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## The Man Who Would Be King

Continued from last issue

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a king. We shall go to those parts and say to any king we find: 'Do you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men, for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that king and seize his throne and establish a dynasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. Are you at all in earnest?"

"A little," said Dravot sweetly. "Now, as big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I unpeeled the big thirty-two miles to the inch map of India and two smaller frontier maps, hauled down volume I of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts' army. We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak, through Laghmann territory; then we get among the hills—14,000 feet—15,000. It will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I smoked while the men pored over Raverty, Wood, the maps and the Encyclopaedia.

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot politely. "It's about 4 o'clock now. We'll go before 6 o'clock if you want to sleep, and we won't steal any of the papers. When we've got our kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a contract like that?" asked Carnehan with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of note paper on which was written the following. I copied it then and there as a curiosity:

This contract between me and you perusing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

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

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

Three.—That we conduct ourselves with dignity and discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.

Signed by you and me this day,  
Peachey Tallaferra Carnehan  
Daniel Dravot.

Both Gentlemen at Large.

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "contract." "Be sure to come down to the Serai tomorrow to say goodby, were their parting words.

The Kumbarsen Serai is the great four square sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the north load and unload. In the afternoon I went down there to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying about drunk.

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

"The priest is mad," said a horse dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the ameer. He will either be raised to honor or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"From Roum have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirrigig—"From Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! Who will take the protected of God to the north to sell charms that are never still to the amir? Ho! Hazar Mir Khan," he

yielded to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt and, turning round to me, cried, "Come, thou, also, sahib, a little along the road and I will sell thee a charm, an amulet that shall make thee king of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road, and the priest halted.

"What d'you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawar till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the ameer, O Lord! Put your hand under the camel bags and feel me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini and an other and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot phlegmily. "Twenty of 'em and ammunition to correspond under the whirrigigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things," I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."

"Fifty or hundred rupees of capital, every rupee we could lay borrow or steal are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khalber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest? Good by." And he gave me his hand cautiously.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in the Serai attested that they were complete to the native mind.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawar, wound up his letter with, "There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty goods and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the ameer of Bokhara."

The two, then, were beyond the border. I would have prayed for them, but that night a real king died in Europe and demanded an obituary notice.

### PART II.

THE wheel of the world swings through the same phases. Summer passed, and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night issue and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. At 3 o'clock I cried, "Print off!" and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

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

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

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whisky. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated. "And I was the king of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting

there and giving us the books. I am Peachey—Peachey Tallaferra Carnehan, and you've been sitting here ever since—oh, Lord! Poor, poor, Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whisky," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at me," said Carnehan.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said at a venture. "To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan?"

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. That was in a most mountainous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall as a back, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan."

"Take some more whisky," I said very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Tallaferra Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirrigig that you can sell to the ameer."

"And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot, 'For the Lord's sake let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off.' And with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing, 'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man, 'If you are rich enough to buy you are rich enough to rob.' But before ever he could put his hand to his knife Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountainous parts and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove mules through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat."

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremendous. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the guns: 'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men.' And with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men and drops one of them at 200 yards from the rock where we was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the

To be continued.