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## A Mystery of India

By GROVER J. GRIFFIN

This story was told me by a retired colonel of the British army. I do not vouch for it, but there are certain features about it that assure me that it is not altogether improbable.

Edgar Oldershaw, a lieutenant in an Irish regiment, went out to India with his command. He was a great favorite with the Indian people and mingled with them as much as if not more than with his own countrymen. So great was his influence upon them that before he was twenty-five he was given command of a native battalion.

Oldershaw fell in love with a Eurasian girl, the daughter of an Englishwoman and an Indian nabob. She had been brought up under Indian influences; but, being of two races, it was easy for her to incline to either. Nevertheless she was more Indian than European. One thing was certain—that she was a very handsome girl, a fascinating creature, combining European manners with that peculiar mysticism pervading all India.

Oldershaw married the girl, but within a few weeks after the marriage began to look pale and thin. The surgeons of the British army could not make out what was the matter with him. He was a man of excellent constitution, temperate in his habits, and so far as could be detected, each one of his organs was in a healthy condition. Nevertheless he seemed to be under the influence of some disease.

Some of his European friends were inclined to believe that his wife was holding him under a spell. But there was no evidence of this. Indeed, Mrs. Oldershaw seemed to be very much troubled about his condition. The only reason that his friends had for considering her to be a possible cause for this condition was that her English mother had died a few months after the daughter's birth, and her death had never been satisfactorily explained. This was no reason at all. It merely indicated that Europeans had no faith in Indians.

Oldershaw was a long while ailing. Some one noticed that whenever he was ordered off on some service where his wife could not go with him he gradually recovered his health and that when he returned to her he relapsed into his former condition. This was talked about among Oldershaw's army associates, or, rather, their wives, but no one had the courage to speak of it to the colonel. A friend suggested to the invalid's medical adviser to bring the matter before him, but the surgeon politely declined.

Colonel Oldershaw lived a year after his marriage, then died, having gradually succumbed to some influence, weakness or mental trouble. No one could give any definite cause for his death. An autopsy was ordered, and tests were made for poison, but without throwing any light as to the cause of his death. This exonerated his wife, if indeed she needed exoneration, for every one who knew her intimately declared that she sincerely mourned her husband and was especially anxious that the cause of his strange illness should be determined.

Two years after this the Widow Oldershaw married an American, one Edmond Baxter, a business man of Calcutta. No one expected that she would long remain single, for she was only twenty-one at the time of Oldershaw's death, and besides being beautiful she was rich.

A month after his marriage Baxter went to America on important business. It was said, leaving his wife in Calcutta. He never returned. Of course after awhile tongues began to wag, people wondering if he might not have discovered the secret of his predecessor's death. Be this as it may, he remained in America, while his wife lived in India. No one ever heard of any divorce between the two, but Mrs. Baxter did not take another husband till news came from America, nine years after her second marriage, that her husband had died of an ordinary disease.

The widow was still a handsome woman, not much over thirty and rich. Time had somewhat erased the early reports of some malign influence upon the men she married. She took a third husband, this time an Indian. He lived six years, when he died a perfectly natural death—at least, so read the certificate.

It seems that a young assistant surgeon of a British regiment, hearing of the case of Colonel Oldershaw, resolved to hunt up an explanation of the mystery. How he learned what he did would take too long to tell. When a little girl, her mother having died, the subject of this story fell to the care of a woman who made a poison girl of her—that is, she gave the child small doses of poison, increasing them till she could bear to take a large quantity and her breath was poisonous to another. The outrage had been discovered and stopped, but not before the child had partially become infected.

Each of the cases pertaining to her husbands was then accounted for. When she became the wife of Colonel Oldershaw the poison she had taken was effective. When she married a second time it had largely passed away. Quite likely, by the time she married the Indian it had died out altogether.

That there are persons in India who have become poison proof by taking small and increasing doses is a fact, but whether they can infect others I do not know.

### NOTHING MAY BE VERY FUNNY.

Weedon Grossmith Proved It to Henry Irving's Satisfaction.

