

EAST and WEST

BY TALBOT MUNDY

• TALBOT MUNDY—WNU SERVICE

THE STORY THUS FAR

Captain Carl Norwood has been sent from his native England to the Kadur River district in India, along with his indispensable manservant, Moses O'Leary, soldier of fortune. Norwood's job is to survey the district to determine whether a valuable secret diamond mine belongs to the temple priests or to the ruler, the Maharajah of Kadur. Norwood calls on the British Residency to pay his initial respects. On his way he catches a glimpse of two women in a palace carriage, one of whom is young and beautiful. The other woman he knows to be the Maharane, of Kadur. O'Leary later tells him that the young woman is an American girl named Lynn Harding, who with her aunt, Mrs. Deborah Harding, is a guest at the palace. On a sightseeing tour Mrs. Harding sprains an ankle, and sends to the palace for aid. Prince Rundhia, handsome, spoiled nephew of the rulers, comes to her rescue, and takes her back to the palace where he meets Lynn. At a banquet that night in the palace, attended by Captain Norwood, Mrs. Harding takes one of the native doctor's pills, and becomes violently ill.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

Lynn laughed: "That's a testimonial for me! But thank you, I'll take care of Auntie."

"No," said the doctor. He caught Rundhia's eye. Rundhia came to his rescue and made signals to the Maharane, who wanted nothing better than to have Lynn under her own roof.

"Lynn, dear, please do as the doctor tells you. Please, please."

Auntie groaned and protested that it was a shame to inflict Lynn on the Maharane, but she was overruled. She was carried out on an improvised litter and rushed to the guesthouse, where Lynn's belongings were collected by the servants and conveyed to the palace.

CHAPTER V

Rundhia was puzzled and Lynn knew it. She enjoyed it. It was cool and beautiful beneath the moonlit trees in the garden.

"You are the strangest mixture of intelligence and innocence that I have ever met," said Rundhia. "You are in love with all this. You are thrilled by the exotic strangeness. But it's all old stuff to me, remember. I'm a babe in the woods, too, in a certain sense. I'm as lost as you are. Things and places don't make life worth living. It's the people in the places, and the things they do together. If you loved me and I loved you—"

"But neither of us does," Lynn interrupted. "We are East and West. Europe delights you because you can't ever really understand it. And the East enraptures me for the same reason."

"So we've that much in common," said Rundhia. "Let me tell you something else we have in common. We like each other."

"Do we?"

"Yes. One would have to be blind, deaf, demented, not to like you. What's wrong with me?"

Lynn's defensive tactic was a thousand times more shrewd than Auntie would dream of giving her credit for:

"Well, for instance, why do you dislike Captain Norwood?"

"For the same reason that he doesn't like me," said Rundhia. "Cherchez la femme. Thank the father and mother who bred him, he's only an Engineer. If he were Cavalry, I might feel jealous. Lynn, I love you."

"How many women have you said that to?"

"Hundreds. But I lied to all the others."

"I have sometimes had to lie to Auntie. But I'm not nearly as practiced a liar as you must be. Let's be truthful."

"I am telling you the truth. I have always thought myself a cynic. I didn't know I had a heart until I met you. I have found and lost it in the same moment. It is yours. What will you do with it?"

His arm crept around her. He hardly knew how she slipped away from him. She waltzed away. She ran along the path, her arms extended to embrace the moonlit luxury of hue and view and perfumed flowers. By the time he overtook her, her retort was ready:

"Perhaps you don't like men with red hair?"

"I am looking," he answered, "at your hair. I want to bury my hands in it, bathe my face in it, breathe the—"

"Borax! I washed it and the water's terrible!"

She escaped him again. Her black pajamas vanished into shadow; she became a beautiful, disembodied head in a golden aureole that asked: "Is Captain Norwood married? I didn't ask him."

"Well, why didn't you ask him?"

"I didn't care."

"Good!" said Rundhia. "I'm going to make you care about something else. Come along. I'll behave. Come this way."

He led her up steps to the top of the ancient garden wall. There was

a summerhouse on the wall, a sort of kiosk; it had been swept and provided with cushions by a servant who crouched in shadow. Rundhia ordered the servant away. He went and lurked at the foot of the steps, but Rundhia shouted at him and he fled. Rundhia led Lynn into the open-sided kiosk.

"You have promised," she said, "to behave."

"Do you believe men's promises when they're in love? Are you as naive as that?"

"Yes. Don't be silly. Let us look at the view."

"Look at me."

His eyes were hardly less fiery than the glowing end of his cigarette. They made Lynn's flesh tingle. He threw away the cigarette.

"Lynn, you romantic girl, this scene enchants you because love has stolen on you unaware. Neither



"Hello!" he remarked.

of us until now has ever known what love is."

"Do you think you know now?" she retorted.

"You know I know it. You are cruel."

"I wish you'd sit farther away," she interrupted. "Why don't you make love to your own countrywomen?"

"There isn't in all India such a lovely girl as you are."

