

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING
ADVENTURE

MOTOR
FICTION

NO. 27
AUG. 28, 1909

FIVE
CENTS

MOTOR MATT'S
ENGAGEMENT

OR ON THE ROAD
WITH A SHOW



STREET & SMITH
PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

Motor Matt, as he coasted the last ounce of speed from the motor, shouted encouragingly to the terrified girl on the trapeze.

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On The Road With a Show

By Stanley R Matthews

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THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

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Motor Matt's Engagement

OR,

ON THE ROAD WITH A SHOW

CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER I. "ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH."</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>CHAPTER II. IN THE CALLIOPE TENT</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>CHAPTER III. AN EAVESDROPPER.</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>CHAPTER IV. QUEER PROCEEDINGS.</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>CHAPTER V. MOTOR MATT PROTESTS.</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>CHAPTER VI. ABLAZE IN THE AIR.</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>CHAPTER VII. WAS IT TREACHERY?</u>	<u>49</u>
<u>CHAPTER VIII. A CALL FOR HELP.</u>	<u>56</u>
<u>CHAPTER IX. BLACK MAGIC.</u>	<u>63</u>
<u>CHAPTER X. THE MAHOUT'S FLIGHT.</u>	<u>70</u>
<u>CHAPTER XI. THE PAPER TRAIL.</u>	<u>77</u>
<u>CHAPTER XII. CARL TURNS A TRICK.</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIII. THE LAQUERED BOX.</u>	<u>92</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIV. THE HYPNOTIST'S VICTIM.</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>CHAPTER XV. "FOR THE SAKE OF HAIDEE!"</u>	<u>105</u>
<u>CHAPTER XVI. THE RAJAH'S NIECE.</u>	<u>112</u>
<u>SAVED BY A FALLING TREE</u>	<u>121</u>
<u>HOW THEY CAPTURED THE PYTHON</u>	<u>125</u>
<u>ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY</u>	<u>129</u>

CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

Motor Matt King.

Joe McGlory, a young cowboy who proves himself a lad of worth and character, and whose eccentricities are all on the humorous side. A good chum to tie to—a point Motor Matt is quick to perceive.

Ping, a Chinese boy who insists on working for Motor Matt, and who contrives to make himself valuable, perhaps invaluable.

Carl Pretzel, an old chum who flags Motor Matt and more trouble than he can manage, at about the same time. In the rôle of detective, he makes many blunders, wise and otherwise, finding success only to wonder how he did it.

Ben Ali, an elephant driver; a Hindoo gifted in the arts for which his country is famous and infamous. The uncle of Margaret Manners, he revenges himself upon his brother, the rajah, in a way that proves his own undoing.

Aurung Zeeb, another elephant driver, and a friend of Ben Ali, assisting in his scoundrelly work.

Haidee, whose real name is Margaret Manners, a girl from India, who becomes the hypnotic subject of Ben Ali, and is saved from him by Motor Matt and Carl.

Boss Burton, manager and proprietor of the Big Consolidated Shows. A man who tries to be "square," in his own remarkable way.

CHAPTER I.

“ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH”.

Strange, how a few harmless ingredients, thrown together and mixed, will set the trouble pot a-boiling.

Salt-peter is an innocent and useful product, and so is charcoal and sulphur; but seventy-five per cent. of the first, fifteen per cent. of the second, and ten per cent. of the third, when properly mixed, will make gunpowder—an explosive that has slain millions, made kingdoms over into republics, and changed the map of the world again and again.

So, on this beautiful morning, with the banks of the Wabash River for a setting, fate was juggling with a few trifling elements for the purpose of combining them and manufacturing trouble.

The Big Consolidated Shows were pitching their tents near that part of the river, and two of the ingredients that helped form the dangerous mixture were connected with the "tented aggregation."

One was the big elephant, Rajah, who had a tremendous thirst and was wabbling along toward the river for a drink; the other was a Chinese boy, dipping a couple of pails of water from the stream for the steam calliope. The third element—the one having no connection with the show—was a German youth with a weakness for bursting into song.

The elephant, dryer than the desert of Sahara, was making big and rapid tracks for the brightly gleaming water, the Chinaman was leisurely filling his pails, and the German was strolling along the bank, dusty from a long tramp and with a stick over his shoulder from which swung a bundle bound up in a knotted

handkerchief.

If the German had known how to sing he would not have attracted the attention of the Chinaman; and if the Chinaman had not looked and grunted his disgust, the German would not have become hostile; and if Rajah, the elephant, had not possessed such a playful disposition, the German and the Chinaman would probably have separated with no more than a few mongrel words of personal opinion. But fate was working overtime that day, and had an eye for weird combinations.

"Ach, der moon vas shining pright upon der Vabash,
From der fieldts dere comes some shmells oof new-
mown hay,
Droo der candlelight der sycamores vas gleaming,
On der panks oof der Vabash, righdt away!"

This was the German's song, and it sounded as though it had been played on a fish horn. The Chinaman could be seen to shiver as he deposited a pailful of water on the bank, straightened erect, and looked at the singer. There was that in his slant eyes which brought the German to a halt.

"Don'd you like der song, shink?" demanded the Dutchman, pushing out his chin in an irritating way.

"Woosh!" snorted the Chinaman, "you makee sing all same like poodle dog makee howl."

"Py shiminy," cried the Dutchman, "I fight pedder as I sing. I don'd let no monkey mit a pigdail make some foolishness mit me."

"Dutchy boy clazy," declared the Celestial.

"I nefer liked der shinks anyways," went on the other, dropping his stick and his bundle. "Dey vas

sheap skates, you bet you, und vas always taking away goot shobs from American fellers. I vill tie you oop in some bowknots mit your pigdail und trop you py der rifer. Yah, so."

"Dutchy boy makee spell 'able,'" and the Chinaman, with supreme contempt, picked up his empty pail.

"You peen afraidt mit yourseluf!" shouted the Dutchman.

"My plenty busy; makee cally water fo' calliope. No gottee time to fight. Come 'lound after palade, China boy makee Dutchy boy suppa' fo' lion."

"Dot's me," breathed the Dutchman, picking up his stick and bundle. "I'll be aroundt after dot barade, you bed my life, und I don'd make some subber for der lion, neider."

He started on slowly.

Unnoticed by either of the boys, the mahout on Rajah's neck had kept the elephant close to the river bank. The mahout was dozing, and Rajah was filling the piece of hose, more generally known as his trunk, with Wabash water and squirting it into his open mouth.

Now, Rajah was an eccentric elephant. There were times when he was full of mischief and playful, and other times when the wild jungle blood got the upper hand of him and he became dangerous.

On two or three occasions, when Old Ben, the African lion, had tried to mix things with the royal Bengal tiger, Rajah had been called in to separate the fighters with a well-directed stream, hurled with catapult force from his trunk.

Rajah's cunning little eyes had been taking in the quarrel between the Dutchman and the Chinaman.

Something prompted him to elevate his trunk and throw a stream after the retreating Dutch boy.

The lad was knocked off his feet, his stick going one way and his bundle the other. He jumped to his feet, spluttering, and whirled around.

Rajah was innocently squirting a dozen or more gallons of the river into his capacious throat, but the Chinaman, the empty pail still in his hand, was laughing so that he almost fell off the bank.

It was the most natural thing in the world for the Dutch boy, in the excitement of the moment, to lay the whole blame on the Chinese boy's shoulders.

The Dutchman had not seen Rajah use his trunk, and the Chinaman had. It was very laughable, and the Chinaman's cackling mirth was unrestrained.

The Dutchman saw only the empty bucket in the Chinaman's hand, and it seemed certain the deluge of water had come from the bucket.

"I gif you fits for dot, py shiminy!" whooped the Teuton.

"No can do!" declared the Celestial.

The Dutchman came on with a bound, his dripping clothes sprinkling everything in his vicinity.

The Chinaman threw the bucket. The other dodged. The bucket sailed on through the air and struck Delhi, Rajah's mate, a sharp rap on her big, fanning ear. Delhi trumpeted loudly and started furiously after the boys.

Both the Chinaman and the Dutchman, their faculties completely wrapped up in their quarrel, gave no attention to the elephants. Coming together like a thousand of brick, they clinched and wrestled back and forth on the bank.

Delhi, wild with anger, gave no heed to the fierce prodding of her mahout, but rushed onward, her trunk stretched eagerly ahead of her and twitching and curving in its desire to lay hold of the struggling youngsters.

For a second the prospect was very dark for the Teuton and the Celestial. What would have happened to them is problematical if Delhi had had her way. But the big brute was not allowed to work her will. Rajah interfered; not out of any desire to be of help to the boys, but rather to assist his mate in securing vengeance.

Quickly Rajah aimed his trunk and hurled a stream of water. The jet struck the two boys, lifted them from their feet, and hurled them into the river. The lads were tossed from the bank in just the nick of time. Hardly were they clear of the spot where they had been wrestling when Delhi's disappointed trunk swept over it.

Rajah's mahout, of course, had aroused himself, and he and the other man got busy bringing the elephants into subjection.

The Dutchman and the Chinaman had fallen into deep water. It was necessary to disentangle themselves from each other in order to swim and keep from being drowned.

As Delhi backed away from the water's edge, under the blows of her mahout's sharp, steel prod, she flung the Dutchman's bundle and stick at the thrashing forms in the water, and followed these with the buckets.

"I can do oop a shink mit vone hand," gurgled the Dutchman, as his dripping head appeared above the surface of the river; "aber ven a goople oof elephants iss rung indo der game, den I don'd— Wow!"

The handkerchief bundle, hurled with terrific force, struck him on the head and sent him under.

"Dutchy boy no good!" spluttered the Chinaman. "Him velly fine false alarm— Woosh!"

One of the buckets hit the Celestial in the small of the back and he vanished in a flurry of bubbles. When he and the Dutchman again reappeared, Delhi and Rajah were under control and no further danger threatened.

"What's the matter with you two kids?" cried Delhi's mahout, excited and angry.

"Der shink drew some vater on me," answered the Dutchman, "und made more monkey-doodle pitzness dan I vould shtand for."

"Him no savvy," declared the Chinese. "El'fant makee thlow water."

Rajah's mahout was a Hindoo. In a queer jargon of broken English, he described the way Rajah had hosed down the Dutchman as the latter was walking off.

The other mahout lost his wrath in a flood of merriment.

"It's all a mistake!" he called. "Come out o' the wet and stop your foolishness. If ye try to do any more fightin', I'll set Delhi onto you ag'in."

The Dutchman labored ashore with his stick and his bundle, and the Chinaman followed with his buckets.

"What do you s'pose Motor Matt would think of this, Ping?" went on the mahout. "If he—"

But what the mahout was intending to say was lost in a roar of amazement and delight from the Dutchman.

"Vat's dot? Modor Matt? Vere he iss, anyvay? Say, I

vas his bard, und I peen looking for him efery blace, longer as I can dell. Shpeak, vonce! Vere iss Modor Matt?"

"China boy Motol Matt's pard," spoke up the dripping Ping. "My workee fo' Motol Matt; Dutchy boy no workee."

"Py shiminy, I dell you some more dot I peen Carl Pretzel," shouted the Dutchman, "und dot I vas looking for der show, und ditn't know I would findt Modor Matt at der same dime. Vere iss he, misder?" and Carl appealed anxiously to the mahout.

"He's travelin' with the show, youngster," answered the mahout, "an' doin' a flyin'-machine stunt twice a day. If ye want to find him, hike for the show grounds."

