the boats—among them the one in which were Sergeant Scully and the two lads—had succeeded in getting out to midstream with but slight loss to the occupants. The Ganges was comparatively narrow at this point, and the hot fire that was poured after the escaping fugitives urged them to make all speed toward the opposite shore. But on this bank Nana Sahib, with devilish forethought, had posed large bodies of Sepoy cavalry and infantry in ambush, and no sooner were the boats within range than the hidden ruffians appeared and opened fire.

Death and destruction followed these volleys, and there seemed no hope for any of the harassed wretches. Two of the six budge-rows caught fire, and its passengers, jumping out in a panic, were pierced with bullets. Two more of the boats were unable to back away in time and were surrounded by the rebel cavalry, who splashed their horses into the shallow water. For a moment or two carbines and pistols cracked, tulwars fell with a sickening sound, and shrieks of agony blended with exultant yells. Then the butchery was over, and among the victims of this little tragedy were Sir Hugh Wheeler and a number of his officers.

Two boats were left, and that they escaped the fate of the rest was due to the presence of mind of some of the inmates, who managed to pole back to midstream. Here, encountering a good current, they were swept along at a fair rate of speed. But in spite of the fortune that had favored them so far these surviving fugitives were far from safe, as they soon realized.

By this time the bloody work over on the Cawnpore shore was about ended. The fleet of captured boats were either empty or in flames, and of their passengers the men had all been killed the women and children were prisoners on the bank. Now, seeing the two remaining budge-rows drifting down stream, the bloodthirsty assassins made strenuous attempts to destroy the inmates. They followed on a run along the banks—Tantia Topee's troops on the Cawnpore shore and the rebel cavalry and infantry on the Oudh side—and fired volley after volley.

In one of the two boats were Sergeant Scully, Guy and Bob. The lads had at first been so stunned by the terrible treachery and massacre as to be quite incapable of action—a feeling that many others shared. But now the stupor had worn off, leaving in its place a burning thirst for revenge, and with eager hands they aimed and fired at the pursuing butchers.

The sergeant, weak and sick as he was, knelt against the gunwale with his musket in his hand.

“Don't miss!” he roared, hoarsely. “Let them have it, the fiends!”

“I brought one down,” shouted Guy. “Did you see him tumble?”

“And there goes one to my account!” cried Bob, as his musket cracked. “Don't stop firing as long as we've a cartridge left! Blaze away, and think of the women and children!”

Such was the dauntless spirit of the occupants of the two budge-rows—more than a score of men in all—but their straggling shots were of little or no effect against such overpowering numbers. Faster and faster came the rain of lead, and the fugitives dwindled rapidly. The bottoms of both boats were littered with dead and wounded. Sergeant Scully fell back with a bullet in the arm, but Guy and Bob seemed to bear charmed lives.

All too quickly the ammunition gave out—the cartridges provided by Nana Sahib proved to be mostly worthless—and now the firing was confined to the rebels on both banks, who were following as savagely as ever. One of the budge-rows struck a swifter current and forged ahead with a rapid spurt. The other—Guy's boat—hung on behind for fifty yards or more; then, getting to one side of the deep mid-channel, it suddenly struck and grounded on a bar.

Nine of its passengers were yet alive, and snatching the poles they tried to shove off. But in spite of hard work they could not budge an inch, and while they were still toiling desperately, subjected to a lively fire from both banks, a budge-row filled with Sepoys was seen bearing down on them from a distance of two hundred yards.

“It's all up with us now, comrades!” cried Sergeant Scully. “Let's fight to the end with our musket butts.”

“No, there's a chance yet,” shouted a gallant fellow named Mowbray, pointing to the Oudh bank. “Look! only a few Sepoys are over yonder—the rest have pushed down after the other boat. Let's make a dash to shore and give them the British charge. Some of us will likely get through to the jungle.”

## CHAPTER XXXII

A hearty cheer greeted this suggestion, and Sergeant Scully, wounded and bleeding though he was, sprang to his feet with a sudden return of strength. For an instant the little band surveyed the situation—the boat load of rebels bearing down on them from up stream, the budge-row filled with their friends that was still speeding down the river under a hot fire from both banks, and the straggling Sepoys directly across on the Oudh shore. A glance at the dead and dying in the bottom of the boat made them long for vengeance.

“Now, then!” cried Mowbray, “all together! Spread out in a line, but keep close. And run like a streak—it’s our last chance.”

Over the gunwale he leaped, dropping with a splash to the submerged bar. The rest followed, muskets in hand, and with their faces to the Oudh shore they plunged through twenty yards of water that took them waist-deep. Then the stream shallowed—the Ganges was fortunately very low at this season of the year—and the gallant fellows swept on more rapidly over the shoals.

Their ringing cheers were answered by derisive shouts, and it was seen that Sepoys were running from right and left toward the spot for which the Englishmen were aiming. Some on the bank began to shoot, and a straggling volley was fired by the approaching boat-load of rebels.

“Faster! faster!” cried Mowbray. “Don’t mind the bullets!”

On they plunged, knee-deep in the rippling tide. The odds were gathering against them, and they had not one chance in a thousand of success. The line was no longer even. Some of the men were in front and others had fallen a little behind, delayed by the clogging sands. Sergeant Scully kept up for a moment, reeling like a drunken man from weakness. At first he had refused assistance from Guy and Bob, but now they took hold of him and tried to drag him along.

“Let go, lads!” he cried. “I’m all right—I can run. Just watch me when I get among those brown devils yonder on the bank—”

A bullet cut short the sentence, piercing him squarely between the eyes. The shock tore him from the arms of his companions, and he fell dead on his back.

The body drifted a couple of feet and lodged on the bottom.

For an instant Guy and Bob were well-nigh stupefied with horror and rage. They bent over the sergeant, and a glance showed them that he was lifeless. Bullets were whistling around them. They saw a man drop on Mowbray's left and one on the right. They heard the cheers of their surviving comrades and the ferocious yells of the Sepoys.

Then, realizing their peril and the cost of further delay, they dashed forward after the rest. But in their haste they kept a little too far down stream, and suddenly found themselves breast deep in water, with a strong current surging against them. Crack! crack! crack! musket balls spattered and sang around them, fired from the bank, and by the ruffians up stream in the boat.

"We're lost!" exclaimed Bob. "We must get out of here—"

As he spoke a bullet tore the cap right off his head, and the shock unbalanced him. He vainly threw up his arms, dropping his musket, and then he vanished from sight as the current swept him into still deeper water. An instant later his head and shoulders emerged, and he began to splash vigorously; but he was receding all the time.

"Can't you swim back?" Guy cried, hoarsely. "Try to wade."

"The water's overhead," Bob answered, "and the current is too strong for swimming. Save yourself, old fellow—don't mind me. Good-by—"

But Guy had already thrown away his musket and started to swim. Heedless of the splashing bullets he bore on with lusty strokes, and in less time than it takes to tell he was alongside of Bob. Though their clothes threatened to drag them down, the lads were in no immediate peril of death by drowning. The water was deep and swift, but the jungle-clad shore of Oudh was now only fifty feet away.

Keeping their heads above the surface by a gentle paddling, they looked back. They were just in time to see Mowbray and two companions—all that were left of the gallant band—scramble up the bank and become lost in a surging mob of rebels.

"Poor fellows! that's the last of them," exclaimed Guy. "I hope they didn't think we deserted. We have escaped for the present, but it won't be long till we share

their fate.” He turned his head to look down the river. “The other budge-row is safe,” he added; “it is out of sight around a bend. But there is a lot of firing going on in that direction.”

“Now’s a good chance for us, if we could only find a hiding place,” exclaimed Bob. “There are but a few Sepoys up above on the bank, and they are looking the other way—I believe some of Mowbray’s party broke through and escaped. And the ruffians up in that budge-row don’t see us either.”

Just then, as if in answer to Bob’s wish, the lads drifted by a high promontory that jutted some twenty feet from the shore. In past ages it had been a bathing ghaut, but now the terraces and pillars were hidden under trees and vegetation. And the shore of the quiet eddy immediately below the promontory was dense with jungle-growth to the very water’s edge.

“Look!” cried Guy; “if we can get into that pool and reach the shore, we may find a hiding place—the bushes are thick.”