"How do you know? It's true, isn't it, that most of them are kept in seclusion and you're not allowed to see them? Is that why you make love to me? Why not burgle a zenana?"

"Lynn," he said, "I don't make love. I am love. And you also. We are love itself, as a musician becomes music. Why waste the glorious hours?"

"What do you know about music?" she retorted. "Can you sing Indian songs?"

"Yes, love songs! I play the guitar."

"You can? What fun! Why not get it? There couldn't be a more perfect place for singing than this garden wall in moonlight."

Rundhia sensed that he had cast his fly too boldly. She wasn't hooked. She needed more subtle persuasion. He shouted to the servant to fetch the guitar. There was no answer; the servant had taken him too strictly at his word, he was out of earshot. Rundhia shouted again and again. He swore under his breath. Then he governed his anger and smiled at Lynn:

"Will you wait here if I go and get it?"

"Yes, but—"

"What?"

"You look murderous. Don't whip the servant!"

His undercover man was waiting for him in the usual place, by the gate in the wall that separated the Maharajah's palace from Rundhia's—an unimportant-looking but pecu-

liarily unmeek Hindu, who spoke in a low voice without preliminary gestures of respect:

"The priests have learned of Captain Norwood's arrival. They sent me to speak with his Eurasian spy, O'Leary, who is a reptile. O'Leary has already detected the opening of the mine."

Rundhia thought swiftly, and spoke slowly: "Go and tell the priests that Captain Norwood is here to line his own pocket. Say he is in debt and seeks an opportunity to pay his debts. His secret report will be in favor of the highest bidder. But don't say you heard it from me. Say O'Leary was drunk and you heard it from him. Make it perfectly clear to the priests that any other officer than Norwood would be scrupulously fair, so let them think about it."

Then Rundhia found a servant in the garden of his own palace and sent him running to fetch the guitar.

The palace front gate clanged behind Norwood. The sullen sentry stood at ease, then easy and resumed his snooze. Norwood turned his horse along the road by the palace wall, riding slowly because the sals was following on foot. He had ridden about fifty yards to a curve in the road when O'Leary stepped forth from a shadow. He didn't look like O'Leary. He was wearing a turban, and dressed like a dripping wet, dirty Hindu of no caste or ostensible occupation. Norwood drew rein and listened, watching the road for pedestrians.

"I didn't stable the mare in the city. She's back in camp. I'll need her later."

"What for?"

"As soon as I'm dressed decent again, I'll go back to the bazaar. I told a yarn about coming back to camp for more money. I'm going to need it."

"What happened?"

"Plenty. I was right about Noor Mahlam. They've ditched him. So I did too. He was only ground bait. He talked too much, then tried to have me knifed to stop me talking. They'd a trap set for me and I walked straight into it. A woman. I'll tell you about her later; she'd fill a dictionary."

"Never mind about the woman. What happened?"

"Nothing happened there. It couldn't. I left your mare tied up to the veranda railing, military saddle and all, and your initials on the bridle. So they couldn't take chances. And I could. And I did."

"That's enough about you. What happened?"

"Kindergarten stuff. Confidence game. The woman's bully flattered me I knew the woman's sister in Lahore, and he said the woman's sister'd given me a rep for being smarter than most, and a man o' my word. Then he introduced me to the woman. She's all honey and poison. Sister my eye. Two words, and I knew she was lying about that."

"Never mind her lies, or whose sister she is. How much truth did she tell you?"

"Not much, barring that I'm the most exciting man she'd ever seen. She was true enough excited, so I knew the bully was listening in; and he weren't her proper bully neither; he was someone who'd been rung in on her, and she scared o' him and not used to his ways. She said there'd be a thousand rupees for me if I'd act discreet."

"Whose thousand rupees?" asked Norwood.

"Trust your Moses O'Leary. I asked her that quick. She said it was Prince Rundhia's thousand rupees. So I knew it wasn't."

"What does she want you to do?"

"She told me a mess o' lies about Prince Rundhia having quarrelled with the temple Brahmins, and him wanting to get back at 'em, to spite 'em. She told me, and I acted surprised, that there's a diamond mine in the temple area. There's a thousand rupees for me if I persuade you to run your survey line slap through the temple area, so that the mine will belong to the Maharajah instead of the temple priests."

"What did you tell her?"

"I said you're easy, but you're honest. I said I'll have to find some way of artfully deceiving you if you're to do what's needed. I said I'd have to look into it, and I made her tell me where the mine is and how to get a look at it. She came clean."

"How did she know?"

"She'd been told. And she was out of her depth already. She want-

ed word with the bully, and she tried to get me to stay where I was. But I thought of the bay mare standing outside in the alley, and she fidgety, and you fond o' the mare and liable to find fault with me if she should come to harm. And I guessed it 'ud be wise to look into the woman's story first."

"You'd better leave that woman and her bully guessing, and show me the mine. Where is it?"

O'Leary pointed: "Two hours from now, when the moon's about there, I can guide you to a place where you can see along under the apron of water."

"Very well, O'Leary. Which way did you come?"