In "From Studio to Stage" Weedon Grossmith tells us of his invitation to play Jacques Strop to Henry Irving's Robert Macaire. He says it took his breath away. Irving told him that he had received good reports of the young actor from Booth and Jefferson in America and arranged to pay him £10 a week if that would be enough.

"I didn't tell him that I would have played the part for nothing and have willingly given a premium to have done so (if I had had the premium). I positively received £10 a week to be instructed in the art of acting by the greatest actor of our time! It was worth hundreds to me both from an artistic and a business point of view. The pains and trouble Irving took with every one over the slightest detail were remarkable. I admit he was very trying at times, especially when I was doing something quietly humorous—or, rather, nothing—and he would gaze on me very solemnly and say, 'That's not funny, my boy. You must do something funny there.'

"I proved to him, however, on the first night that sitting perfectly still on the staircase looking the picture of misery was decidedly funny; at least the audience thought so—so much so that the great chief said to me afterward, 'What were you doing on the staircase that made the audience laugh so much?'

"'Nothing,' I replied.  
"'All right, my boy; do it again,' he answered."

### DEAD AIR IN THE LUNGS.

When You Yawn You Expel It, So Don't Be Afraid to Yawn.

With ordinary breathing the lungs are not completely filled with air, nor are they entirely emptied every time you exhale during natural respiration. This leaves a quantity of dead air in the lungs, generally away down in the lower lobes. This is called "residual" air, and after it stays there awhile and becomes foul nature casts about for some means to make you get rid of it. The yawn is the thing, so nature makes you yawn. You open your mouth to its fullest extent, throw back your head, strain with the back muscles of the jaw, and you can then feel your lungs move as they force out all the foul air and take in fresh. In this manner are the lungs actually ventilated.

Yawning also ventilates the air passages in the mouth, throat and upper portion of the chest leading to the lungs. And again yawning is really an aid to hearing.

The cracking sound which you so often hear when giving an extra big yawn is due to the stretching and opening of the eustachian tubes. These tubes communicate between the ears and the back of the throat. If they are congested, which happens when you have a bad cold in the head, people complain of deafness.

If you feel inclined to yawn then do so. It is nature's way of cleaning out your lungs and air passages.—New York American.

### Curing Wood.

Wood has contagious diseases! A sick of wood in a lumber yard may be sick and infect other timbers, which later may develop the disease when they are supporting great weights in a new building. Some of the diseases are so contagious that in a building they will jump several feet across masonry or brick to some stick of healthy wood. Cures have been discussed by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Most of the diseases are varieties of dry rot caused by fungus, and most of the varieties of the dry rot fungi cannot stand heat much over 100 degrees, so the most likely cure is to close a building up tight, if any beams are infected, and heat it up to 120 or 140 degrees. Even this is not always successful, for ends of beams are buried in the outer brick walls, and the heat may not reach them.—Exchange.

### Called.

"Tillie," he said, "I had a strange dream the other night. I dreamed that I started to say something to a certain pretty girl and she stopped me. 'No, George,' she said, 'you mustn't tell me you love me—not yet, anyway. Wait till I weigh 133 pounds!'

"One hundred and thirty-three pounds!" exclaimed the lovely maiden to whom he was telling his dream. "Why, George, that's exactly what I weigh!"

What could George do, even with his story unfinished, but fess up!—Chicago Tribune.

### Sharpens Scissors.

Hold a needle firmly by the head between the thumb and first finger and with the scissors in the right hand cut back and forth on the needle, as though trying to cut the needle in two. After several cuttings the scissors will be found very sharp.—National Magazine.

### Both Sides.

First Commuter—It's a perfect little gem. It has been the ambition of my life to buy a nice little place in the country. Second Commuter—Well, I once felt that way myself. At present it's the ambition of my life to sell a nice little place in the country.—Puck.

### The Flax Expert.

Parvencu (going over his estate with his steward)—The flax is very short this year. Seem to me they will only be able to make children's shirts with it. Flaxcende Blatter.