“We’ll try it,” muttered Bob. “It all depends on our not being seen. Dive, old fellow dive straight for the bank, and don’t come up till you’ve made thirty feet at least.”

At that instant the bobbing heads of the fugitives were discovered by the boat-load of sepoys, and a few shots were fired. The bullets struck close by—so close as to suggest to the lads a clever trick for deceiving the enemy. With rare presence of mind they went through a perfect imitation of being shot. They tossed up their arms, cried out as though in pain, and quickly let themselves sink. But no sooner were they under water—keeping the right direction in view—than they dived to the bottom.

Side by side they swam forward, their noses at times scraping the sand and mud. On and on they went, and when they were nearly suffocated they came to the top. A glance showed them that they were half a dozen yards below the promontory, and far enough in from its point to be hidden from the sight of the Sepoys in the boat. The water was still deep, and twenty feet straight ahead was the shore.

“Again!” gasped Bob when both had taken a full breath.

Down they went, and a short swim under water brought them to the bank. But it



seemed to shelve down suddenly, for though they could touch it they were still submerged to the breast. Here indeed was a chance of safety, for the jungle was so dense and tangled that not a glimmer of light could be seen through it.

But better fortune than they dreamed of was in store for the fugitives. Guy, making a grab at a thick clump of bushes, fell through them into a wonderful place that they concealed—a square, walled passage that led inward from the bank. His low cry of delight brought Bob after him, and both lads pushed boldly forward into the tunnel, as it seemed to be.

The water was still breast-deep, and it kept at that level as they waded on, guided by a distant gleam of light. Under foot was a hard bottom, and when they thrust their hands overhead they touched a slimy wall.

The streak of light grew larger and brighter, and soon they emerged from the other end of the water-passage, and found themselves in an oval bathing tank. All around them were walls of marble, green with age, and from one end a flight of steps led to an upper floor.

The lads were not content with their present safety, but wanted to see what further security there was. So, scrambling out of the pool, they quickly and noiselessly mounted the steps. They were now on the ground-floor of a ruined Hindoo temple, littered with stones, dirt and leaves. On three sides the dark and shady jungle showed through the gaps in the masonry, but on the fourth side, where the entrance was, the vegetation was lower and less dense.

“Here’s luck,” said Bob. “The place is some distance from the river, and I don’t suppose any one comes near it. Now if only those ruffians didn’t see us reach the shore—”

He was interrupted by a shout and a rustling noise. Three Sepoys were coming toward the temple on a run. Evidently they had seen the fugitives plunge into the passage and had circled around to intercept them.

For an instant the lads were too horrified for speech or action. It was doubly hard to die just when they believed themselves safe! Then Guy picked up a block of stone as large as his head, and drew his companion to one side of the doorway.

“We won’t be murdered without a fight for it,” he whispered, savagely. “It’s no use to hide below, and no doubt more of the devils are at the river end of the

tunnel.”

“If we only had our muskets!” gasped Bob. “Or if I had a stone! But it’s too late now—watch sharp, they’re coming.”

As the shadow of the foremost Sepoy darkened the entrance to the temple Guy sprang out in front of him, the huge stone poised in his hands. He let drive at once, with all his might, and a sickening crash was heard. Down went the man across the doorway, the front of his skull literally smashed in.

The one behind stopped, gave a yell, and lowered his musket to fire. Then a strange thing happened. The third Sepoy, who was just in the rear of the other, suddenly lifted his gun with both hands and brought the stock down with terrific force on the head of his comrade. The latter pitched forward on his face, a ghastly and quivering corpse.

Guy and Bob saw it all as they looked back while seeking stones, and they could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes. But they quickly understood the meaning of the tragedy when the surviving Sepoy dashed into the temple, calling them by name. In spite of his shaven beard and rebel uniform they recognized him at a glance. It was Jewan.

In their delight the lads threw their arms about the Hindoo and greeted him with choking words of gratitude and welcome. Jewan returned the embrace with tears in his eyes and then he quickly disengaged himself.

“Sahibs, it is not a time to talk,” he whispered. “Your safety must be thought of—”

“Are more of the rascals coming?” exclaimed Guy.

“I trust not,” was the reply. “Myself and those two who lie dead were together at a spot along the bank when you disappeared in the secret passage. My companions knew that it led to the temple, and when they ran here to kill you I followed with them. But no others either saw what had become of you or saw us come this way, so in this place we are safe for the present. But wait, sahibs.”

He hurried outside and quickly dragged in the bodies of the two dead Sepoys, hiding them at one side of the doorway; he also brought in their muskets.

“We never expected to see you again,” said Bob. “What are you doing in the rebel uniform. And Mary Brydon—what was her fate?”

“The mem-sahib is a prisoner in the Nana’s palace at Bithoor,” was Jewan’s startling reply. “I will tell you this much briefly, sahibs. When I returned to the temple that day I was followed secretly by some of Nana’s own soldiers, who made prisoners of myself and the mem-sahib. We were taken before the Nana, and on account of the girl’s beauty he directed her to be sent to his palace. Then, desiring to live for the sake of you and the mem-sahib, I declared that I had repented of my sins against the faithful and wished to take the oath of loyalty to the insurrection. The Nana believed me, and since then I have served with a regiment of his troops. My company was sent here to the Oudh side of the Ganges this morning for the purpose of slaying the Feringhees. But I swear, sahibs, that no blood is on my hands. When I fired, I fired in the air.”

“I’m sure of that,” replied Guy.

“Have you heard anything more of Mary?” questioned Bob.

“She is still at Bithoor,” Jewan answered. “And now I must leave you, sahibs, lest a search be made for me; and also that I may tell a pardonable lie as to the death of my comrades and keep others from coming near the temple. But I shall return before dark with food, and then we will talk further. And while I am gone strip these dogs of their uniforms and cartridge boxes, and throw the naked bodies into the tunnel beneath the temple. Also hide down below and make no sound. “

With this Jewan hastened away, speedily vanishing in the jungle, and Bob and Guy set themselves to carrying out his instructions. It was ghastly work but they did not shrink from it. The belongings of the two Sepoys—the clothes, boots, caps, muskets and ammunition—they heaped on a pile in a dark corner of the temple. The naked bodies they dragged down the steps and flung into the deep water of the tunnel.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

During the rest of the morning and all through the afternoon Guy and Bob remained in the underground part of the temple. Seated side by side on the slimy flagstones, with their feet dangling over the edge of the bathing tank, they talked in whispers of the terrible scenes they had witnessed, and of what chances they had of escaping the fate of their friends. They felt that they were in no immediate danger, for not a sound reached their ears—not a musket-shot, a human voice, or the tread of a footstep. Evidently all but themselves had perished, and silence had settled down on Cawnpore.

In the dusk of evening, true to his promise, Jewan returned; he brought with him a spare knapsack containing food, and the lads were so hungry that they ate every scrap, washing the meal down with water from the upper end of the pool, where it bubbled pure and cold out of a spring.

“And now tell us the news,” Guy said, eagerly. “Have any more of the garrison escaped?”

“But one or two besides yourselves,” was the reply, “and they were in the budge-row that floated around the bend of the river. It stuck down yonder, and though several got safely to the jungle, the rest were slain by the Sepoys.”

“And Mowbray and his companions—those who were with us and got to the bank?” asked Bob.

“All killed, sahibs,” was the reply. “A part of the women and children only are yet alive—two hundred or more—and they are confined under strong guard in a brick house near the town.”

“And what will be done with them?” Guy inquired.

“Who knows?” said Jewan, with a shrug of his shoulders. “The Nana Sahib is truly a fiend with a human body, and after the deed he has done this day he will stop at no cruelty.”

“But can we do nothing for these poor people?” exclaimed Guy. “Could we not get near in the darkness and release them? The river is not far away, and no

doubt there are plenty of boats.”

“Sahibs, it would be madness,” declared Jewan. “The house is within the rebel camp. No, we can do nothing for the mem-sahibs and the babalog (children).”

“I would give my life to save them,” muttered Bob, “but I suppose you are right. And is there no word of an English force coming?”