"Short cut. Don't you try it. Horse might break a leg."

"All right, I'll follow the road. Meet me in camp."

O'Leary vanished. Norwood had ridden another fifty yards when he heard angry shouting, several times repeated. He wasn't sure, but he thought he also heard a girl's voice. He rode forward slowly and then, a bit alarmed by the ensuing silence, stirred his horse to a canter. He drew rein, looking upward at Lynn, not much more than two or three minutes after Rundhia had left her. She was sitting in full moonlight on top of the wall, on a cushion, with one foot hanging over the wall and her back against the kiosk.

"Hello!" he remarked. "Did Rundhia leave you all alone here?"

"He said he'd come back."

"Well, he'll keep that promise. How well do you know him?"

"I met him for the first time this evening."

"Like him?"

"Shouldn't I?"

"At your age, there is danger in exotic likes and dislikes."

"I'm twenty-two."

"You don't look it. I had guessed you as eighteen. However, no doubt you know how to take care of yourself among men of your own race. I'm taking it for granted that you're a nice girl with a sense of humor but a bit rebellious against certain sorts of restraint. All this is new, and you're enjoying it. You like the Indian setting, and the novelty and the moonlight and all that stuff."

"Don't you?"

"Yes. And I like you. I would not like to hear of you making a mess of your life for the sake of a spot of excitement. You don't understand India. You don't understand Rundhia."

A shadow moved. Someone chuckled:

"Doesn't she?"

Rundhia loomed on the wall with a guitar in his hand. He smiled down at Norwood. The moonlight shone on his teeth.

"We were reaching a beautiful understanding," said Rundhia. "Are you on your way to camp? Well, it's a grand night for a ride. Sorry you're tired and sleepy."

Norwood eased his horse a little nearer to the wall. He gave the reins to the sals. In another moment he was standing upright on the saddle, with his head within six inches of the top of the wall:

"I am not so sleepy as perhaps I look," he answered. "Give me a hand up, Rundhia."

Lynn watched. This was something altogether new in her experience. Rundhia hesitated. Moonlight betrayed him. Rundhia felt tempted to refuse. But he hadn't the iron. He could have scared the horse and made Norwood look ridiculous. But he hadn't the nerve. Lynn felt sorry for him. With a shrug he handed the guitar to her, in order to use both hands to help Norwood scramble up the wall.

"You weren't invited," said Rundhia.

Norwood stared. "No. I noticed it. Can you strum on that thing?"

Lynn spoke with all the malice she could put into her voice:

"You like music, Captain Norwood? I supposed your line was engineering and ordering people about."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Fist Fight Encouraged Newton

Victory in a schoolboy scrap spurred Isaac Newton to scholastic honors. Before the fight he had been sluggish, indifferent in school. But with confidence born of the triumph with his fists, he set to work, soon led his class, notes a writer in the Washington Post. His mother tried to make a farmer out of him, taking him out of school at fifteen, but he was useless with a plow so was sent back to classes.

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

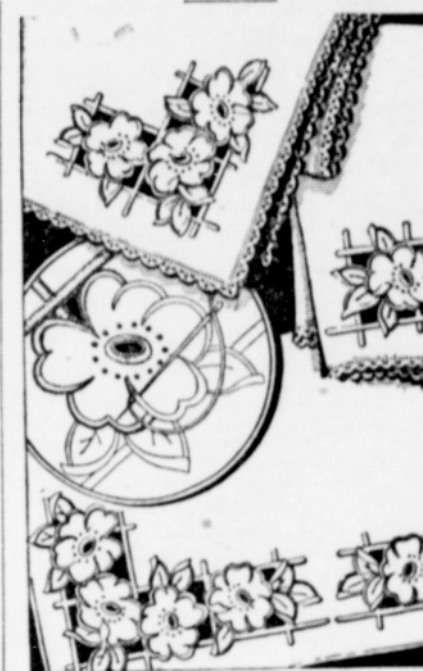


Read the labels on canned foods. Many tell the number of slices contained in the can. Others give additional useful information about the contents.

About Grapefruit.—A soft, discolored area at the stem end of a grapefruit indicates decay and decay, even in one small spot, will affect the flavor of the whole fruit.

Protect House Plants.—Drafts of cold air or night temperatures that approach freezing handicap house plants. It is best to remove them from windows for the night.

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Pattern 6300.

JUST a touch of this needlework adds distinction to linens. Do these motifs in a color to match the linen or in varied natural colors. They are just the thing for cloths, scarfs, towels and pillowcases. So replenish your linen closet with these and you'll be proud to show it. Pattern 6300 contains a transfer pattern of 16 motifs ranging from 2 1/4 by 2 1/4 inches to 2 1/2 by 8 inches; materials needed; color schemes.

To obtain this pattern, send 15 cents in coins to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 West 14th St., New York, N. Y.

Unforgivable Hypocrisy

The only vice that cannot be forgiven is hypocrisy. The repentance of a hypocrite is itself hypocrisy.—Hazlitt.

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