Without paying any further attention to Ping or the elephants, Carl gathered in his cap—which lay at the water's edge, and was the only thing belonging to him that was not dripping wet—and laid a rapid course for the top of the bank.

Ping, filling the pails, started after Carl, worrying not a little over this new pard of Motor Matt's who had appeared so unexpectedly on the scene.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE CALLIOPE TENT.

"I don't like it, pard, and you can bet your moccasins on that," said Joe McGlory.

"There are a whole lot of things about this business I don't fancy," returned Motor Matt; "but we're under contract, Joe, and Boss Burton says he'll give us an extra fifty a week if we do the trick."

"But the girl! What's her notion about it? Hanging to a trapeze under the aëroplane isn't a stunt to be sneezed at."

"She's anxious to do the trick. She'll get fifty dollars a week for it, and the money looks good to her."

"There's the danger, pard. Her neck's worth more than fifty plunks a week."

"She's a little brick, that Haidee—pure grit. I'll see that she's not placed in much danger."

"You'll have your hands full looking after yourself and the aëroplane. Sufferin' whirligigs! You know how hard it is to manage the *Comet* when there's a weight suspended beneath."

"I can do it," declared Matt.

"Of course you can do, old socks—you can do anything when you set your mind to it. But, tell me this, what has that old elephant driver, Ben Ali, got to do with Haidee? Ben Ali's a Hindoo, and Haidee is almost as white as an American girl."

"Ben Ali's her uncle, Joe. Haidee's mother was Ben Ali's sister, and Haidee's father was an English officer living in Bombay. The girl told me all this yesterday at

the time she begged me to do what Boss Burton wanted and let her trail the *Comet* aloft on the trapeze."

"Funny combination," muttered Joe.

McGlory was in his overclothes, and had just finished getting the aëroplane ready for the parade. The "animal top"—that is, the menagerie tent—had been hoisted, and the small canvas lean-to that housed the steam calliope had been put in place alongside. The calliope was not in the lean-to, but was out on the grounds, being put in shape for the parade.

Matt and Joe usually came to the calliope tent to make themselves ready for the street procession. They, together with Ping, had been three weeks with the Big Consolidated, Matt making ascensions in the aëroplane twice daily, following the parade and just before the evening performance—wind and weather permitting. So proficient had Matt become in handling the flying machine that nothing short of a stiff gale or a hard rain kept him from carrying out his engagements for a double exhibition each day.

The aëroplane had caught the popular fancy, and had proved the biggest kind of a card for Boss Burton, proprietor of the show. Under its own motive power, the machine formed a star feature of the parade, traveling slowly on the bicycle wheels which were necessary in giving it a start when flights were made.

From tip to tip, the wings of the aëroplane measured more than thirty feet. Of course it could not travel in the parade with such a stretch of surface across the streets, so Matt had arranged the bicycle wheels in such a manner that the *Comet* moved sideways in the procession, the king of the motor boys, his cowboy pard, and his Chinese comrade occupying positions in the seats on the lower wing.

When Matt and his friends first joined the outfit, Boss Burton had supplied them with bespangled apparel, which, if they had worn it, would, according to McGlory, have made them "a holy show."

Matt and McGlory balked at the glittering costumes, but Ping had hung to his beadwork and gilt trimmings with a fierce determination there was no shaking.

McGlory compromised with Burton by getting into a swell cowboy rig, but for Matt there was no such thing as compromise. This engagement with the show was purely a business proposition, and he refused to make a spectacle out of himself. He looked well, too, in his unostentatious blue cap and clothes, and was given many a cheer as the aëroplane pitched and shivered along in the procession.

Boss Burton was a shrewd manager, and it was said that he lay awake nights while section two of the show train was making its jumps between stands, thinking up new acts that would thrill the patrons of the Big Consolidated. His last idea was to hitch a trapeze to the bottom of the aëroplane, and have Haidee, Ben Ali's pretty niece, perform on the flying bar while Matt was manœuvring the *Comet* over the show grounds.

It was this new wrinkle that had drawn objections from McGlory when he and Matt had retired to the calliope tent to make ready for the parade.

About all Matt had to do to get ready was to wash and brush himself. McGlory, on the other hand, had to get into a blue shirt, corduroy trousers, "chaps," tight, high-heeled boots, and a broad-brimmed sombrero.

"What's become of Ping?" asked Matt, stepping to the tent flap and looking off over the busy grounds.

It would be an hour before the parade could start, and the bright sun glowed over a scene of feverish

activity. The side-show tents, the stable tents, and cook tent were already up. A small army of men was working on the circus "top," and the rhythmical thump of mauls on tent stakes could be heard on every hand. Horses in two, four, six, and eight-horse teams were moving about; band wagons, cages, and chariots were being dusted and cleaned; the painted banners in front of the side-show were being laced to their guys; the candy "butchers" were getting their places in readiness, and throughout the various occupations of the men ran an orderly disorder, everywhere noticeable.

But Matt could see nothing of Ping, and he turned away to where McGlory, his foot on an overturned bucket, was buckling a big-roweled Mexican spur to his heel.

"Ping is always promptness itself in getting into his tinsel frills and furbelows," remarked Matt, "and I can't understand what's keeping the boy so late this morning."

"He's been put on the steam calliope, pard," laughed McGlory, dropping his foot from the bucket and stamping until the rowel jingled. "Little Squinch-eye seems to have fallen in love with that bunch of steam whistles. He tried to play 'Yankee Doodle' on the pipes, in Indianapolis, and had almost stampeded the elephants before the calliope man could choke him off. Sufferin' jangles, pard, you never heard such a sound."

Before Matt could make any response, a soft voice called from outside:

"Motor Matt! Can I come in a minute?"

"Sure," replied Matt heartily.

A lithe, graceful form, in velvet and spangles, leaped lightly through the opening.

"Haidee!" exclaimed Matt, staring.

The girl bowed laughingly and threw a kiss, just as she was in the habit of doing after her trapeze work in the "big top."

"Yes, friends," she answered; "Haidee, the Flying Marvel, who is to do a turn on Motor Matt's flying machine just before the doors open. I am also to ride on the top wing of the *Comet* during the parade. Will I do?"

Lifting her arms, she pirouetted around for the observation of the boys, then paused and smiled bewitchingly.

"Do?" cried McGlory. "Why, sis, you'll be the hit of the piece. All I hope"—and McGlory's face went rather long—"is that you and Matt come through your trip in the air without any trouble."

"I'm not afraid!" declared Haidee.

"No more you're not, sis. If you were riding on the lower wing with Matt the whole game would be different; but you're to hang under the machine, and there'll be more pitching and plunging than if you were aboard a bucking bronk. Hang on, that's all, and don't try to hang by your heels."

"I'll get an extra fifty dollars a week!" cried the girl.

It was plain to be seen that she placed great store on that "fifty dollars a week."

"What does your uncle, Ben Ali, think of it, Haidee?" asked Matt.

A barely perceptible frown crossed the girl's face. What was passing in her mind? Whatever her thoughts were, they found no echo in her answer.

"Uncle Ben is glad to have me do it," and Haidee

retreated toward the door.

"Have you seen Ping, Haidee?" inquired Matt.

"When I saw him last," was the response, "he was walking toward the river with a couple of buckets. I'll be going, now. I'll see you again when the parade starts. That trapeze act on the aëroplane will make a great hit, don't you think?"

"It ought to," said Matt.

The girl vanished.

"I'll walk over to the steam music box," remarked McGlory, "and see if I can spot our pigtail friend."

"All right," returned Matt, dropping down on an overturned bucket and pulling a pencil and memorandum book from his pocket.

Before he could begin to figure, he heard a voice addressing McGlory at the tent door—and it was a voice that brought him up rigidly erect and staring.

"Say, misder, iss dis der shteam cantalope tent?"

McGlory laughed.

"Well, yes, Dutchy, you've made a bull's-eye first clatter. Here's where they keep the 'cantalope.' What's the matter with you? Look like you'd gone in swimming and forgotten to take off your clothes."

"I tropped in der rifer mit meinseluf, und id vas vetter as I t'ought. Say, vonce, iss Modor Matt aroundt der blace?"

"He's inside, and— Sufferin' whirlwinds, but you're in a hurry!"

A bedraggled form, with a dripping bundle in one hand and a stick in the other, hurled itself through the opening with a yell.

"Matt! Mein olt pard, Matt!"

The next instant Carl Pretzel had rushed forward and twined his water-soaked arms about the king of the motor boys. The Dutchman's delight was of the frantic kind, and he gurgled and whooped, and blubbered, and wrestled with Matt in a life-and-death grip.

McGlory, in amazement, watched from the entrance.

"Carl!" exclaimed Matt. "By all that's good, if it isn't Carl! Great spark plugs, old chap, where did you drop from?"

"Ach, from novere und eferyvere. Vat a habbiness! I peen so dickled mit meinseluf I feel like I vas going to pust! My olt raggie, Matt, vat I ain'd seen alreddy for a t'ousant years!"

Just then there was a rush behind McGlory, and some one nearly knocked him over getting into the tent.

"My workee fo' Motol Matt!" shrilled a high, angry voice. "Dutchy boy no workee!"

Ping was terribly hostile, but McGlory caught and held him.

Carl tore himself loose from Matt and would have rushed at Ping had he not been restrained.

"Looks like they'd both been in the river," remarked McGlory.

"What's the trouble here, boys?" asked Matt.

CHAPTER III.

AN EAVESDROPPER.

Both Carl and Ping tried to explain matters at the same time. Each talked loud, in the hope of drowning out the other, and the jargon was terrific. Finally McGlory got a hand over the Chinaman's mouth, and Carl was able to give his side of the question. After that, Ping had his say.

"There's been no cause whatever for this flare-up," said Matt. "Everybody knows that Carl can't sing, but everybody who's acquainted with him, too, knows that he's got more pluck to the square inch than any fellow of his size. Carl's all right, Ping. He went around South America with Dick Ferral and me on that submarine, and we parted company in San Francisco just before I met up with Joe. Shake hands," and Matt pushed Carl toward the Chinaman.

"My workee fo' Motol Matt," whispered Ping, who had likewise been given a push by the cowboy; "Dutchy boy no workee, huh?"

"You're both pards of mine," said Matt, "and you've got to be friends. Now, shake hands."

The shaking was done—rather hesitatingly, it is true, but nevertheless it was done.

"Now," went on Matt, "you get into your regalia, Ping. Carl, you can get out of your wet clothes and put on Joe's working suit. While you're about it, tell me how you happen to be here. You stay and listen, Joe," the young motorist added. "I want you to like Carl as well as I do."

"That's me, pard," laughed McGlory, taking a seat on

one of the buckets. "There's plenty of ginger in the Dutchman, and that's what cuts the ice with me."

Ping, covertly watching and listening, moved over to his bag of clothes and began rigging himself out in his gorgeous raiment. Carl, talking as he worked, removed his water-logged costume.

"I vas a tedectif, Matt," said he gravely.

"What's that?" demanded McGlory.

"Detective," smiled the king of the motor boys. "My Dutch pard has been making a sleuth out of himself."

"Yah, so," pursued Carl. "Tick Verral vent off mit his uncle, in Tenver, und I run away to San Francisco looking for Matt. He don'd vas dere some more, und I can't find oudt nodding aboutt vere he vas gone. I haf to do somet'ing vile waiting for him to turn oop, und so I go indo der tedectif pitzness. Dot's great vork, I bed you. You findt somet'ing for somepody, und dey gif you all kindts oof money. Fine!"