“It is rumored that the great general, Sahib Havelock, is marching up country,” replied the Hindoo, “but if it be true he is certainly many miles away. And even should he come, sahibs, I fear he would accomplish but little. Here at Cawnpore alone is an army of six thousand mutineers who are expecting him, and are preparing to fight a great battle when he arrives. At Delhi is an army of seventy thousand under the standard of the Mogul king, and all of upper India, save only the towns of Lucknow and Allahabad, are in the power of the enemy. And already Nana Sahib has proclaimed himself ruler over this district.”

“The inhuman monster!” cried Guy. “Oh, what a reckoning he will have some day! A thousand deaths would be too good for him.”

“I hope it will fall to my lot to be with the force that defeats and captures him,” muttered Bob. “My blood fairly boils when I think of his treachery—fo [\_sic\_] all those helpless men butchered, and the women and children spared for the sword or for a worse fate—”

A burst of tears choked the lad’s voice, and he could say no more. Guy, too, broke down, and for a moment they wept silently. Jewan said nothing, knowing the futility of words at such a time. Through the temple entrance and the doorway at the head of the steps a broad bar of silvery moonlight came stealing into the chamber, and the lads were startled at the wan and haggard look on each other’s faces.

“This won’t do,” Bob said, finally. “We’ve got to bear up like men. There’s enough to be thankful for, and since God has saved us so far I kind of think we’ll pull through what’s to come yet. And it’s time we made up our minds to some plan. We can’t stay in the temple long.”

“No, that’s true!” assented Guy. “The only thing to do is to try to reach Allahabad—the news of this massacre ought to be made known as soon as possible. Poor Scully, how we shall miss him on the way! And there’s Mary

Brydon. Good heavens! Bob, how can we leave the girl a prisoner in the hands of that fiend?"

"How can we help her?" Bob answered, sadly. "I feel as you do, old fellow, but—"

"Sahibs, it may be possible to aid her," Jewan interrupted in an earnest voice.

"How?" demanded the lads together.

"Only at very great risk," said the Hindoo. "Listen, sahibs, and I will explain all. I came here tonight to offer you a choice of two plans, and I am ready to serve you whichever one you may choose. You must make up your minds quickly, since there is no time to lose."

"Yes," exclaimed Guy; "go on."

"The first plan is that we start at once for Allahabad," resumed Jewan, "and that is by far the safer of the two. I can secretly procure a boat from the Cawnpore side of the river and fetch it opposite the mouth of this tunnel. Then by traveling only at night, as we did before, we shall likely escape peril—"

"Yes, and the other plan?" interrupted Guy. "What about Mary? Does it concern her? Quick!"

"It concerns her," replied Jewan, "and I will tell it as quickly as possible. The mem-sahib is still a prisoner in the Nana's palace—she is confined in an upper room with native attendants. I was at Bithoor three days with my company—doing guard duty—and I know the place fairly well. While we sit here talking, sahibs, my regiment of Sepoys as well as two troops of cavalry are probably crossing the Ganges on the way to Bithoor, which is twelve miles distant. You may mingle with them at slight risk, if you consent."

"How?" exclaimed Guy. "I don't understand."

"Here are the uniforms of the dead soldiers and their weapons," answered Jewan; "they will fit you well. And I have brought a stain for your faces and a dye for your hair. You will join the regiment with me, sahibs, and march to Bithoor tonight. You will be quartered within or close to the palace—"

“Ah, I begin to see now,” Bob cried, eagerly. “You’ve got a sharp head on your shoulders, Jewan. And suppose we do mingle with the Sepoys and get safely to Bithoor—what then? What chance will we have of helping Mary?”

“I have been on sentry duty within the halls of the palace,” replied the Hindoo, “and I may likely be appointed to the same service within a day or two, since Nana is pleased to honor me with marks of his esteem. As I said before, I know where the mem-sahib is confined. With your assistance, during the silent hours of the night I may be able to rescue her.”

“Jewan, you’re a trump,” declared Guy. “And suppose we get the girl away from the palace?”

“We will flee to the river, sahib. It will be easy to find a boat, and with proper care we may float safely down to Allahabad.”

“It’s a big contract,” Bob said, thoughtfully, “but I fancy we can see our way pretty clearly. And why are these troops going to Bithoor, Jewan?”

“They have been ordered there to fortify and guard the palace,” the Hindoo answered. “The Nana is cunning, and should he be defeated at Cawnpore in a battle he desires to fall back upon Bithoor.”

“Yes, I see,” replied Guy. “But don’t you think we are sure to be found out, in spite of our disguises, if we join the rebels?”

Jewan shook his head. “My regiment has been newly made up,” he said, “and but few of the men know one another. Moreover, many have been added in the past two days—mutineers from stations in different parts of the country.”

“Your reasoning is sound as far as that goes,” admitted Guy. “But suppose these fellows try to talk to us?”

“Surely you can answer them back in Hindoostanee, Sahib Mottram?”

“Yes, I know the tongue pretty well,” said Guy.

“Then you will avoid suspicion,” declared Jewan. “As for the Sahib Loftus, he need not talk at all. I will put a bandage around his face, and he will pretend that he is shot in the jaw.”

Bob laughed. "That will work like a charm," he said.

"Yes," added Guy. "Jewan appears to have planned everything smoothly, I must confess. But even if the risk was ten times greater I would not hesitate."

"Then have you chosen, sahibs?" inquired the Hindoo. "Think well! To go to the Nana's palace means some risk, in spite of all the precautions we can take. Whereas if we start at once down the Ganges—"

"That will do," interrupted Guy. "We have already chosen—we'll save Mary Brydon or perish in the attempt. What do you say, old fellow?"

"Yes, a thousand times yes," cried Bob. "We would be cowards to leave the girl to her fate when there was a chance of saving her."

There was a gleam of admiration in Jewan's dark eyes, though the moonlight was not sufficient to show it. "Sahibs, you have chosen like brave men," he said, "and my life is at your service. Now let us prepare—it is important that we join the rebels before they reach Bithoor."

He produced a flask containing a dark liquor and a cartridge box full of a brownish powder. The latter he mixed copiously with water, and bidding Guy and Bob undress he rubbed them with it from head to foot, staining their skin to the natural color of the natives of India. Then he dyed their hair black, and when they were rigged out in the boots, clothing and equipments of the two dead men they would readily have passed for Sepoys.

"Surely the Nana himself would be deceived," said Jewan, as he surveyed the lads with satisfaction in the moonlight. "But you must shun water, sahibs, since the stain of your skin might come off in streaks should it be wet. And now let us depart, for the moon is rising high."



## CHAPTER XXXIV

Several hours after midnight, in the early morning of the 28th of June, the troops sent from Cawnpore by the Nana arrived within sight of Bithoor, the distance between the two places being no more than twelve miles. Azim Ullah was the leader, and the sowars and infantrymen under him were those who had participated in the massacre.

Many of these wretches were laden with small articles of plunder, half intoxicated by indulgence in strong drink and stained with the blood of their victims. There was no order in ranks, nor was the regiment divided into companies. With noisy and triumphant clamor they surged in a mob, horse and foot, through the native streets and bazaars to the stronghold of Nana Sahib.

And with the rabble marched Jewan and the two lads, the latter growing more and more confident of safety and the success of their mission with every passing hour, for in the bright moonlight their disguises were clearly seen, and yet the fierce Sepoys never dreamed that two Feringhees were in the midst of them.

After leaving the shelter of the temple the fugitives had joined the rebel force at a fording of the Ganges not far above the Sutte Chowra Ghaut, Jewan slipping first into the crowded ranks, and the lads following his example a moment later from the shadowy bank of the river.

During the march through Oudh the Hindoo kept purposely apart from his companions, and Guy and Bob were left to depend on themselves. Mindful of their instructions, they said nothing to each other, but trudged carelessly on over the sandy roads, jostled right and left by the unsuspecting Sepoys.

Occasional questions were put to Guy, which he answered with ready skill in the native tongue. He explained that his companion's bandaged jaw was due to the blow of a musket butt, and thus Bob's silence—for several Sepoys had addressed him—was satisfactorily accounted for. But it was a hard ordeal for both lads, and it was all they could do to conceal the rage and indignation they felt for these terrible comrades, the blood-stained butchers of Cawnpore.