If there were no clouds we would not enjoy the sun.—Old Saying.

## BOMBA

By MARGARET BARR

Hollingsworth had views as to industrial questions, financial matters and principles of government. He read the newspapers regularly and was much interested in strikes and methods used as auxiliaries. He lived on a street at the end of which was a large mill property and when one day a strike was declared did a great deal of talking as to the merits of the case. At first he took sides with the strikers, but when they became somewhat militant he changed about and favored the mill owners. Nothing pleased him so well as to go out into the street where knots of people were discussing the situation and make it all clear to those who were disposed to listen to him.

One day while he was thus showing a party of strikers just where they were wrong and how easy it would be to set themselves right his wife, who was at the window, noticed—that he was ignorant of—that he was rubbing his listeners the wrong way. Instead of benefiting by his diplomatic advice their scowls indicated that they were considering him an enemy. His wife beckoned him to come into the house. He obeyed and received a scolding for his rashness.

Two or three days after this, when Mr. Hollingsworth came home from business in the evening, as soon as he opened the door he was greeted by a plaintive wail.

"Oh, Fred!"  
"For heaven's sake, what is it, darling?"

"Why did you talk so to those Italians?"  
"What have they done?"  
"Left a bomb at the back door."  
"You don't mean it?"  
"Oh, I'm so glad you've got home! I've been afraid it would go off before you came."

"Why didn't you telephone the police?"

"I didn't know what to do. The bomb was left about half an hour ago. Susan came upstairs and told me that she had found it at the back door just inside the shed."

"What did she say she found?"  
"A basket. How she knew it was a bomb was that she heard a grating sound like rusty machinery. She didn't wait to hear any more, but came right upstairs to me and told me about it."

"I'll have a look at it."  
"Oh, don't go near it! Please don't!" Notwithstanding this appeal, Mr. Hollingsworth went through the kitchen to the back door. His wife caught him by the collar and held him to prevent his examining it. Making a virtue of necessity, he stopped and listened. There was a succession of small sounds which Mr. Hollingsworth attributed to the moving of some mechanism.

"Do come away!" cried his wife, tugging at his coat-tail.  
"There's something going inside, but I can't make out what it is," said the husband.

The top of the basket was covered with a thin woolen cloth, and at that moment the latter was raised as if something were passing under it.

"By Jove," exclaimed Hollingsworth, "it looks as if the mechanical contrivance underneath were rubbing against the cover—a concentric wheel, maybe."

Mrs. Hollingsworth shrieked and dragged her husband back into the hall. The occasion of her action was a tiny puff as if a few grains of gunpowder had exploded.

"This is all nonsense," said the head of the house. "I'm going to make an examination."

At this Mrs. Hollingsworth slammed the kitchen door and locked it. For some time no threats or pleadings would induce her to open it, but finally she gave way, and the door was opened. The cover of the basket had been pushed off, and a pair of baby legs were mingled in confusion, the cover being wrapped around the legs, which were kicking in a lively manner.

"By thunder!" exclaimed Hollingsworth. "It's a baby!"

"The dear little thing!" cried the wife as she ran toward a child a few weeks old lying on its back, its chubby fists crammed in its mouth and making all sorts of noises, from the turning of a rusty cogwheel to the crowling of a young rooster. The explosion they had heard was an infantile sneeze.

"Lucky we didn't send for the police," said the husband, "till we found out what it was. They would have laughed at us. What in the world are we going to do with it?"

"I'm going to keep it," said the wife. "Going to keep it?"  
"Certainly."

The couple, having been married four years without children, had begun to think that they would never have any born to them, and after a good deal of discussion it was decided to take the little stranger in and give it a home. Being a girl, they called her Bomba, which is the Spanish for a bomb.

Mr. Hollingsworth is still interested in the labor problem, but is more cautious in the expression of his opinions to the laborer. True, his experience with a bomb did not turn out as dreadful as he expected, but it taught him a lesson as to the danger of being a little Bomba has been adopted by the Hollingsworths and, strange to say, is beginning to take great interest in labor questions.

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