"How much have you made at the business, Carl?" queried Matt.

"Vell, nodding, so far as I haf gone, Matt. Aber I don'd haf no luck mit it. I vas schust learning der ropes. A feller hat his money took away in 'Frisco. I ged oudt oof dot mit a proken headt, und don'd findt der money. Vell, next a olt laty in Salt Lake City loses her parrot, und say she gif ten tollar would I findt him. I ketch der parrot off a push schust ven anodder feller lays holt oof him. Ve fight for der pird, der pird iss kilt, und some more I don'd ged nodding, only a plack eye und some fierce talk from der olt laty. Aber I don'd ged tiscouraged, nod at all. I vork on mit meinseluf.

"Pympy, I peen in Chicago—der blace vere ve vas, Matt, mit der air ship. Dot's a great town for der tedectif pitzness, I bed you. I try to hire oudt by a

prifate tedectif achency, aber dey don'd vant me. I keep afder dose fellers, und afder I was t'rown from der office a gouple oof times I valked in on dem by der fire escape. Den dey gif me some chobs."

"What sort of a job did they give you, Carl?"

By that time the Dutch boy had stripped and put on McGlory's clothes. Reaching for his water-logged bundle, he untied it, and fished a folded newspaper from an assortment of rubber collars, socks, and red cotton handkerchiefs.

The newspaper was very damp, and had to be handled with care.

"Dis iss some English papers, Matt," explained Carl. "Id vas brinted in Lonton, und dose tedectif fellers had him py deir office. How mooch iss a t'ousant pounds in Unidet Shtates money, hey?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"Veil, dot's der chob—making dot fife t'ousant. I bet you I get rich vone oof dose tays."

"You have to do something, don't you, before you get the money?" queried McGlory, with a wink at Matt.

"Ach, dot's nodding," answered Carl, in a large, offhand manner. "Readt dot, Matt."

Matt took the wet newspaper and read a marked paragraph, which ran as follows:

"£1,000 Reward! This sum will be paid for any information concerning one Margaret Manners, last known to be in Calcutta, India. Miss Manners is about eighteen years of age, and is the only daughter of the late Captain Lionel Manners, of the English Army, stationed at Bombay. Miss Manners disappeared from her home, under mysterious circumstances, and it is possible she went to America and engaged in the circus

business. Any one with knowledge concerning the missing person, and desirous of obtaining the reward, will please communicate with Arthur Hoppleson, Solicitor, 10 Kent's Road, London, W. C. Further information, which cannot be publicly printed, will be cheerfully furnished."

Motor Matt, after reading the paragraph to himself, read it aloud.

"Why," grinned McGlory, "that outfit of detectives was working your German friend, Matt. They gave him that and sent him on a wild-goose chase, just to get rid of him."

"Dot's a misdake," declared Carl. "Dose fellers saw I meant pitzness, py shinks, und dey gif me der hardest case dey hat. Yah, so. Since den I haf been looking for shows. Eferyvere I hear aboutd some shows I hike away. Aber I don'd findt Miss Manners. She don'd vas in der mooseums, oder in der Vild Vest shows, or in Rinklings; und oof she vasn't in der Pig Gonsolidated, den I vas oop some shtumps. My money has blayed out, und I hat to rite in a pox car to Lafayette, Intiana. Here I vas shdrolling along tovard der show groundts ven I see dot shink mit der puckets, und hat sooch a scrap. Afer der scrap vas ofer, a man on a elephant shpeak about Motor Matt. Den I don'd t'ink oof nodding more. I come, so kevick as bossiple, to findt my olt raggie. Und here ve vas, togedder like ve used to be." A broad smile covered Carl's face. "Now I don'd care for nodding. Oof you t'ink you could help me findt Miss Manners, den I vill be opliged, und gif you part oof der revard—a gouple oof pounds oof id, anyvay."

"It looks to me, Carl," said Matt, handing back the paper, "as though the men in that detective office were trying to have some fun with you. Have you written to London to secure further information?"

Carl looked startled.

"Vell," he admitted, "I ditn't t'ink oof dat."

"You're a fine detective, you are," said Matt. "You might as well hunt for a needle in a haystack as to hunt for this English girl. Can't you see? You've got a pretty wide field to cover, and it is only *supposed* that she came to America and engaged in the circus business."

Carl ran his fingers through his carroty hair.

"Meppy dot's right," he mused. "Oof dose fellers in Chicago vas making some monkey-doodle pitzness mit me, you bed you I vould like to fool dem. Meppy I findt der girl. Den vat? V'y, dose tedectif fellers feel like t'irty cent. You vas vorking for der show, Matt?"

"We've an engagement with the manager for making flights in our aëroplane."

"Vat's dose?"

"What's an aëroplane? Why, Carl, it's a heavier-than-air flying machine."

"So? Und you go oop in id?"

"Yes."

Carl sat on a bucket and ruminated for a space.

"You know pooty near efery vone dot vorks for der show, hey?" he asked.

"Yes, I know every one."

"Iss dere a girl mit der name oof Markaret Manners?"

"No. But she'd have a different name if she was with a show, Carl. Performers hardly ever use their real names."

"Dot's rightd, too." Once more Carl ran his fingers

through his mop of hair. "Iss der any vone connected mit der show vat has a shtrawperry mark on der arm?" he asked, brightening.

"Strawberry mark on the arm?" repeated Matt. "Why, Carl, that advertisement doesn't say anything about such a thing."

"I know dot, aber efery young laty you read aboutd vat's lost has der shtrawperry mark on der—"

McGlory let off a roar of laughter. Carl straightened up with a pained look on his fat face.

"Carl," cried McGlory, "you're a great sleuth, and no mistake! You jump at too many conclusions."

"Dere don'd vas anyt'ing else to chump ad," returned Carl. "Dis vas a dark case, you bed you, und dere has to be some guessings. Dot's vat I make now, der guessings."

"Pretty woolly guessing, at that, and—"

McGlory broke off abruptly to follow a sudden movement on Matt's part. The canvas forming the side of the menagerie tent had shaken, as though there was some one on the other side of it. Matt, seeing the shiver of the canvas, leaped for the wall. The next moment he had lifted the canvas and was looking into the other tent.

A tall, brown-faced man, wearing a turban and an embroidered jacket, was just vanishing through the tent entrance. Matt dropped the canvas and turned away, a thoughtful look taking the place of the smile with which he had listened to Carl's talk.

"What was it, pard?" asked McGlory.

"An eavesdropper," replied Matt.

"Speak to me about that!" exclaimed McGlory. "If

some one thought the Dutchman's yarn worth listening to, then perhaps there's something in it."

"Perhaps." Motor Matt's brow wrinkled perplexedly.

"Who was the fellow? Could you recognize him?"

"It was Ben Ali."

McGlory bounded up, excited, and his own face reflecting some of the perplexity that shone in his friend's.

Before the conversation could be continued, however, a man thrust his head into the calliope tent.

"They're waiting for you fellows," he announced. "Hustle!"

CHAPTER IV.

QUEER PROCEEDINGS.

The place occupied by the aëroplane in the procession was almost at the end, and just behind the herd of four elephants. Rajah, owing to his freakish disposition, was always the fourth elephant of the string, Delhi his mate, immediately preceding him. With peaceable brutes ahead, Rajah might usually be depended upon not to cut any capers.

It will be seen from this that the *Comet* followed on the heels of Rajah.

The parade was almost in readiness for the start when Matt, McGlory, and Ping reached the aëroplane. Hostlers were running about placing plumes in the head-stalls of the horses, drivers were climbing to their seats, the wild animal trainer was getting into the open cage, and the members of the band were tinkering with their instruments.

Haidee was standing by the aëroplane when Matt, McGlory, and Ping reached the machine.

"All ready, Haidee?" asked Matt.

The girl turned and looked at him blankly. Her face was unusually white, and there was a vacant stare in her eyes.

"What's to pay, sis?" asked McGlory, with a surprised look at Matt. "Don't you feel well?"

"I am well."

The words came in an unnatural voice and with parrot-like precision.

Boss Burton came hustling down the line in his

runabout.

"Hurry up, Matt," he called. "Help Haidee to a place on the upper wing of the *Comet*."

Matt stepped over to the runabout.

"What's the matter with the girl?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Matter?" echoed Burton, fixing a keen look on the girl. "By Jupiter, she's got one of her spells again! She hasn't had one of those for a month, now, and I thought they'd about left her for good."

"Is she subject to spells of that kind?"

"She used to be. There's something queer about them, but they don't last long."

"We shouldn't put her on the upper wing, then. There's no seat there, and nothing to hold on to."

The sharp, impatient notes of a trumpet came from the head of the line.

"Well, put her somewhere," said Burton impatiently, and whirled his horse.

"Get on the top plane, Ping," said Matt, hurrying back to the *Comet*. "Haidee is going to ride on the lower wing with us."

"Awri'," chirped Ping, and McGlory gave him a leg up.

Haidee, moving like an automaton, made no objection to this arrangement. She took her place obediently on the lower wing of the machine, between Matt and McGlory, and the engine was started.

When the elephants began to move, Matt switched the power into the bicycle wheels, and the aëroplane lurched over the uneven ground. Reaching the road,

the *Comet* went more steadily; and when the procession wound into the paved thoroughfares, the movement was comparatively easy.

Ben Ali, from the neck of Rajah, kept turning around and looking back at the three on the lower plane of the *Comet*.

Matt, McGlory, and Haidee, on account of the wings of the aëroplane being turned lengthwise of the street, rode facing the sidewalk on the left. In order to see them, Ben Ali was obliged to keep Rajah somewhat out of the line.

"What's the matter with Ben Ali?" asked McGlory, leaning forward and talking in front of Haidee. "He's showing a heap more interest in the *Comet* than he ever did before."

Matt shook his head, and met steadily the piercing eyes of the Hindoo until they were turned forward again.

"What is your uncle looking this way for, Haidee?" he asked.

"I don't know."

The girl expressed herself in the same mechanical way she had done before.

"Haidee isn't herself," said Matt, "and I guess her uncle is worried. Change seats with her, Joe."

Matt wanted to talk with his cowboy chum and did not want to be under the necessity of passing his words around the girl.

"Move over, sis," requested McGlory, standing up and balancing himself on the foot-rest.

The girl quietly slipped along the plane.

Cheer after cheer greeted the aëroplane and the king

of the motor boys as soon as the crowded thoroughfares were reached. Ping, on the upper wing, and clad in all his barbaric finery, was as proud as a peacock. Haidee, on the other hand, paid absolutely no attention to the crowds. She sat rigidly in her place, like a girl carved from stone, keeping her unblinking eyes straight ahead of her.

"I'm plumb beat, and no mistake," breathed McGlory, in Matt's ear. "I never saw Haidee like this before. She acts to me like she was locoed."

"Boss Burton told me, just before we started," answered Matt, in a low tone, "that she was subject to 'spells.' This is the first one she has had in a month, Burton says."

"Can you savvy it?"

"No."

"Ben Ali seems worried out of his wits. Watch how he keeps Rajah zigzagging back and forth across the trail, so he can get a look at the girl every now and then. I wonder if Haidee knows what she's about?"

"She must. If she didn't she wouldn't be riding in the aëroplane."

The bands played, the crowds waved hands and handkerchiefs and cheered, the clowns carried out all their funny stunts, and the procession moved on through the city of Lafayette. Students from Purdue University followed the paraders and blew long blasts through tin horns. Rajah showed signs of becoming restless, and Ben Ali's attention had to be given entirely to the big brute.