Bob understood very little of the native tongue, but enough was spoken in English to chill his blood with horror. Guy heard all, and was compelled to listen

to many separate tragedies of the massacre told in gleeful and boasting tones. It may be said here that English was spoken to a great extent throughout the Sepoy army, and almost entirely so by Hindoos of the rank of Kunwar Singh, Azim Ullah and the Nana Sahib.

From the arrival of our young heroes at Bithoor dates a period of two weeks, which may be passed over briefly, since during that time the lads met with no adventure, nor did they make the least headway in the task which had led them to incur such fearful risks. The palace of the Nana stood in the centre of the town, surrounded by a net work of native streets. The great building had an inner court, access to which was had by double gates of carved brass. The outer court, hemmed in by a low wall, covered an extent of three acres. Here were stables, sheds and various other small buildings, and here the force of cavalry and infantry was quartered.

Amid the confusion that went on from day to day it was natural that the disguised English lads should have escaped even a shadow of suspicion. The soldiers had come from different parts of India, and the prospect of a great battle which they were constantly discussing left them no time to question one another closely. The native officers were as lax as the men; there was no drill or roll call, and from sunrise to sunrise the troops ate, drank, gambled and slept. Nor was anything done in the way of fortifying the palace, and this was explained to the lads by Jewan, who frequently came to them with bits of news.

“General Havelock is very near,” he said, “and the Nana has decided not to try to hold Bithoor in case he suffers a defeat, but to fall back still farther. These soldiers are kept here now to guard the treasures that the palace contains, but they will likely be ordered to Cawnpore as soon as the English draw near.”

“And what about Mary?” asked Guy. “We have been here almost a week, and the chances are no brighter.”

“Have patience, sahibs,” Jewan replied. “I am working slyly to get into the good graces of my jemadar (lieutenant,) and some night I shall be on guard duty within the palace. Then will be our time. The mem-sahib is still a prisoner and in no danger of her life.”

The sultry July days wore on, but night after night passed without bringing tidings that the lads so ardently desired. They slept much in the daytime, and

moved about with less fear of detection during the hours of darkness. Bob kept the bandage on his face, and Guy had as little as possible to say to his comrades in arms. They did not dare to wash themselves, and nearly every other night, in a secluded corner of the court Jewan would renew the stain on their arms and faces.

They saw the Nana from a distance on the one occasion when he visited Bithoor, but they did not get a glimpse of any of his family or of the interior of the palace. They frequently saw Azim Ullah and other of the Nana's trusted advisers, who were constantly journeying to and from Cawnpore. For fear of arousing suspicion Jewan ventured near the lads as seldom as possible, but he managed to keep them informed of what little news there was—that Mary was still locked up in the palace, that the other women and children were safe in the brick house at Cawnpore, and that General Havelock and his force were steadily marching nearer.

At last dawned the 16th of July, a day that Guy and Bob were long to remember. Early in the afternoon the native officers received some news of importance by a mounted courier from Cawnpore. What it was they did not announce to the men, but at once the infantry and cavalry were mustered into line to the beating of drums and thoroughly inspected. Then they were dismissed, with orders to have horses, arms and cannon ready for marching at short notice.

All through the afternoon the work of preparation went on, and Guy and Bob cleaned their muskets and equipments as industriously as the rest. At heart they were sick with dread, knowing now that Mary must be abandoned to her fate, and that they themselves might soon stand in battle array against Havelock's English army. It was a terrible situation, and they saw no way to get out of it.

Just at dusk a great noise was heard, accompanied by the blare of bugles. Those near the outer gates began to shout loudly, "The Nana! the Nana!" and a few moments later a magnificently caparisoned elephant, surmounted by a closed howdah, trotted into the inclosure. Close behind followed a small troop of horse, and among these the lads recognized both Azim Ulla and Kunwar Singh.

Drums rolled, bugles sounded and all the soldiers cheered lustily. The procession passed rapidly, on to the inner court of the palace, and the brass gates were left wide open behind them. The troops, vastly excited, began to discuss what the Nana's arrival could mean. A hoarse and steady uproar came from the native

town without, and during the next half hour mounted messengers poured in at intervals.

It was now dark, and torches were beginning to glare under the silver light of the rising moon. Here and there among the noisy throngs, like lads distracted, went Guy and Bob. In spite of reckless questioning they could learn nothing, and they expected at any moment to be summoned to arms. In vain they searched for Jewan, and they were strongly tempted to slip out of the court and escape while they had the chance; all that prevented them from taking this step was the lingering hope that they might yet be able to save Mary Brydon.

But suddenly the familiar face of the Hindoo appeared in the crowd. He looked worried and anxious, and it was evident that he had been seeking the lads. With a gesture of caution, he led them after him at a distance to a quiet corner near the stables.

“Well, what is it?” demanded Guy. “Quick! we can’t wait.”

“Sahibs, the English was army but twenty-two miles from Cawnpore this morning,” was the startling reply. “Already they have defeated the rebel outposts, and there will be a great battle on the morrow. The Nana has come to see to the removal of his treasure from the palace, and within a couple of hours he will be on his way back to Cawnpore, taking the troops here with him. And I have worse news—yesterday all the women and children in the brick house were slain so they might not be rescued alive.”

For a moment Guy and Bob were literally speechless with horror. Their rage was beyond words, and they felt such a mad thirst for vengeance as they had never known before. Then tears came to their relief, and they wept like children. Jewan, in great alarm, bade them be more careful.

“Good heavens! this is awful,” groaned Bob.

“I can scarcely realize it,” whispered Guy. “All those poor people killed—the women and the little children! And Mary will meet the same fate!”

“Yes, unless we can save her,” said Bob. “But it is madness to hope, and we ourselves are in a bad fix.”

“We might escape now, sahibs, if we chose,” replied Jewan. “But do you prefer

to risk your lives for the sake of the girl ?”

“Yes,” the lads answered, eagerly. “And how?”

“Then follow me,” said Jewan, “and keep at a distance of ten feet. There is much confusion in the palace, and we may be able to enter without suspicion. I know where the mem-sahib is confined, and I know also the guard who has the keys. The risk is great, but there is a slight chance—”

“Lead on,” interrupted Guy. “We’ll follow.”

“Yes, to the end,” added Bob. “And God help us!”

## CHAPTER XXXV

The inner court was for the most part paved with marble, though it contained two tanks of water on a level with the flagging, several fountains and a number of patches of shrubbery. The place was rather uncomfortably crowded, and great lamps of colored glass shed a soft light on the picturesque scene.

The Nana's elephant was drinking at one of the tanks, and a couple of attendants were waiting until its thirst was satiated to feed it with a roll of hay. Many of the horses also were drinking and servants were busily rubbing them down. The Nana's escort stood here and there in groups—irregular sowars of Oudh, gorgeously attired in Oriental dress and armed with carbines and tulwars. Several score of Sepoys had ventured into the court and were talking loudly and eagerly to the new arrivals. Servants of the palace—dusky-skinned women and half-naked men—were passing in and out of the arched doorways on all sides.

Such was the sight that met the eyes of Guy and Bob as they passed between the brass gates a few feet in the rear of Jewan, and it rather encouraged them than otherwise, since they stood a good chance of escaping attention. With shouldered muskets they pressed on through the jostling and noisy crowd, assuming a bold demeanor and trying to look careless and unconcerned.

They kept the Hindoo constantly in sight, and without glancing back at them he led the way rapidly to the farther side of the court. Here he turned at right angles along the end of one of the tanks, and after going ten feet he turned again, this time toward one of the palace doors.

Just then, as Guy and Bob followed Jewan's first turn at the angle of the tank, there was a stir and commotion at this very door; several persons were pressing out in haste. A dozen Sepoys and servants, hastening to make room, thrust themselves between the lads and the Hindoo, crowding the former to the very edge of the tank.

What happened was partly the fault of the lads themselves. Having lost sight of Jewan and knowing the importance of finding him again at once, they pushed ahead with more force than speed. A fat soubahdar, getting a sharp blow in the ribs from Guy's musket butt, faced around with a grunt and an angry oath.

“You dog!” he cried, “take that for your clumsiness” and he gave the lad a violent shove.

Back went Guy against Bob, who was just behind him, and with a tremendous splash both slipped off the edge of the tank into the water. They dropped their muskets in the fall and went clear under. Gasping and spluttering, they came to the top and gained a foothold on the slippery bottom.

As they stood there, submerged to the breast, they were at first too dazed and angry to realize their peril. They waded a step or two toward the edge of the tank, greeted by mocking laughter and jeers, and then, when the clamor of the crowd turned quickly to fierce yells of “Feringhees! Feringhees!” they suddenly trembled at the thought of their peril. They understood now what had happened—the bath had washed the stain from their faces in streaks.

“Feringhees! Feringhees!” the cry rang louder and more savagely from the court, and the clamor spread like a wave from tongue to tongue until it seemed to have reached even to the native quarter. There was a clatter of weapons, a rush of feet and a noisy trampling of horses on the flagstone; the Nana’s elephant trumpeted shrilly in sudden affright at the commotion, and voice called to voice within the palace.

Guy and Bob waded slowly on through the shallowing water, grimly courag[e]ous in the face of a death that seemed certain. There was no trace of Jewan, but they saw on all sides of the tank a mass of squirming foes in Sepoy uniforms and picturesque native dress; tulwars, knives and musket barrels flashed before their eyes.

“Kill them! Kill the Feringhee spies!” howled the mob.

The lads were now within reach, expecting to be instantly shot or cut down. But of a sudden a commanding voice rang above the tumult, and as the throng made way Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah pressed forward to the edge of the tank.

“Look! ‘tis the Sahib Mottram,” Kunwar Singh cried in tones of wonder and anger; “and his companion is the same who was tied with him at the cannon’s mouth. The dogs have been playing the part of spies. Behold the garments they wear and the streaks on their faces, where the water has washed the brown paint off. Brahma be praised! the infidels shall not escape my vengeance this time.”

“Truly they shall die,” exclaimed Azim Ullah; “by the faith, I say it. But let them not be slain at once—I would have them alive.”

He gave loud orders to that effect, and the threatening weapons were lowered. Amid tremendous yelling and shouting, the lads were dragged out of the tank. Half a dozen muscular Sepoys laid hold of them, and others formed a circle to keep back the unruly crowd.

“It’s all up with us,” muttered Bob. “Show them we’re not afraid, old fellow.”

“We’ll be game to the last,” replied Guy, “but I wish we could die fighting. I wonder what they’ll do with us?”

An answer to the lad’s question was just then suggested by Kunwar Singh.

“There are cannon in the outer court Azim Ullah,” he cried. “Let the Feringhee dogs be blown to fragments, as I would have served them when you came between me and their righteous punishment. Not this time can the ruby ring save them. Is it not so?”

“It is true,” declared Azim Ullah. “The heretics have put on the dress of the faithful, and for that they shall surely die. Away with them!”

The clamor broke out afresh and the mob began to open a path toward the outer court for the Sepoys and their captives. But just then a venerable-looking Hindoo with a white beard pushed rapidly to the spot and waved both his hands in the air.

“Hear ye! hear ye!” he cried. “I bring a message from the Nana. It hath come to his ears that two Feringhees have been found among the faithful, and his highness commands that the dogs be fetched without delay to his royal presence.”

Kunwar Singh swore fiercely and looked as black as a thunder cloud. “Think you they can be saved?” he muttered in an undertone.

“No, by the faith!” declared Azim Ullah. “Better for them had we led them to the cannons—they will now fare worse.”

He leaned forward to whisper to his companion’s.



Bob and Guy were of the same opinion. They shrank with unutterable horror from the thought of being ushered into the presence of the terrible Nana Sahib—the inhuman butcher of Cawnpore, and they realized instinctively that the punishment he would mete out to them would be a triumph of fiendishness.

But no sign of fear escaped the lads as they were hurried, dripping wet, into one of the arched doors of the palace. On they went in the grasp of the Sepoys and followed by Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah—on from corridor to corridor until the short journey ended on the curtained threshold of a brilliantly lighted apartment.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

The Sepoys halted outside, but Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah pushed into the room with the prisoners. It was a very large apartment, but its furniture consisted of only a few chairs and couches and a table inlaid with gold and ivory. The walls were lined with splendid mirrors that reached to the ceiling, and on the richly-carpeted floor stood half a dozen brass-bound chests. A number of the palace servants were busily engaged in filling these with portable treasure—gold and silver plate, jeweled ornaments, rare laces and silks, gem-crusted weapons and strings of rubies and emeralds.

Guy and Bob had but little time to look around them, nor were they in a mood to think of anything except their impending fate. Almost immediately a man appeared from an inner room—a stout, handsomely-dressed native, with a round face, brilliant black eyes and a complexion no darker than that of a Spaniard.

This was the perfidious butcher of Cawnpore, and at the first glimpse of him the lads uttered exclamations of intense astonishment. And no wonder, for they recognized him beyond doubt. Nana Sahib was the mysterious Hindoo whom Guy had saved from Kunwar Singh's elephant.

For a moment there was a pause. Guy and Bob were speechless, and the Nana himself seemed not a little surprised as he stared at the prisoners; his mocking smile showed that he knew them. Then Azim Ullah quickly told of the discovery and capture, waxing more fierce and earnest with every word.

“So let the Feringhees die,” he concluded, “vile heretics and infidels that they are! Their deaths would be too good for them, since they came here as spies in the stolen garb of the faithful. It was doubtless their purpose to send a dagger or a bullet to the heart of your highness.”

“Yes, let them die,” added Kunwar Singh. “It is a marvel how they escaped the fate of the other Feringhee dogs at Cawnpore. With my own eyes I saw them sink beneath the tide of the Ganges; by Brahma! I swear it.”

“But the one—the Sahib Mottram saved my life at Meerut,” interposed the Nana in a sleek and oily voice. “For that reason I gave him the ruby ring which you did not return to me, Azim Ullah. And truly the maddened elephant would have

killed me.”

“My poor Golab!” muttered Kunwar Singh, with a look of terrible hatred at Guy.

“Your highness has already paid that debt three times,” declared Azim Ullah.

“Three times did the ring work its magic power when shown to those who knew the sign—with the havildar Mahmud Khan, with Pertab Das in the forest of Jheend, and lastly with myself in the camp at Cawnpore. Yet, not satisfied with your mercy, the sahibs did come here disguised with evil intent.”

“And is it true, your highness,” demanded Kunwar Singh, “that the ring was intended to save other than the Sahib Mottram?”

“It was meant for him alone,” said the Nana. “Fool! think you I take pleasure in sparing the lives of the English?”

“Then the dog lied,” howled Kunwar Singh. “He declared the power of the ring was for all who might chance to be with him, and by that evil trick were all who aided him deceived—the old havildar, Pertab Das and Azim Ullah.”

“Kunwar Singh speaks the truth,” assented Azim Ullah. “The Feringhee is a dog of a liar and but little deserves your highness’ mercy.”

“And he and his companions have slain many of the faithful,” cried Kunwar Singh. “Forget not that, your highness.”

“Chup chup!” exclaimed the Nana, with an angry gleam in his eyes. “Surely I am master here. This Feringhee shall die as he deserves,” pointing to Bob, “but the Sahib Mottram I will spare on the following conditions—that he renounces the wicked and idolatrous faith of his fathers, embraces the true religion of the Hindoo and fights against the English usurpers under my standard. I have spoken.”

Guy’s face flushed with passion and indignation, and he fearlessly confronted the Nana.

“I refuse your offer,” he cried. “I will die with my friend, and even should you be willing to spare him on the same conditions, we would both refuse. Life is sweet to us, but it is too dear a price to pay for the loss of honor and religion.”

“That’s the way to talk,” exclaimed Bob. “Let these treacherous fiends do their worst! Vengeance may be slow, but it will surely come.”

Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah grinned with satisfaction, seeing that matters were turning out as they wished. The red blood was showing under the Nana’s yellowish skin, and with something of the stealth of a tiger he stepped quickly nearer to the prisoners. With unconquerable aversion and with horror in their eyes, both lads shrank suddenly back.

The Nana forgot what he had intended to say, and his countenance blazed with wrath.