Matt, with one hand on the steering lever, kept the unwieldy machine moving in a straight track.

"What do you suppose Ben Ali was listening to Carl's

talk for, there on the inside of the menagerie tent?" inquired the cowboy, his voice so low it could not possibly reach Haidee. "I had a notion that—"

"Sh-h-h!" Matt interrupted. "I had the same notion, Joe, but it was only a wild guess, at the most. He's a prying chap, that Ben Ali, and he might have had only a casual interest in what Carl was saying."

"I'll bet a ten-dollar bill against a chink wash ticket that there was something more to it than that."

"Well, if there was, it's bound to come out, sooner or later. Say nothing, but keep your eyes open."

"I've always felt that there was a mystery about the girl and Ben Ali, and that—"

McGlory broke off suddenly. Haidee, with the quickness of lightning, had leaned over behind him and jerked one of the levers at Matt's side.

The next instant the big aëroplane took a wild jump forward. The king of the motor boys was alive to the danger in an instant.

"Hold the girl!" he cried, and instantly flung the lever back.

The front ends of the two great wings had hurled themselves against Rajah. The huge animal trumpeted wildly and swung about on his hind legs with trunk uplifted.

It seemed as though he would surely charge the *Comet*, wreck the machine, and kill or maim the four who were riding in it.

McGlory, with Haidee in his arms, leaped from the foot-rest into the road. Ping rolled off the opposite side of the upper plane.

Had Matt deserted his post, the *Comet* would

certainly have been seriously damaged, if not totally wrecked. But, in spite of the danger that threatened him, he kept his seat.

Quick as a flash, he threw in the reverse. The bulky machine began wabbling away on the back track, the clown in the donkey cart behind, and the acrobatic "haymakers" in their trick wagon, driving frantically out of the way.

Ben Ali was using his sharp prod with apparent frenzy, but the jabbing point had not the least effect. Rajah started for Matt and the *Comet*.

Then, had not Delhi's mahout been self-possessed and quick, the worst would have happened.

People in the street jumped for the walk, and those on the walk pushing into the open doors of shops. Shrieks and cries went up from the women, and men yelled in consternation.

Across Rajah's path, with a rush, charged Delhi, coming to a halt and blocking the way. Rajah tried to go around, but Delhi backed and continued to cut off his retreat.

By that time Boss Burton had whirled to the scene in the runabout, and half a dozen men, from the forward wagons, were all around Rajah, belaboring the brute with cudgels, whips, and whatever they could get their hands on.

Rajah's incipient rage was soon quelled by this heroic treatment.

"What happened?" demanded Burton, drawing up beside the aëroplane.

"The machine made a jump," answered Matt, not wishing to put the blame on the girl. "Rajah was too close. Tell Ben Ali to pay more attention to the

elephant and less to us, and to keep in the centre of the road."

Burton was angry. The fault seemed to lie with Matt, but Ben Ali caught the brunt of the showman's ire.

Ping, his yellow face like a piece of old cheese, got back on the upper wing, and McGlory led Haidee to the *Comet* and helped her to her seat.

"Speak to me about that!" gulped the cowboy. "I'm a Piegan if I didn't think you and the old *Comet* were done for. What possessed the girl?"

"Give it up," answered Matt grimly. "As you said a while ago, pard, these are queer proceedings. Just watch Haidee every minute."

"She didn't know what she was doing, and you can gamble a blue stack on that."

"Of course she didn't. That's why I didn't tell Burton the real cause of the trouble. Keep it to yourself, Joe."

CHAPTER V.

MOTOR MATT PROTESTS.

The parade was finished without further incident worthy of note, a huge crowd following it back to the show grounds to see the aëroplane flight. As soon as the grounds were reached, Ben Ali came for Haidee. There was a burning light in his black eyes, and he was shaking like a man with the ague.

"Just a minute, Ben Ali," said Matt, catching the Hindoo by the sleeve of his embroidered coat and leading him apart. "What's the matter with your niece?"

"Salaam, sahib," chattered Ben Ali. "Haidee all right soon."

"She can't make an ascension with me, Ben Ali. She was the cause of that trouble, and it would be sheer madness to take her aloft on that trapeze."

"Yis, sahib, *such baht*" (that is true). Ben Ali drew a quivering hand over his forehead. "But she be well like ever soon, sahib."

Ben Ali whirled away, took Haidee by the hand, and vanished among the wagons.

Boss Burton strode to the scene.

"What ails that brown rascal?" he asked, staring after Ben Ali. "He's in as bad a taking as the girl. What did he say about her? I've never been able to get him to tell me anything about her spells."

"He tells me that she will be all right in a little while," answered Matt.

"Then we'll delay the flight. It will be half an hour yet

before all the people get here."

Matt peered at the showman as though he thought him out of his senses.

"You don't mean to say that you want the girl to ride a trapeze under the *Comet*?" he demanded.

"Why not?" Burton answered. "You said you'd take her, and she's willing to go—she wants to go."

"When I said I'd take her," returned Matt, "I didn't know anything about her spells. Suppose she were to have one while we're in the air? Why, Burton, she might throw herself from the trapeze."

"No," declared the other, "she wouldn't do that. After she has one spell, I understand she doesn't have another for days, or weeks. It's been a month since she had the last. Why, in St. Paul, she had one ten minutes before she went to the ring for her trapeze work—and she never did better. If Ben Ali says she'll be all right in a little while he ought to know."

"I protest against allowing her to go up in the aeroplane," said Matt firmly. "When the machine is off the ground it has to have my whole attention. I won't be able to look after Haidee without endangering both our lives."

A hard look came into Burton's face.

"I'm paying you five hundred a week for the stunt you pull off with the flying machine, ain't I?" he demanded harshly.

"You are," was the young motorist's calm response.

"And I'm giving the fifty on top of that for taking the girl up with you?"

"That was your proposition."

"And you agreed to it?"

"That was before I knew Haidee was afflicted in this way, Burton."

"Bosh!" scoffed the showman. "The thing has got on your nerves."

"So it has," acknowledged Matt. "I'm not going to place Haidee in any danger, if I can help it."

"And that shot goes as it lays, Burton," spoke up McGlory, who had been taking a deep interest in the talk. "If you think Motor Matt is going to risk the girl's neck, or his own, for a little fifty a week, you've got another guess coming."

Boss Burton had set his heart on that trapeze act. It was a decided novelty, and he could not cut it out of his calculations.

"Am I to understand," he went on, taking a look at the gathering crowds, "that you'll break your contract rather than take Haidee up with you?"

"That's what you're to understand!" snapped McGlory. "We'll not hem, and haw, and side-step, not for a holy minute."

"It's this way, Burton," continued Matt. "Haidee can't go up on the trapeze—we have to take a running start, you know, and it would be impossible. She'll have to ride up on the lower plane; then, after we are well clear of the ground, she'll have to drop from the footboard with the trapeze in her hands. If she's not entirely herself, the drop from the footboard to the end of the trapeze ropes will be too much for her. She'll fall."

"But I told you that after she comes out of these things she's as fit as ever," cried Burton. "It's a still day—the best we've had for flying since you joined the show. I don't want to give up the idea."

"And you don't want to see Haidee killed before your eyes, do you?" asked Matt coldly.

"Oh, splash! There'll be nothing of that kind. Ah, look! Here she comes, and she's just as well as ever."

Matt and McGlory turned. Haidee, ready for the ascent, was hurrying toward the machine from the direction of the tent. She moved swiftly and gracefully, and there was nothing mechanical in her actions—as there had been during the parade. The pallor had left her cheeks and the vacant look was gone from her eyes. Matt and McGlory were astounded at the sudden change in her.

"Are you all ready for me, Motor Matt?" she asked eagerly.

The trapeze was ready. That had been attached to the under plane of the *Comet* and the bar lashed to the foot-rest before the parade. But Matt was not ready.

"How are you feeling, Haidee?" asked Matt kindly.

"Fine!" she declared.

"Do you remember what happened during the parade?"

A puzzled look crossed her face.

"I can't remember a thing about that," she declared. "In fact, everything has been a blank almost from the time I left the calliope tent, where I was talking with you, until I came to myself in the menagerie tent with Uncle Ben."

Matt bowed his head thoughtfully.

"What's the matter?" asked the girl, in a quivering voice. "Aren't you going to take me up with the *Comet*?"

"He's afraid you'll have a spell while you're in the air,

Haidee, and drop off the bar," jeered Burton.

The girl stepped forward and caught Matt's sleeve.

"Oh, it can't be true!" she exclaimed tearfully. "Motor Matt, you're not going to keep me from making that extra money? I need it! I must have it!"

The girl's earnestness made Matt waver.

"It won't do," spoke up McGlory decidedly.

"Joe!" and Haidee turned on him. "Why can't you understand that I'm just as able as ever to do my trapeze work? I'll not have another of those queer spells for a long time."

"That's what you think, sis," answered McGlory, "but if anything happened to you my pard would remember it as long as he lived. He has just protested to Burton against taking you up. And he had a bean on the right number when he said what he did."

"*I'm* taking the chances," said Haidee, "and nothing will happen."

The aëroplane was at rest on the hard roadway running across the show grounds. For a distance of twenty feet on each side of the road strong ropes were stretched to keep back the crowd. The throng was now pressing against the ropes, clamoring for the aëroplane to make its flight.

"If this performance don't come off," said Boss Burton, "it will be a tough blow for the Big Consolidated. I advertised this trapeze stunt on the flying machine in the morning papers, wiring it ahead from Indianapolis. It's *got* to be done, that's all. Every promise made in our bills is always carried out. That's what has given this show a hold with the people. I don't say one thing and then do another."

"Circumstances alter cases," returned Matt.

"If you don't want to take Haidee, will you take Archie le Bon?"

Archie le Bon was one of the Le Bon Brothers, iron-nerved men who performed wonderful flying feats on the trapeze.

"Certainly I'll take Archie le Bon," replied Matt, glad to find such a way out of the disagreement. "Bring him here while I'm getting the machine ready."

Haidee began to cry, but Burton took her by the arm and led her away, talking earnestly and in a low voice.

A trick was worked on the king of the motor boys that morning, and it was something for which he never forgave Boss Burton. And it was a trick carried to a successful conclusion almost under the very eyes of McGlory and Ping. Matt, being busy with the aëroplane and the motor, did not discover it until too late.

Matt went over the machinery of the *Comet* with the same care he exercised before every flight. A loose bolt or screw might spell death for him if it escaped his attention.

When he was through with his examination, and had taken his seat ready for the flight. Le Bon appeared. He was in his shirt sleeves, not having had time to exchange his everyday clothes for ring costume.

"I'll run with the machine," said Le Bon, "and climb over the lower plane from behind when it gets to running too fast for me."

"That will do," answered Matt.

Amid the breathless silence of the crowd, Matt set the motor to working.

"Ready!" he called.

The machine started along the road, gaining in speed with every foot of its progress.

At the end of fifty feet it was going faster than a man could run; and at a hundred feet it was darting along at thirty miles an hour. This was the gait that enabled the wing to pick the machine off the ground.

As the *Comet* slid upward along its airy path, the astounded McGlory saw Le Bon far back toward the point from which the machine had started. Thinking that, through some mistake, Le Bon had been left behind, McGlory turned toward the mounting aëroplane.

Then the trick dawned upon him.