“Dogs, what means this?” he cried. “Do you dare to shrink from me as though I were defiled? Is my touch pollution that you tremble at my approach? By Brahma! Feringhees—”

“Keep back!” Guy interrupted, hoarsely, losing the last vestige of prudence and self-restraint in his passion. “I would rather touch a poisonous cobra—I would die a dozen deaths before I would accept one act of mercy from your vile, blood-stained hands! You human devil! monster! butcher of helpless women and children! traitor and liar! But your day of reckoning is coming—”

With a cry Nana struck Guy in the mouth, shouting at the same time to the guards. Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah whipped out their tulwars, and the Sepoys, rushing in, seized and overpowered the lads.

All seemed to expect the signal for instant death, but for a few seconds the Nana hesitated. Then he drew Kunwar Singh and Azim Ullah to a corner of the room, and for several minutes the three conversed inaudibly. What was said seemed to be far from pleasing to Kunwar Singh, for he frowned blackly.

“It were better to slay the dogs at once,” he finally burst out, aloud.

“Truly I am of the same mind, your highness,” added Azim Ullah.

The Nana shook his head.

“It will be more of a punishment to make them wait,” he replied. “Death is certain in the end, and they shall all die together. Already it is time we were starting for Cawnpore.”

“The will of your highness is law,” Kunwar Singh muttered, sullenly. “I ask but this—that mine may be the hand to deal out the penalty.”

“It shall be as you request,” assented the Nana; and with that he whispered a few words in the ear of Azim Ullah.

The latter strode from the room and at a signal from him the Sepoys followed quickly with the prisoners.

Azim Ullah led the party from corridor to corridor, and finally down a damp stairway to the underground part of the palace, where the tumult in the upper courts became only a faint hum. Here appeared a burly Hindoo with a great bunch of keys, who led on through various gloomy subterranean passages, making many turns to right and left until he paused before a massive door of brass.

He inserted a key in the lock, and the door swung open with a harsh, creaking noise. Rough hands pushed Guy and Bob over the threshold, and the door closed behind them with a dismal clang. They heard mocking laughter and jeers, and then the voices and footsteps faded rapidly in the distance.

At first the lads could see only the vague outlines of a narrow, cramped cell, with slimy stone walls and floor, and a tiny barred window high up at one end. But in a few moments their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and now they made out a dark figure crouching on a pallet of straw.

With a moaning sound the figure stood up, revealing a tall and gray-bearded man. He tottered slowly forward, almost to the front of the cell. Here he paused, and with his hands to his eyes he gazed intently into the faces of the lads. Then—

“Guy, my son!” burst hoarsely from his lips.

“Father!” cried the happy and incredulous lad. “Oh, thank God!”

The next instant they were in each other’s arms, weeping for very joy and trying to talk in broken and incoherent sentences. Bob understood the situation. He leaned against the wall and watched the united father and son with tears of sympathy in his eyes. In that moment of happiness none thought of the sure and terrible fate that was hanging over them.

It was fully five minutes before Mr. Mottram could be induced to let go his son or was able to grasp the fact that the thrilling and unexpected meeting was indeed a reality. But at last he drew Guy and Bob to the rear of the cell and sitting down on the wretched straw pallet, the three talked earnestly and eagerly while the hours of the hot and moonlit night slipped rapidly by. From a distance they heard the clatter of hoofs and rattle of arms, the roll of drums and peal of trumpets, but gradually these sounds gave way to utter silence.

There was much to be told on both sides. Guy and Bob described all their adventures from the time they had entered Meerut on that fatal Sunday morning, and no short narrative did the story make, since the lads were frequently interrupted, and omitted nothing that they could remember. Mr. Mottram was deeply interested and was unsparing with words of praise. He inquired all about the progress of the insurrection, and his countenance grew more grave and hopeless as he listened. The massacre of Cawnpore wrung tears from his eyes and fierce denunciations from his lips. He rose to his feet and paced excitedly up and down the narrow cell. At last he sank down on the straw, and for several minutes not a word was spoken.

“I would like to hear your story, father,” Guy said, finally.

“I have but little to tell,” Mr. Mottram answered, huskily, “for I have been a prisoner during all these weeks. You guessed rightly, Guy. On that night of the ball—how long ago it seems now!—I overheard Nawab Ali and another Hindoo of rank discussing the coming mutiny. My eavesdropping was discovered, though I did not suspect it at the time, and as I was hastening to Meerut that night I was captured by some of the Nawab’s retainers. After spending two weeks in his palace I was sent under guard to the Nana’s palace here at Bithoor. It seems that the Nana, knowing I was an American, hoped to persuade me to take part in the insurrection against the English. But I held out in spite of his offers and threats, and am now under sentence of death. But for Nawab Ali I would have been killed long ago—his friendship has saved me thus far.”

“Well it’s all up with us,” remarked Bob, after a pause. “There will be a battle tomorrow, and whether the Nana beats or loses, he will kill us before Havelock’s force can get to Bithoor. That’s why he gave us a couple of days of grace. And no doubt he will kill Mary Brydon at the same time.”

“Of course he will,” Guy answered, bitterly. “There’s no hope for any of us. It’s

useless to count on Jewan, for of course he has marched away to Cawnpore with the troops.”

“We are in God’s hands, my dear lads,” Mr. Mottram said, solemnly, “and His will must be done. Only a miracle can save us, and we will not hope for that which cannot be. It is certain that we must die, so let us prepare to meet that fate as brave men should.”

To the three prisoners deep down in the dungeon under the Nana Sahib’s palace at Bithoor the 17th of July was a day of comparative quiet and monotony. At intervals through the tiny grating that communicated with the outer world they heard the dull and indistinct booming of big guns. They knew that a decisive battle was being fought, and that the sounds came from Cawnpore, twelve miles away. But they felt that they were doomed to die, and that their fate could not be averted by either the Nana’s defeat or success.

Silence reigned overhead in the palace, but at morning and evening of that day food and water were thrust through a small wicket in the brass door of the cell, though the prisoners did not see the man who brought them. He came again about noon of the 18th and soon after his departure confused noises penetrated to the dungeon. They continued without cessation—constant rumbling of heavy wheels, the music of drum and bugle, pounding of hoofs and a muffled din of voices. Now and then came the dull roar of cannons and the brisk volleying of musketry.

“Do not build up false hopes, my lads,” said Mr. Mottram. “We must be prepared for the worst—and the worst will surely come.”

“But there is fighting close by, sir,” argued Bob. “It looks as though General Havelock had defeated the rebels, driven them to Bithoor and pressed after them.”

“I’m sure Nana Sahib and his force are in occupation of the palace,” added Guy, “and from the firing I should judge that the English are already at the edge of the native town.”

“Very likely,” assented Mr. Mottram, “and as soon as they get a little nearer the Nana will execute the sentence of death on us and evacuate the place. It is hard to die thus, away from friends and home, but God will comfort us in the last moment. It will be but a brief pang.”

This stifled the hopes that Guy and Bob had begun to feel, and they said no more. All through the sultry evening they listened to the continuous noise and clamor and watched in vain for the coming of the jailer with food and drink. At last, in spite of hunger and thirst, they fell asleep on the bed of damp straw.

The first flush of dawn, glimmering feebly through the bars of the narrow window, waked the prisoners after a night of bad dreams. They sat up, rubbed their drowsy eyes, and instantly became aware of more ominous and alarming sounds than they had heard on the previous afternoon.

As they listened they forgot the gnawing pangs of hunger and their parched lips and throats. Overhead were turmoil and shouting, and the outer and inner courts were alive with the clatter of iron hoofs, the trumpeting of elephants, the roll of drums and the stirring blare of bugles. And from but little farther away rang the steady spitting and cracking of small arms, mingled at frequent intervals with the crash of a cannon or the screech of a flying shell. Now and then, as one of the missiles struck near by, there was a deafening explosion.

“Oh, if we could only be out there fighting!” Bob cried, hoarsely. “Havelock has advanced through the town and is almost at the palace. He is forcing his way in. What a terrific firing they keep up. And hark! I’m sure I heard a British bugle.”

“I heard it, too,” exclaimed Guy. “This is awful! awful! To think how close the rescuers are! Father, is there no hope? Don’t you believe we can be saved?”

Mr. Mottram shook his head sadly.