Haidee was climbing over the lower plane toward Motor Matt, now and again turning to wave her hand at the cheering crowd!

And McGlory saw something else—something that had a fearful significance in the light of later events.

CHAPTER VI.

ABLAZE IN THE AIR.

When the king of the motor boys was in the air with the *Comet*, every power of mind and body was trained to the work of looking after the machine.

Flying in an aëroplane is vastly more difficult than sailing in a balloon. In the case of a gas bag, an aëronaut has only to throw out ballast, take his ease, and trust to luck; but, with a heavier-than-air machine, the aviator must rely upon the quickness of his wits and his dexterity.

Aëroplane flying, in a large measure, is a knack, and must be acquired. The air pressure never touches the machine in exactly the same point for two consecutive seconds, and, because of this, the centre of gravity is constantly changing. Centre of gravity and centre of air pressure must coincide at all times if the machine is to be kept in the air, and the success or failure to do this proves the competency or the incompetency of the operator.

The Traquair aëroplane—upon which model Matt's machine had been built—preserved its equilibrium while aloft by an elongation, or contraction, of the wing tips. A lever regulated this; and, whenever Matt was flying, the lever was moving continuously, the ends of the wings darting out and in with lightning-like rapidity, one side presenting greater wing area to the pressure while the other presented less, and vice versa.

Motor Matt's engagement with Boss Burton did not cover long flights. Usually, if the weather was propitious, he made it a point to remain aloft about fifteen minutes, circling about the show grounds,

turning sharp corners and cutting airy "figure eights," in order to show the capabilities of the aëroplane.

"Get your trapeze over, Le Bon!" he called, while they were steadily mounting.

A laugh was his answer—a silvery ripple of a laugh that had a familiar ring in his ears and now filled him with consternation. He dared not look around.

"Haidee!" he exclaimed.

"Are you mad at me, Motor Matt?" came the voice of the girl.

She cautiously slipped into the seat beside him, her heightened color and sparkling eyes showing her excitement.

"This was a trick," went on Matt calmly, attending to his work with an indifference more apparent than real, "which you and Le Bon and Burton played on me?"

"It was Burton's idea, and he told it to me while we were going after Archie le Bon. Archie was to pretend to run with the machine, and I was to be with him. When the machine got to going too fast for us, Archie was to drop to one side and I was to spring to the lower wing. Your back would be in my direction, and you couldn't see me."

"That wasn't like you, Haidee," said Matt.

"Are you mad?"

"What's the use of being put out with you? I'll have something to say to Burton and Le Bon when I get back to the grounds."

"You thought you were doing something to help me—I know that—but you didn't understand I was perfectly able to carry out my part of the programme. As it is now, I came along and you couldn't help

yourself. Are you going to try and keep me from dropping under the machine with the trapeze?"

"No," was the grim reply, "now that you are here you can go on with your work. Hold to the hand grip on the edge of the plane while you unleash the bar."

Perfectly cool, and in complete command of her nerves, Haidee knelt on the foot-rest, clinging to the plane with one hand while she unlashd the trapeze bar with the other.

"I'm ready, Motor Matt," said Haidee.

She was sitting on the edge of the seat, holding the bar in both hands.

Matt had brought the *Comet* to an even keel, some fifty feet over the show grounds. They were traveling about thirty miles an hour—a snail's pace for the *Comet*—and Matt was about to make a turn over the river and traverse the length of the grounds going the other way.

"Now, listen," said he to the girl. "I'm going to tilt the *Comet* sharply upward and ascend for about fifty feet, then I'm going to reverse the position and descend for fifty feet in the same sharp angle. When we turn for the descent, Haidee, drop from the foot-rest when I give the word. The pull of your body, when it falls, will drag on the machine, but never mind that—hang on and don't get scared. As soon as I can I will bring the machine to a level. Understand?"

"Yes."

"And another thing. While you're moving on the bar, just remember to do it quietly and easily. You've seen the two Japs at work in the show, I know. When the big fellow balances the pole on his shoulder, and the little fellow goes up, every move is made as though there would be a smash if they were not careful."

"I understand," said the girl.

The machine had been brought around and was heading toward the grounds. Matt twisted the small forward planes, which laid the course for ascending or descending. At the same time he speeded up the motor.

The *Comet* pointed upward; then, at the top of her course, was as quickly turned and aimed toward the earth.

Matt caught a glimpse of a sea of upturned faces. The machine was rushing downward at a frightful pace.

"*Now!*" shouted Matt.

He saw the girl poise birdlike on the foot-rest, then sink from it with the trapeze. So great was the slant of the aëroplane that she seemed to fall forward.

There was a jar as the bar reached the end of the ropes, and, with the girl's weight, was caught and held. The *Comet* made an erratic wobble and lurched sideways like a great bird, wounded on the wing.

Haidee withstood the jolt admirably, and Matt twirled the lever operating the steering planes.

Sounds from the earth always reach aëronauts with startling distinctness. The shouts of consternation which came from the throats of the spectators could be heard, and also the murmur of relief as the *Comet* righted herself, and the trapeze and the girl swung back under the machine.

Controlling the aëroplane was always more difficult when there was a weight suspended beneath, but Matt had counted upon this, and he forced the *Comet* back and forth over the show grounds, holding the machine fairly steady.

Three times he and Haidee circled over the "tops"

with their gay streamers, cheer upon cheer following them from below.

Matt had been in the air more than fifteen minutes, and he was just manœuvring toward the starting and stopping point, when the cheers were suddenly turned to cries of fear and alarm. He could see the people below waving their arms and pointing upward.

For an instant the young motorist's heart sank. He felt sure that something had gone wrong with the girl.

This conviction had hardly formed before it was dissipated. A smell of smoke came to his nostrils, and to his ears a crackle of flames. Matt turned his head.

The left wing of the aëroplane was on fire!

A thrill of horror shot through him. In the air, he and Haidee, with a blazing flying machine alone between them and death! The very thought was enough to wrench the stoutest nerves.

"Haidee!" yelled Matt.

"Yes," came the stifled response, from underneath the *Comet*.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes."

"Hang to the bar—don't lose your nerve!"

Matt's mind was grappling with the complex situation. To get safely to the ground in the shortest possible time was the problem that confronted him.

How the wing had caught fire he did not know, and had not the time even to guess. It sufficed that the plane was ablaze, and that the longer it blazed and ate into the fabric the less resistance the plane made to the atmosphere. And it was this resistance that spelled life for the king of the motor boys and the girl!

To drop the blazing aëroplane into that sea of heads below meant injury to some of the spectators. Matt must avoid this and reach the earth in the roped-off lane from which the ascent had been made.

He put the clamps on his nerves, and, with brain perfectly clear, drove the aëroplane about at a sharp angle.

Then, if ever, the machine was true to its name, for as it darted onward, the smoke and flame that streamed out behind must have given it the look of a comet.

Could he drop to earth, the young motorist was asking himself, before the fire struck either of the gasoline tanks?

Motor Matt, as he coaxed the last ounce of speed from the motor, shouted encouragingly to the terrified girl on the trapeze.

Suddenly, below him opened the narrow lane roped off along the road. A buzz of excited voices echoed in his ears. With steady hand he shut off the power and glided downward.

"Drop from the bar and run, Haidee," he shouted, "as soon as we come close to the ground."

There was a response from the girl, but the clamor of the crowd prevented him from hearing what it was.

The next moment the blazing aëroplane settled into the road and glided along on the bicycle wheels.

McGlory, Carl, and Ping were on hand, the cowboy in charge of a detachment of canvasmen with buckets. A hiss of steam, as water struck the flames, rose in the air.

"Careful!" cried Matt, restraining the impetuous assault of the fire fighters. "Don't climb over the

machine and damage it! Keep them back, Joe! Here, some of you, drench the wings on the right side and keep the fire from spreading."

Ably directed by Matt and McGlory, the fire was extinguished. Leaving the damaged aëroplane in charge of Carl and Ping, Matt limped off toward the calliope tent, accompanied by his cowboy chum.

CHAPTER VII.

WAS IT TREACHERY?

"Where's Haidee?" asked Matt.

"Oh, bother the girl!" cried McGlory savagely.

Matt turned on him with a surprised look.

"What's the matter with you, pard?" he asked.

"Well, it's apples to ashes that I was never so badly shaken up in my life before as I am this minute. Sufferin' Judas! Say, I'd never have believed it."

The crowd was dense. Some of the people were moving off toward the city, some were making for the side-show, and others were trying to get close to the king of the motor boys. Matt, having just finished a sensational flight, was an object of curiosity and admiration.

Neither he nor McGlory paid any attention to the demonstration around them, but moved briskly onward toward the calliope tent.

"I can't rise to you, Joe," said the puzzled Matt. "What's on your mind?"

"Something more'n my hat, and you can bet your moccasins on that."

"Where did Haidee go?"

"That leather-faced tinhorn uncle of hers grabbed her and took her away the minute she dropped from the trapeze."

"She wasn't hurt, was she?"

"I didn't take any trouble to find out. She walked off

spry enough."

McGlory was gruff to the point of incivility. It was evident to Matt that he had been mightily stirred.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Matt.

"Wait till we get into the calliope tent, and out of this crowd and the dust—then I'll tell you."

"Didn't you discover the trick Boss Burton played on me with the help of Haidee and Le Bon, Joe?"

"Oh, speak to me about that!" snarled the cowboy. "Nary, I didn't, pard, until it was too everlastin'ly late to stop the run of the cards. Burton! We've got a bone to pick with him; and, after it's picked, I feel like cramming it down his throat. He was bound to have the girl go up, and he worked it in his sneaking, underhand way! I don't like this layout, Matt. You've had the closest call that's ever come your way since you took to flying. Sufferin' cats! Say, my heart was in my throat all the while I was looking on. I was expecting that any minute the fire would reach the gasoline, that both tanks would let go, and that you, and the girl, and the *Comet* would all be wiped out in a big noise and a splotch of flame."

By this time they had reached the calliope tent, and were able to duck inside and get away from the crowd.

The calliope was there, and filling the larger part of the interior. The big steam organ was shrouded in a canvas cover, and only the lower rims of the wagon wheels on which it was mounted were to be seen.

Matt dropped down on a heap of straw and leaned back wearily against a side pole. McGlory threw himself down beside him, his face thoughtful and angry.

"I hadn't any notion Burton was running in a

rhinecaboo," said the cowboy presently, "until the *Comet* had jumped into the air and I had looked back and seen Le Bon near the place from which the machine had started. When I turned and looked at you and the *Comet*, there was the Haidee girl perched on the lower wing, throwin' kisses to the crowd. I knew then that Burton had turned his trick, and I lammed loose a yell; but there was too much noise for you to hear it. I kept my eyes on the aëroplane and the girl and—and I saw something then that made my hair curl later when the fire broke out."

"What was it?" asked Matt.

"Haidee, pushing something out on the left-hand wing and jabbing it down there with a hatpin, so it would stay."

"We must have been three or four hundred feet away from you, Joe," returned Matt, "and how could you see it was a hatpin?"

McGlory sat up, opened the front of his coat, and drew a blistered hatpin out of the lining.

"I hunted around under the machine, while we were fighting the fire," he explained, "and picked up that. So, you see, I know it was a hatpin."

A frown crossed Matt's face.

"What do you make out of that move of Haidee's?" he asked.

"She pinned a ball of something soaked in oil to the wing and touched it off," averred McGlory. "It smouldered for a while and then blazed up and set fire to the canvas."

"Joe," returned Matt incredulously, "you must be mistaken. I've always been a friend of Haidee's. Why should she want to destroy the *Comet*, or me? When

you come to that, why should she want to take her own life? That's virtually what it would have amounted to if the fire had reached the gasoline tanks."

"Who could have started the fire, if it wasn't the girl?" demanded McGlory. "She was the one."

Matt was nonplused. His cowboy chum seemed to have drawn a correct inference, but the supposition was so preposterous the king of the motor boys could take no stock in it.

"We've got to use a little common sense, Joe," insisted Matt. "The girl wouldn't have the least motive in the world for trying to do such a thing as set fire to the *Comet*!"

"We've got to bank on what we see," answered McGlory, "no matter whether we want to believe our eyes or not. Look at it! Haidee comes to the aëroplane for the parade like a wooden figure of a girl, moving like a puppet worked by strings. Suddenly she flashes out of her locoed condition and pulls a lever that slams the *Comet* against Rajah's heels. Well, we protected the girl from that because we believed she was having one of her 'spells.' She came out of the spell all of a sudden and lopes down to where the aëroplane stands ready for the start. She seems as well as ever, and begs to go up on the trapeze. A trick is played on us, and she *does* go up. Then, once more, she gets the *Comet* into trouble. I can't savvy the blooming layout, but I'm keen to know that some one is starting in to do us up. And Haidee is one of our enemies."

Just then Boss Burton pushed into the tent. He was nervous and cast furtive glances at Motor Matt.

"Great business!" he exclaimed. "Le Bon got juggled out of the ascension, after all, and Haidee, the sly minx! did her stunt on the trapeze, just as she had planned. How in the world did the machine take fire?"

Crossed wires, or something?"

"You need not try to dodge responsibility, Burton," said Matt sharply. "You put up the trick that was played on me."

"On my honor, King—"

"Don't talk that way," interrupted Matt. "Come out flat-footed and admit it."

"Well," grinned Burton, a little sheepishly, "if you put it that way, I'll have to acknowledge the corn. But the girl was clear-headed, wasn't she? She didn't fall off the trapeze, and she pulled off some hair-raising tricks on that flying bar that set the crowd gasping. It was the biggest novelty in the way of an act that any show ever put up. Results will show at the ticket wagon this afternoon. Too confoundedly bad, though, that the thing should have been marred by that fire. How long will it take you to fix up the machine? Can you do it in time for an ascent to-night? I've planned to have Haidee shoot off skyrockets from the trapeze, and Roman candles, and all that."

"You'll have to cut out the fireworks, Burton," said Matt dryly. "It will take a full day to repair the *Comet*."

Burton "went up in the air" on the instant.

"Think of the loss!" he exclaimed. "You've got to repair the machine in time for the ascent this evening. If it's a matter of men, King, I'll give you a dozen to help."

"It's not a matter of men," said Matt. "Joe and I are the only ones who can work on the *Comet*. And listen to this—I mean it, and if you don't like it we'll break our contract right here—Haidee has gone up with me for the last time. I'll take Archie le Bon, or any one else you want to send, but not Haidee."

"Is this what you call treating me square?" fumed Burton.

"Sufferin' Ananias!" grunted McGlory. "You're a nice lame duck to talk about being treated square! You've got a treacherous outfit, Burton, and Pard Matt and I are not beginning to like it any too well."

Matt, thinking McGlory might tell what Haidee had done, gave him a restraining look.

"You're responsible for the trouble that overtook the *Comet*, Burton," proceeded Matt.

"Me?" echoed the showman, aghast. "Well, I'd like to know how you figure it."

"Through your schemes, and over my protest, Haidee made the ascent with me."

"I'll admit that."

"If she hadn't made the ascent, there'd have been no fire."

"Do you mean to say—"

"Now, don't jump at any conclusions. I know what I'm talking about when I tell you that there'd have been no fire if Haidee hadn't made the ascent with me. That isn't saying, mark you, that the girl is to blame for what happened. Would she want to burn the aëroplane and drop herself and me plump into the show grounds? If—"

Just then a weird thing happened. The calliope gave a sharp clatter of high notes.

All present in the tent gave astounded attention to the canvas-covered music box.

"Spooks!" grinned Joe.

"There was enough steam left in the calliope to play a

few notes," suggested Burton.

"But the notes couldn't play themselves," said Matt, and made a rush for the calliope.

The keyboard was in one end of the calliope wagon, and the canvas was draped over the chair occupied by the operator when the steam wagon was in use.

With a pull, Matt jerked aside the canvas that covered the rear of the calliope, and there, crouching in a chair, was Ben Ali!

CHAPTER VIII.

A CALL FOR HELP.

"Well, sizzlin' thunderbolts!" gasped the amazed Burton.

At first, Ben Ali sat blinking at those before him, apparently too dazed to move.

"He's an eavesdropper!" cried McGlory, "and this ain't the first time we've caught him at it, either. Grab him, Matt! Wring that thin neck of his!"

Ben Ali regained his wits, then, and very suddenly. With a panther-like spring, he cleared the wagon on the side opposite that where Motor Matt was standing, dodged McGlory, who tried to head him off, shook a glittering knife in Boss Burton's face, and vanished under the wall of the menagerie tent. It was all so neatly done that the three in the calliope lean-to were left staring at each other in helpless astonishment.

McGlory rushed furiously at the menagerie tent wall, lifted the canvas, then dropped it and rushed back.

"Not for me!" he breathed. "Rajah is right there, teetering back and forth from side to side, and winding his trunk around everything in sight."

"Where was Ben Ali?" demanded Burton, a glitter rising in his eyes.

"Getting out under the cages on the other side of the tent," replied McGlory. "I'll see if I can't head him off."

With that the cowboy shot out of the lean-to. Matt didn't think the effort to catch Ben Ali worth while, and once more dropped down on the pile of straw.

For a few moments Boss Burton walked back and

forth in front of him, hands behind his back, head bowed in thought, and a black frown on his face. Abruptly he halted in front of Matt.

"The infernal Hindoo drew a knife on me!" he scowled.

Matt nodded. The fact had been too plain to call for comment.

"I'd pull the pin on Ben Ali in half a minute," continued Boss Burton, "if it wasn't for Haidee."

"Where did you pick up Ben Ali and Haidee?" inquired Matt.

"In Wisconsin," was the answer, "just as the show was starting out of its winter quarters. Rajah had run amuck, wounded a horse, smashed a wagon, and come within an ace of killing his keeper. Ben Ali applied for the job of looking after him, and I let him have it. He's been the only one, so far, who could take care of Rajah."

"Where did the girl come in?"

"She came in with her uncle, of course. Ben Ali said his niece was good on the flying bar, and he brought her to see me. When she came she was in one of her spells, and looked and acted like a puppet, with some one pulling the wires. I wasn't much impressed with her, but gave her a try-out. She recovered from the spell and acted just as she did to-day, when she went up with the *Comet*—perfectly natural. She gave a good performance—mighty good—and I made a deal with her uncle. That's the way I got tangled up with the pair. Why?"

The showman transfixed Matt with a curious glance.

"Oh, nothing," said Matt carelessly. "The Hindoo and the girl have always been something of a mystery

to me, and I wanted to find out what you knew about them. Where did they come from?"

"Give it up. I never look into the past of people who hire out to me. If they're capable, and do their work, that's enough. From what McGlory said, and from what I've seen, Ben Ali appears to have been sneaking around here, listening to what you and your friends were saying. If he hadn't inadvertently touched the keyboard of the calliope we shouldn't have known he was under the cover. Have you any notion what he means by that sort of work?"

"No."

"Well, it's deuced queer, and that's all I can say. Do you think he ought to be bounced?"

"Yes, but I wouldn't do it."

"On Haidee's account?"

"Partly that; partly, too, because, if you keep him on the pay roll, we may be able to learn something about him and the girl. I'm a bit curious about them, Burton."

"It's a bad habit—this of getting too curious. It's dollars and cents for me to have the two with the show. What's more," and his remarks took a more personal turn, "it's money in my pocket to have the *Comet* go up this afternoon with Haidee shooting Roman candles from the trapeze. When are you going to get busy with the repairs?"

"After I eat something."

"Well, rush the work, Matt. Do the best you can."

"It won't be Haidee who rides the trapeze next time the *Comet* takes to the air," said the king of the motor boys firmly.

"Well, Archie le Bon, then," returned Burton, with much disappointment.

As he went out, McGlory came in, passing him in the entrance.

"Nothing doing," reported the cowboy. "Where the Hindoo went is a conundrum. I couldn't find anybody about the grounds who had even seen him since he walked Haidee away from the burning aéroplane."

While McGlory, disgusted with his ill success and the turn events were taking, there on the banks of the Wabash, slumped down on a bucket and mopped his perspiring face, Motor Matt dropped into a brown study.

"These Hindoos are crafty fellows, Joe," he remarked, after a while. "They're clever at a great many things we Americans don't understand anything about. I knew one of them once. He was the servant of a man who happened to be the uncle of one of the finest young fellows that ever stepped—brave Dick Ferral. This particular Hindoo I was able to study at close range."

"What are you leading up to by this sort of talk?" asked McGlory, cocking his head on one side and squinting his eyes.

He had this habit when anything puzzled him.

"I'm leading up to the element of mystery that hangs over the events of to-day. India is a land of mystery. The people are a dreamy set, and now and then one of them will go off into the woods, or the desert, and spend several years as a devotee. When he comes back to civilization again he's able to do wonderful things. I've heard that these fakirs can throw a rope into the air and that it will hang there; and that they can make a boy climb the rope, up, and up, until he disappears.

Then rope, boy, and all but the fakir will vanish."

"Fakes," grunted Joe. "Such things ain't in reason, pard. You know what a fakir is in this country, and I reckon he's not much better in India."

"Of course it's a fake," said Matt, "but it's a pretty smooth piece of magic. The Hindoo devotees could give Hermann and all the other magicians cards and spades and then beat them out."

"I'm blamed if I can see yet where all this talk of yours leads to."

"I'm only, what you might call, thinking out loud," laughed Matt. "Haidee's actions puzzle me. Her uncle is a Hindoo, and he may be an adept in magic. If he is, just how much has the girl's queer actions to do with Ben Ali? It's something to think about. I'm glad Burton isn't going to cut loose from the Hindoo and the girl. The more I see of them, the more curious I'm becoming."

"Ben Ali, pard," grinned McGlory, "is a little bit curious about us, I reckon, from the way he's pryin' around. How do you account for that?"

Matt shook his head.

"I can't account for it, Joe, but perhaps we'll be able to do so later." He got up. "How about something to eat?" he asked. "We'll have to have dinner, then take something to the boys, and get busy patching up the aëroplane."

"Did you ever know me to shy at a meal?" asked McGlory, promptly getting up. "We'll hit the chuck layout, and then—"

It was nearly time for the doors to open, and inside and out the two big "tops" there was a bustle of preparation. The "spielers" in the ticket stands at the

side-show were yelling, people were crowding about the ticket wagon, where they were to buy pasteboards admitting them to the "big show," and a band was playing in the road beyond the grounds.

Above all these various sounds there came a call, wild and frantic. It reached the ears of the two boys in the calliope tent with strange distinctness, and cut McGlory short while he was talking.

"Helup! Helup, somepody, or I vas a goner!"

The cowboy gave a jump for the door, only a foot or two behind Matt.

"Was that your Dutch pard?" cried McGlory.

"It was his voice, plain enough," answered Matt, looking around sharply.