“Every step that the English advance brings us nearer to the end,” he replied. “The Nana will not forget us, be assured of that. When he finds that he can no longer hold the palace he will send his butchers to slay us, as he did with the women and children in the brick house at Cawnpore—”

“Listen, they are coming now!” Bob interrupted, turning suddenly pale.

The lad was right. Footsteps were heard pattering along the outer corridor of the dungeon floor. They halted before the door and with a jangling noise a key was thrust into the lock and turned. Screech! back the door rolled on its rusty hinges.



## CHAPTER XXXVII

The horror of that brief moment is beyond the power of words to describe, for the prisoners confidently expected to see a band of armed executioners sent by the Nana. Imagine their delight and relief when they saw instead the familiar figure of Jewan.

With a low cry of joy the faithful Hindoo darted into the cell. He hurriedly embraced Guy and Bob, pushed them aside, and knelt at the feet of Mr. Mottram. "My master, my dear master!" he exclaimed in trembling tones. "Brahma be praised that my eyes behold you again!"

Mr. Mottram was no less affected, and he found difficulty in speaking. "Rise up," he said, huskily. "Don't kneel to me, Jewan—you, who have been true to your salt when all others failed. A lifetime will not suffice to repay all you have done for me and mine. May God reward you, for I never can!"

"Duty is its own reward," Jewan answered, religiously, "and I am the Sahib Mottram's servant." He rose quickly to his feet, and a great bunch of keys jingled in his hand. "Come," he added, "there is not a moment to lose if we would be saved—if we would escape the sworn vengeance of the Nana."

"But how did you get here?" demanded Guy. "Where are you going to take us?"

"And Mary Brydon!" cried Bob. "Will she be saved, too?"

"We shall hasten now to release the mem-sahib," Jewan replied; "she is not far away. But come, sahibs—we are in great danger here. I will tell all when we have reached a safer place."

Without further words, Mr. Mottram and the lads hurried from the cell, and on looking up and down the gloomy corridor they were relieved to see that no foes were in sight. Jewan locked the door and thrust the keys into a fold of his cummerbund. From the same receptacle he took three pistols and handed one to each of his companions.

"We may need them," he muttered. "They are repeating weapons and contain five cartridges. I have one for myself. And now, forward, sahibs; and may

Brahma lend us speed!”

They darted along the stone-walled passage, hearing above them a confused clamor and the incessant roar of cannons and crackle of musketry. Here and there a glass-covered grating overhead allowed a grayish light to filter through.

Two turns were made and then the Hindoo paused before a dungeon door. In vain he tried no less than five keys, but the sixth fitted the lock. There was a rasping turn, the door swung open, and with a low and eager cry Mary Brydon tottered forward to the threshold of the cell—pitifully thin, clothed almost in rags, and with such a look of suffering on her face that her friends scarcely [*sic*] recognized her.

Guy and Bob eagerly wrung her hands and Mr. Mottram impulsively took her in his arms and kissed her. “My poor girl!” he whispered, hoarsely. “My poor girl! What you must have suffered! But you are safe now, I trust.”

For a moment Mary wept softly and her slim form quivered with sobs of joy. Then she slipped herself resolutely from Mr. Mottram’s arms. “We are not safe yet,” she said—“not until we are out of this awful place. I am brave now—I can walk. Let us go quickly.”

Jewan had already closed and locked the cell and was waiting anxiously for his companions to start. He led them on at once, and they had gone but twenty yards along the corridor when they heard above the din of firing outside, other and more alarming noises at a closer distance—a rush of many feet and a burst of shrill and fiendish yells.

Mary trembled slightly and caught hold of Mr. Mottram’s arm. Guy and Bob looked at each other in silent horror.

“Kunwar Singh and his butchers are coming, sahibs,” declared Jewan. “They have stumbled on the body of the jailer, whom I slew and found his keys to be missing. Already they have reached the first cell and discovered its emptiness by looking through the wicket. That is why they yell so fiercely—they are now approaching the mem-sahib’s cell.”

“There is time to escape them,” exclaimed Mr. Mottram. “Lead the way, Jewan.”

“We must hide, sahibs—it is our only chance,” the Hindoo answered. “That was

the plan I had in mind from the first. It is impossible to get safely out of the palace as yet. We must lie hid until the English soldiers arrive.”

“But where?” cried Bob. “You know the place—we don’t.”

“Sahibs, I will do my best,” said Jewan. “Come!”

On they dashed, making as little noise as possible. Mary ran as fleetly as the rest, displaying great bravery and coolness under such trying circumstances. The clamor in the rear grew louder, but the pursuing ruffians were still invisible when the fugitives reached the end of the main corridor they were following.

Here they turned to the left, into a passage nearly as wide, and after proceeding twenty yards Jewan turned again to the left, this time into a dark and narrow gallery. He led them on for a short distance and then stopped with a low cry.

“What is the matter?” demanded Mr. Mottram.

“I took the wrong turn,” the Hindoo answered. “The passage ends here—there is no outlet.”

“Then we must retrace our steps,” exclaimed Guy. “Quick! While there is time.”

“Sahibs, they are coming,” Jewan whispered. “Remain here and make no sound for your lives.”

The Hindoo was right. To go back now would be madness, since the pattering feet and shrill voices were close at hand. The fugitives crouched together in the darkness, scarcely daring to hope that the butchers would pass their hiding place. With intense and painful interest they riveted their eyes on the end of the narrow passage, where a flood of light entered from a grating overhead.

Nearer and louder rang the clamor, and suddenly the pursuers came in sight—a dozen burly wretches in colored tunics, led by Kunwar Singh, and all armed with naked tulwars alone. They glanced carelessly into the side passage, but did not stop. With ferocious shouting they surged on down the main corridor and their footsteps and voices faded in the distance.

“Thank God!” whispered Mr. Mottram. “They have passed us by. What are we to do next, Jewan?”

“We will wait here a little while,” replied the Hindoo. “We would go back by the way we came, but in that direction I hear sounds. Some of the evil dogs may have remained behind the rest to search the side passages.”

“Then you think we are safe here for the present?” asked Guy.

“As safe as in any other hiding place we might find under the palace,” Jewan answered. “Kunwar Singh and those with him will first seek thoroughly for us below ground, and then they will go above, thinking that we escaped to the courts. By that time the English soldiers may have entered the palace—the firing is much nearer.”

“Yes, that’s true,” assented Mr. Mottram. “The attacking force seems to be close to the gates. God speed the brave fellows and bring them to our aid !”

“But how many are coming, Jewan?” inquired Bob. “What has been going on during the last couple of days, and how did you happen to be here to save us? Tell us all.”

“So far as I can answer your questions briefly, that will I do,” the Hindoo replied. “It is but natural, sahibs, that you should wish to know, even in such a time of peril. There was a great battle the day before yesterday, and General Havelock defeated the Nana’s army and took Cawnpore. The rebels fell back upon Bithoor, and here they were followed last evening by a force sent by Havelock under the command of a brave sahib officer named Major Stephenson. There was hard fighting in the native town until midnight, and then the English soldiers retired. At dawn the attack began again, and seeing there was no hope the Nana fled, leaving behind a small force who were to hold the palace as long as they could. And that will not be long now, sahibs.”

“I hope not,” replied Guy. “This is glorious news, Jewan.”

“Glorious indeed,” said Mr. Mottram. “So the first decisive check has been given to this terrible mutiny! And where have you been, Jewan, since you lost the lads that day?”

“By the mercy of Brahma I was among the few who were left here to guard the palace,” the Hindoo answered. “In vain did I watch for a chance to save you, sahibs, until this morning at sunrise. Then, knowing that the Nana had fled and that Kunwar Singh had orders to slay you as soon as the English drew nearer, I

got within the palace by craft. I had previously learned that the mem-sahib was on the dungeon floor, and having crept down unseen, I found and slew the jailer who had the keys. The loaded pistols I procured in the outer court.”

Mr. Mottram impulsively caught Jewan’s hand and wrung it warmly. “We owe our rescue to your daring and faithfulness, my brave fellow,” he said. “If it pleases God to save our lives you shall never—”

He stopped suddenly, and at the same instant all heard a tumult swelling through the corridors. Nearer and louder rang scurrying feet and savage voices.

“They are coming back,” cried Mary. “It is too late to escape—they will find us here and kill us.”