"What could have gone wrong with him?"

"I can't imagine—here, in broad daylight, with the grounds full of people."

"It's trouble of the worst kind if we're to take the words as they sounded."

Matt believed this fully. Carl Pretzel was not the lad to give a false alarm, and he had clearly put his whole heart into the words Matt and McGlory had heard.

"Where did the call come from?" went on McGlory, mystified.

"It seemed to come from everywhere, and from nowhere," replied Matt. "Look into the menagerie tent, Joe."

While McGlory was lifting the canvas and taking a look through the animal show, Matt rounded the outside of the lean-to, searching every place with keen eyes.

Carl was nowhere to be found. As Matt drifted back toward the door of the calliope tent, McGlory emerged and joined him.

"He's not mixed up with the animals," reported the cowboy.

"And I can't get any trace of him out here," said Matt. "Let's walk over to the aëroplane. Carl and Ping were to watch the machine, and I'm pretty sure neither of them would leave it without orders unless something pretty serious had gone wrong."

Vaguely alarmed, the two chums pushed their way through the crowd toward the place where the *Comet* had been left.

CHAPTER IX.

BLACK MAGIC.

While the parade was passing through town, Carl had been "sleuthing." The fact that he was wearing McGlory's working clothes gave him an idea. He didn't look like himself, so why not be some one else? All the detective books he had ever read had a good deal to say about disguises. Carl was already disguised, so he made up his mind that he would be a dago laborer.

After watching the parade file out of the show grounds, he slouched over to the side-show tent. A man was just finishing lacing the picture of a wild man to the guy ropes. Carl shuffled up to him.

"I peen der Idaliano man," he remarked, in a wonderful combination of Dutch and Italian dialect, "und I, peen make-a der look for a leedl-a gal mit der name oof Manners. Haf-a you seen-a der girl aroundt loose some-a-veres?"

The canvasman looked Carl over, and then, being of a grouchy disposition, and thinking Carl was trying to make fun of him, he gave him a push that landed him against a banner containing a painted portrait of the elastic-skin man. The banner was even more elastic than the image it bore on its surface, for Carl rebounded and struck one of the "barkers," who happened to be passing with his hands full of ice-cream cones for the bearded lady and the Zulu chief.

Disaster happened. The "barker" fell, with the Dutch "tedectif" on top of him—and the ice-cream cones in between.

The "barker" indulged in violent language, and began using his hands. Carl was pretty good at that

himself, and retaliated. Two canvasmen pulled the two apart. Carl had the contents of a cone in his hair, and the "barker" had the contents of another down the back of his neck.

"Where'd that ijut come from?" yelled the "barker," dancing up and down among the broken cones.

"Who left der cage toor oben?" cried Carl, digging at his hair. "Der papoon vas esgaped."

"You put up your lightning rod," growled the "barker," "or you'll git hit with a large wad of electricity."

"Come on mit it!" whooped Carl, fanning the air with his fists. "No vone can make some ice-cream freezers outd oof me mitoudt hafing drouples!"

"That'll do you," snorted the canvasman who had hold of Carl, and thereupon raced him for twenty feet and gave him a shove that turned him head over heels across a guy rope.

"Dot's der vay," mourned Carl, picking himself up and gathering in his hat. "Der tedectif pitzness comes by hardt knocks, und noddng else. Vere can I do some more?"

His head felt cold and uncomfortable, even after he had mopped it dry with a red cotton handkerchief.

He went over to the horse tent. The tent was nearly empty, all the live stock except a trick mule being in the parade. The mule would not have been there, but he was too tricky to trust in the procession. A man with a red shirt, and his sleeves rolled up, sat on a bale of hay close to the mule. The man was smoking.

"Hello, vonce," flagged Carl.

"Hello yourself," answered the man.

"I peen some Idaliano mans," remarked Carl, "und I vas make-a der look for Markaret Manners, yes. Haf-a you seen-a der gal?"

"Take a sneak," said the man.

"She iss-a leedle-a gal aboutt so high, yes," and Carl put out his hand. "I peen-a der poor Idaliano man, aber I gif-a you fife tollars, py shiminy, oof-a you tell-a me where-a der gal iss."

"You can't josh me," went on the man earnestly. "Hike, before I knock off your block."

Carl continued to stand his ground and ask questions; then, the next thing he knew, the hostler had jumped up and rushed for him. Carl sprang back to get out of the way, unfortunately pushing against the hind heels of the mule. The mule knew what to do, in the circumstances, and did it with vigor.

Carl was kicked against the man with the pipe, and that worthy turned a back somersault as neatly as any "kinker" belonging to the show.

The Dutch boy limped hastily around the end of the horse tent and crawled into an empty canvas wagon. The mule's heels had struck him with the force of a battering-ram, and he felt weak up and down the small of the back. Besides, the wagon was a good place in which to hide from the hostler.

Cautiously he watched over the wagon's side. The hostler came around the side of the tent, looked in all directions, and then retired, muttering, in the direction of the bale of hay.

Carl chuckled as he dropped down on a roll of extra canvas, but the chuckle died in a whimper as he became conscious of his sore spots.

"I vonder how Cherlock Holmes efer lifed to do vat

he dit," he murmured, curling up on the canvas. "Der tedectif pitzness iss hit und miss from vone end to der odder, und den I don'd get some revards. Meppy I vill shleep und forged id."

When Carl woke up, he looked over the side of the wagon and saw a burning flying machine in the air, and he heard the wild yells of the crowd. Probably it was the yelling that awoke him.

"Py shinks," he cried, "dot's my bard, Modor Matt! He iss purnin' oop mit himseluf. Fire! Fire! Helup!" and Carl rolled out of the wagon and raced toward the spot where the machine seemed to be coming down.

McGlory, white-faced but determined, was marshaling a lot of men with buckets of water. Carl dropped in. When the machine landed, he set to with the rest and helped extinguish the flames.

Then, after he had congratulated Matt, Carl and Ping were placed on guard.

In spite of the fact that Carl had shaken hands with Ping, he continued to have very little use for the Chinaman. And Ping, to judge from appearances, had no more use for the Dutchman. They did not speak. One sat down on one side of the machine and the other sat down on the other. Then a brown man, wearing an embroidered coat and a turban, drove up on a small cage wagon drawn by one horse. He got off the wagon and stepped up to Carl.

"How-do, sahib?" said the man.

Carl remembered him. He was the fellow who had been dozing on Rajah's back at the river. Also he was the man who had taken charge of the girl who had dropped off the trapeze when the burning aëroplane came down.

Carl had a startling thought—it flashed over him like

an inspiration.

"How you vas?" answered the Dutch boy genially.

"You come 'long with Ben Ali," said the man.

"Nod on your dindype," replied Carl. "I vas vatching der machine for Modor Matt."

"*You come!*" hissed Ben Ali.

Then Carl noted something very remarkable. The Hindoo's eyes began to blaze, and dance, and show wonderful lights in their depths.

"Shtop mit it!" said Carl. "You peen a mesmerizer, und I don'd like dot."

Carl knew he couldn't be hypnotized against his will, but the Hindoo's eyes were working havoc with his nerves.

"*You come!*"

The words of Ben Ali were imperative. Carl, seemingly unable to remove his own eyes from the Hindoo's, followed as Ben Ali retreated toward the wagon. At the end of the wagon Ben Ali made some passes with his hands in front of Carl's face, then opened the door.

"You get in, sahib!"

Carl climbed into the wagon mechanically. Slam went the door and click went a key in the padlock.

The *Comet* had come down from its disastrous flight at a considerable distance from the tents. There were no people in the immediate vicinity save Ping.

The little Chinaman, on hands and knees under the lower wing of the aëroplane, was watching covertly all that took place.

After locking the door of the cage wagon, Ben Ali

took a cautious look around him. He saw no one.

Climbing up on one of the forward wheels, he took a slouch hat and a long linen duster from the seat, removed his embroidered coat and his turban, got into the hat and duster, climbed to the seat, picked up the reins, and drove off.

Ping had seen it all, but had made no attempt to interfere. And he made no attempt now.

He did not like the "Dutchy boy." He was afraid Carl would take away from him his job with Motor Matt.

It was with secret rejoicing, therefore, that the Chinaman saw Carl locked in the wagon and hauled away.

"Hoop-a-la!" chattered Ping, as he returned to his place and once more went on watch.

The wagon used by Ben Ali, on this momentous occasion, was technically known as the monkey wagon. Two of the monkeys had eaten something which did not agree with them, and had died in Indianapolis. The three that remained had been taken out and put in another cage, with a collection known as "The Happy Family." This, of course, left the monkey wagon empty.

Burton was figuring on using it for one of the ant-eaters, but there were some repairs to be made before the wagon could be put to that use. The repairs dragged, and so Ben Ali found his opportunity to use the cage.

Straight across the show grounds drove the disguised Hindoo. None of the employees who saw him recognized him or questioned his right to use the monkey wagon. Different gangs had different duties, and no one knew but that this strange driver was off to town on some important mission.

Ben Ali drove within a hundred feet of the calliope tent. When he was well beyond it, a yell came from inside the wagon.

"Helup! Helup, somepody, or I vas a goner!"

A shiver ran through Ben Ali. He made ready to leap from the wagon, but thought better of it when he saw that the call had attracted no attention and was not repeated.

"Sahib keep still!" he called, kicking the end of the wagon with his heels.

And thus, with not a sound coming from the interior of the monkey wagon, the artful Hindoo adept drove into the road and headed the horse away from the town and into the country.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAHOUT'S FLIGHT.

When Matt and McGlory, hurrying to the aëroplane to make inquiries concerning Carl, came within sight of Ping, they saw him calmly occupied twirling a set of jackstones.

"Ping!" called Matt.

"Awri!" answered Ping, slipping the jackstones into a pocket of his blouse and immediately getting up.

"Where's Carl?"

"Dutchy boy no good. Him lun away."

"Run away?" echoed McGlory. "Here's a slam! When and how, Ping?"

"Ben Ali dlive 'lound in wagon. Him say to Dutchy boy, 'You come.' Dutchy boy makee come chop-chop. Ben Ali shuttee do', put on Melican coat, Melican hat, makee dlive off. Woosh! Dutchy boy no good."

This offhand description of what had happened to Carl was received with startled wonder by Matt and McGlory.

"When was this?" demanded Matt.

"Plaps fi' minit, plaps ten minit. No gottee clock, Motol Matt; no savvy time."

"You say Ben Ali drove up in a wagon?"

"Dlive up in monkey wagon. Put Dutchy boy in monkey wagon."

"And then he locked Carl inside?"

"Allee same."

"And took off his turban and embroidered coat and replaced them with another hat and coat?"

"Melican hat, plenty long coat."

"Wouldn't that rattle your spurs, pard?" murmured McGlory.

"What did Ben Ali do?" went on Matt, resolved to get at the bottom of the matter, if possible.

"Him makee funny look with eye," replied Ping. "By Klismus! him blame' funny look. One piecee devil shine in eye."

"Hypnotized!" grunted McGlory.

"You can't easily hypnotize a person against his will," averred Matt. "It's not hard to guess that Carl was a good way from being willing to go with Ben Ali."

"What the dickens did Ben Ali want to run off Carl for?" queried McGlory.

"This business gets more and more mysterious, Joe," returned Matt, "the farther we go into it."

"And that yell we heard!"

"That certainly came from Carl. Ben Ali must have driven past the calliope tent while we were talking inside. The fact that Carl gave a yell for help proves that he wasn't wholly hypnotized."