“Yes, they are returning,” muttered Bob; “and now they’ll search every nook and corner. What chance have we, Jewan?”

“There is still hope, sahibs,” whispered the Hindoo. “We must leave this shelter at once and try to reach the flat roof of the palace. There is a way up from the north tower, and from the top we can hold it with our pistols. Also we can make signals to the English soldiers, who seem now to be at the outer court.”

“Yes, the firing is very near,” exclaimed Mr. Mottram. “Lead on, Jewan—quick! They are close by.”

No time was lost. With pistols in hand the little party dashed to the end of the passage, and turned sharply to the right. Through the main corridor they pushed on a run, driving before them a couple of frightened servants of the palace, who yelled loudly at every stride. Of course this outcry was heard and understood by the pursuers in the rear, and now the ferocious clamor of Kulwar Singh and his butchers added to the din.

The fugitives did not lose heart. Cheered by the terrific rattle of musketry close outside they pressed on. They overtook the two servants, and Mr. Mottram felled one with the butt of his pistol. The other was seized by Jewan and flung head first against the wall.

“Faster! faster!” shouted Bob. “They are coming!”

“This way, sahibs!” cried Jewan. As he spoke he lifted Mary in one of his strong

arms and turned sharply to the right.

With bloodthirsty cries ringing in their ears the fugitives dashed for fifty feet along the corridor and then up a flight of steps. There were double doors at the top, and through these they burst into a small courtyard paved with greenish marble, and with a splashing fountain in the middle. To the right and left rose the white, balconied walls of the palace, and from the farther end a tower stood up high above the roofs and turrets that surrounded it.

“Where are we?” demanded Mr. Mottram. “Do you know?”

“Sahibs, I am not sure,” Jewan answered, hoarsely. “It is possible I have lost my way, but I think yonder tower is the one we seek.”

“It has big iron doors,” cried Guy, “and I hope we will find them open. Come on!”

They sped across the marble pavement, but only to find a disappointment awaiting them. The iron doors were separate, being three feet apart, and both were locked.

“The keys!” shouted Mr. Mottram. “One will surely fit! Be quick!”

Jewan stood the girl lightly against the wall, and out came the jingling bunch from his cummerbund. “The butchers are coming, sahibs,” he cried as he inserted the first key. “Keep them back until I can open the door—if the right key be indeed here. Aim to kill and don’t miss.”

Even as he spoke Kunwar Singh and his bloodthirsty band surged up the steps from the dungeon floor and into the farther end of the little court. Seeing the fugitives at bay they held their ground for an instant. Their dusky faces were flushed with rage, and they screeched and howled like fiends.

Mary trembled with fright and crouched between Jewan and the door. But Mr. Mottram and the lads boldly confronted the enemy and took advantage of the pause to aim carefully.

“They have no firearms,” muttered Guy. “Pull trigger the instant they advance.”

“Make every shot tell,” said Mr. Mottram. “Make haste with the door, Jewan,”

he added.

The suspense was prolonged for nearly half a minute, and meanwhile the rattle of musketry had increased and grown louder until it seemed to come from the very interior of the palace. Hearing this and seeing that their intended victims were armed, the ruffians still hung back.

“Dogs! cowards!” howled Kunwar Singh. “Why do ye delay? At the Feringhees—slay them, cut them down! Scatter their blood and bones on the ground!”

This exhortation had a speedy effect. Brandishing their tulwars and yelling hoarsely, the rabble sprang forward across the court. At once Mr. Mottram and the lads fired, and the very first to fall was Kunwar Singh. Guy’s well-directed bullet entered his brain, and his spasmodic leap in air ended with a headlong plunge into the fountain.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! Again and again the three fired. Down the wretches went, screaming with agony and spattering the stones with blood. In less time than it takes to tell six were dead or disabled, and now the survivors—still numbering a dozen—fell back a little.

“They’ll be at us again in a moment,” cried Mr. Mottram. “Hold your fire, lads.”

“The troops are in the palace!” shouted Guy, as hearty cheering was heard. “A little longer and we’ll be saved.”

Just then Jewan uttered a cry that had more of despair than joy in it, and when his companions glanced behind them they saw a startling sight. One of the iron doors was wide open, disclosing a huge apartment filled with kegs, bags and heaps of loose powder. It was the Nana’s magazine.

For an instant the fugitives utterly lost hope. They had but a few shots left, and they knew that the next rush would bring them to close quarters with the ruffians. Then a happy thought struck Bob, planting himself in the doorway he faced the foe.

“Back! back!” he cried, brandishing his pistol. “Come one step nearer and I’ll fire right into the loose powder on the floor of the magazine. I mean what I say—take warning in time!”

The lad's voice rang above the approaching din and tumult, and for an instant the fierce ruffians of the Nana's bodyguard—for such they were—seemed cowed and terrified. Several slipped to the rear and vanished.

Then a stalwart fellow in a scarlet cummerbund advanced nearer. "Forward, comrades!" he howled. "Let us die for the faith! If we perish the Feringhees will perish with us! Death to the infidel dogs!"

Stirred by the spirit of fanaticism, the ruffians loudly applauded their leader. They gathered more closely together and prepared to make a furious rush.

What would have happened had they succeeded in coming on, or whether Bob would really have kept his word, are some of the things that will never be known. For just as the maddened wretches were on the point of starting there was a great clamor on the left of the court, and through an arched doorway swept a column of men in the dear old British uniform. Cheering loudly, they charged on the rabble with drawn bayonets. Two or three managed to escape, but the rest were speedily hacked to pieces by the infuriated soldiers, who shouted to one another as they stabbed and thrust: "Remember the slaughter house at Cawnpore!"

Major Stephenson followed close behind the troops—a handsome man with a light beard. His uniform was ragged and dirty, his face black with powder grime, and the sword he held in his right hand was literally dripping with blood. But his voice as he eagerly greeted the little band of fugitives was the sweetest sound they had heard for many a day. They were safe at last, and it was little wonder that tears of joy dimmed Mr. Mottram's eyes or that Mary threw her arms around the gallant officer's neck. Guy and Bob embraced each other in their delight, and on Jewan's dusky face was a look of happiness that was too intense for words.

What afterward befell our young heroes during the progress of the great mutiny must be sought for by the reader in the chronicles of those dark days. And although no mention will be found by name of Guy Mottram and Bob Loftus, the stirring events in which they took part are fully related.

The taking of Cawnpore and the final destruction and blowing up of the Nana Sahib's palace at Bithoor are matters of history. Mary Brydon was sent down country to Calcutta, and when General Havelock shortly marched on to the capture of Lucknow, Mr. Mottram, Guy, Bob and Jewan were attached to his



invincible little army. After the first relief of that town they endured the horrors of the siege of the residency by Nana Sahib, until the second relief by Sir Colin Campbell on the 17th of November.

By this time Delhi had fallen, and all through India the English were regaining their lost power and prestige. But it required many months more of hard fighting and long marching to stamp out the lingering embers of the insurrection, and this cannot be said to have been finally accomplished until November of 1859, when the last force of rebels under arms was defeated and driven out of the province of Oudh. Among these was Nana Sahib himself. After evading pursuit for weeks he utterly disappeared, and to this day his fate is unknown.

All these things happened nearly forty years ago, and most of the actors in the great mutiny are in their graves, including Mr. Mottram, and his wife and the faithful Jewan. But Guy—now an elderly man with iron-gray hair—lives on the plantation beside the Kalli Nudda. He is a district magistrate of much popularity, with two sturdy boys of his own; and his wife's name was once Mary Brydon.

The commander of the military cantonments at Meerut is Lieutenant Robert Loftus, still called Bob by his intimates. His duties are not arduous, and his chief pleasure is to spin in a dogcart down the sandy shore of the Kalli Nudda to Guy's plantation. Then, when dinner is over and cigars are lighted, the two old friends will turn their steps instinctively to Jewan's grave by the bank of the river, and sitting side by side in the silvery moonlight they let their thoughts drift to the past. Out of the mist of years recollections crowd on recollections, and of all those memories they prize most highly that of the faithful Hindoo servant who was true to his salt, and whose heroic deeds are carved on the marble that lies above his last resting place.

THE END