"He may have come out from under the influence just long enough to give a whoop," suggested the cowboy.

"Let's go back and hunt up Burton," said Matt. "He'll want his monkey wagon, and, of course, we've got to get hold of Carl."

"It's news to discover that Ben Ali is a hypnotist," observed McGlory, as he and Matt whirled and started

to retrace the ground over which they had just passed.

"I told you these Hindoos were a crafty set," answered Matt.

The doors were open and the crowd was vanishing inside the big tents. The grounds were not so congested with people as they had been, and it was easier to get about and hunt for Burton.

As it chanced, they ran plump into the manager just as they were rounding the dressing tent at the end of the circus "top."

Burton was red and perspiring, and there was wrath in his face.

"I've been looking all around for you fellows," he cried. "You can run one of these here buzz-wagons, can't you, Matt?"

"Yes," replied Matt, "but—"

"Come along," interrupted Burton, grabbing Matt by the arm, "we haven't any time to spare."

"Wait!" protested Matt, drawing back. "Have you seen—"

"Can't wait," fumed Burton. "I've hired a chug-car; and there's a race on. Haidee has skipped. Aurung Zeeb, one of the other Hindoo mahouts, has helped her get away. They've taken my runabout. Confound such blooming luck, anyhow!"

Here was news, and no mistake. Ben Ali running off with Carl, and Aurung Zeeb taking to the open with the showman's Kentucky cob and rubber-tired buggy!

"Do you know where Aurung Zeeb and Haidee went?" asked Matt.

"I haven't the least notion," was the wrathful answer, "but we've got to find them. I don't care a straw about

Zeeb, or the girl, but that runabout rig is worth six hundred dollars, just as it stands."

"Well, if you don't know which way the rig went," argued Matt, "it's foolish to go chasing them and depending on luck to point the way."

"We've got to do something!" declared Burton.

"Where's Ben Ali?"

"Oh, hang Ben Ali! I haven't seen him since he flashed that knife in my face."

"We've just discovered," proceeded Matt, "that he has skipped out, too, and taken your monkey wagon along."

"Sure of that?"

"Ping just told us. Not only that, Burton, but he took my Dutch pard—the lad that came this morning—with him. Carl was locked in the cage."

"Worse and worse," ground out Burton. "How'd Ben Ali ever manage to do that?"

"On the face of it, I should say that Ben Ali had hypnotized Carl."

"Nonsense! What does an elephant driver know about hypnotism? Still, this begins to look like a comprehensive plan to steal a monkey wagon and a runabout and leave me in the lurch. What do you think of that Haidee girl to do a thing like this? She seemed mighty anxious to earn money, yet here she skips out with about a hundred in cash to her credit."

"It's hard to understand the turn events have taken," said Matt. "But I wouldn't blame Haidee too much until you know more about her—and about Ben Ali."

"I want my horses and my rolling stock," fretted Burton. "The rest of the outfit can go hang, if I get back

the plunder."

"You said something about an automobile," said Matt.

"There's a car here, and the man that owns it is seeing the show. He said I could have the use of the car all afternoon for fifty dollars. He thought I was an easy mark, and I let him think so. He's got the money and I've got the car. After he'd gone inside, I happened to remember that I couldn't run the thing, so I chased off looking for you. Here we are," and the three, who had been walking in the direction of the road, came to the side of a large automobile.

It was a good machine, with all of six cylinders under the hood.

"If you're a mind reader, and can tell where we ought to go, Burton," said Motor Matt, "I'll get you there. I feel right at home when I'm in the driver's seat of a motor car."

"Wait till I ask somebody," and Burton whirled and flew away.

"Gone to have some fortune teller read his palm," laughed McGlory. "Oh, but he's wild when he gets started."

"I don't blame him for worrying," said Matt. "He was offered four hundred, spot cash, for that Kentucky cob, in Indianapolis. Shouldn't wonder if he stood to lose a thousand dollars if the runaways can't be overhauled. And he hasn't much time to overhaul them, either, Joe. The three sections of the show train have got to be on the move toward South Bend by three in the morning. I'm worried some myself, on Carl's account. What has that crafty mahout got at the back of his head? I wish I knew. You and I are going to stay right here in Lafayette until we can find out something about Carl."

"Sure we are," agreed the cowboy heartily. "But here comes Burton, and he looks as though he'd found out something."

"One of the canvasmen," announced Burton breathlessly, as he came up with the boys, "says that he saw the monkey wagon heading south into the country. Can't find out which way the runabout headed, but we'll take after the other outfit. Get in and drive the machine for all you're worth."

Matt passed around in front, and was pleased with the business-like manner in which the motor took up its cycle.

"Here's where we throw in the high-speed clutch and scoot," said Matt, settling into the driver's seat with a glad feeling tingling along his nerves. It had suddenly occurred to him that he would rather motor in a high-powered car than do anything else that had so far claimed his attention. In such a machine, "miles were his minions and distance his slave." "Here we go," he finished, and away bounded the car.

Matt took time to wonder at the nature of a plutocrat who, for fifty dollars, would trust such a beautiful piece of mechanism in the hands of a showman. But the fact was accomplished, and guesses at the reason were futile.

They came to a hill—a steepish kind of a hill, too—and they went over it without a change of gear. Motor Matt laughed exultantly.

"Took it on the high speed!" he cried. "A car that can do that is a corker."

On the opposite side of the hill, as they were scorching down with the speedometer needle playing around the fifty-eight mark, a team and wagon containing a farmer and his family were almost backed

off the road. Matt tampered with the brakes, but the car was going too fast to feel the bind of the brake grip.

"Never mind!" cried Burton, from his place at Matt's side. "That outfit is going to the show to-night. If I see 'em, I'll pass 'em all in with fifty-cent chairs. Now, boy, hit 'er up. I've got to recover my property before night sets in, and this may be a long chase."

"Long chase!" yelled McGlory derisively from the tonneau. "How can it be a long chase when we're going like this? Hang on to your hair, Burton! Mile-a-minute Matt's at the steering wheel."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PAPER TRAIL.

The coils hummed merrily to the six-cylinder accompaniment. The wind whistled and sang in the ears of the three who were plunging along at a speed which was bound to get them somewhere in short order.

Then, as might be expected, something happened. It was no accident to the car. The road spread apart in two equally well-traveled branches, and Matt shut off and came to a stop at the forks.

"The canvasman, of course," said the young motorist, looking around at Burton, "couldn't tell you which fork the monkey wagon would take."

"Here's a go!" muttered Burton. "If we take one fork, we may be hustling off on the wrong scent. At a guess, I should say take the right-hand branch."

"Let's not do any guessing until we have to," Matt returned. "My cowboy chum here is a good hand at picking up trails. Show us how they do it in Arizona, Joe."

McGlory was out of the car in a flash and giving his attention to the surface of the road.

"You might as well try to hunt for the print of a rabbit's foot in the trail of a herd of stampeded steers," said McGlory, after five precious minutes spent in fruitless examination.

"What sort of a cowboy are you, anyhow?" scoffed Burton.

"Well, look," answered McGlory. "The ground is all

cut up with people coming to the show, and it's none too soft. I couldn't pick out the tread of a traction thrashing machine in all this jumble of prints."

"Any one coming on either road?" queried Burton, standing up and looking. "If there is, we could inquire as to whether they'd passed the monkey wagon."

"See any one?" asked Matt.

"Not a soul," and the showman plumped disappointedly down in his seat.

"Just a minute, Joe," interposed Matt, as the cowboy was about to climb back into the tonneau. "What's that white object in the road?" Matt pointed as he spoke. "There's one, just over the left-hand fork, and another beyond it."

"If you stop to bother with paper scraps," cried Burton, "we'll never get anywhere."

McGlory, however, turned back and picked up the object to which Matt had called his attention.

It was a scrap of paper, just as Burton had said. The scrap was a ragged square, as though it had been roughly torn, and measured about two inches across.

The cowboy examined it casually at first, then his face changed, and he gave it closer attention.

"My handwriting," he declared, looking up at Matt.

"How can that be?" scoffed Burton.

"I don't know how it can be," replied McGlory, "but it's a fact, all the same. I had a memorandum book, and have jotted down various things in it."

"Where'd you leave the memorandum book?" jested the showman impatiently; "in the monkey wagon?"

"Nary, I didn't. I left it in the hip pocket of my

working clothes."

"And Carl had on the clothes!" exclaimed Matt, with a jubilant ring in his voice. "Carl must have scattered that trail for our benefit."

He stood up in the automobile and looked back over the road they had traveled.

"Why," he went on, "we haven't been as observing as we should have been. There's a paper trail, and Carl must have started it pretty soon after the monkey wagon left the show grounds."

"Well, well!" muttered Burton. "Say, Matt, that Dutch chum of yours is quite a lad, after all. The idea of his thinking of that."

"Carl always has his head with him," declared Matt. "Climb in, Joe. The left fork for ours."

McGlory pulled the crank, before he got in, for the stop had killed the engine.

"It's a cinch," said McGlory, as he resumed his place in the tonneau, "that Carl wasn't hypnotized when he dropped those scraps. How *could* he drop 'em? That's what beats me. Why, he was locked in, so Ping said."

"There was a hole in the floor," explained Burton. "Not a very big one, but big enough for an ant-eater to get a foot through. I was going to repair the cage, but haven't had time to attend to it."

"Why didn't Carl yell again?" went on McGlory. "If he had yelled long enough, and loud enough, some one would have been bound to hear him and stop Ben Ali."

"This is another case where Carl's using his head," put in Matt. "He's playing some dodge or other."

"He's showing up a whole lot stronger than I ever imagined he could," said the cowboy. "I had sized him

up for a two-spot at any sort of headwork. Got my opinion, I reckon, from the way those Chicago detectives fooled him."

"He's not so slow as you imagine, Joe," said Matt. "Now keep an eye out for scraps!"

"We can't get into a scrap with those Hindoos any too quick to suit me," laughed McGlory, hanging out over the side of the motor car.

Once more the whirling, headlong rush of the car was resumed. No sooner had Burton, or McGlory, discovered a bit of white in the roadway ahead than it was lost to sight behind.

Then, after four or five miles of this, the three in the car raised an object, drawn up at the roadside, which brought the car to a halt. The object was the monkey wagon, horse gone from the shafts, rear door swinging open, and not a soul in the vicinity.

"Here's another queer twist," grumbled Burton, as all three got out to make a close survey of the wagon. "What do you think of it, Matt?"

Matt and McGlory thrust their heads in at the door.

"Phew!" gurgled the cowboy, drawing back. "There's a mineral well, in Lafayette, that's a dead ringer for the smell inside that cage wagon."

"I haven't had it swabbed out yet," apologized Burton.

"Here's the hole where Carl dropped out the paper scraps," Matt called, from inside the wagon.

"And here's something else, pard!" yelled McGlory.

Matt came out of the wagon and found his cowboy chum calling Burton's attention to marks in the road.

"What do you make of it, Joe?" asked Matt, coming

closer.

"Well," answered McGlory, reading the "signs," "a one-horse buggy with rubber tires stopped here, alongside the monkey wagon. Look how the road's tramped up, ahead there. The horse was restive during the halt, and did some pawing."

"Great guns!" murmured Burton. "My runabout!"

"I think it's pretty clear now," observed Matt. "Aurung Zeeb and Haidee didn't get away at the same time Ben Ali and Carl did, or else they took a different course. Anyhow, they came up with the wagon. The runabout's faster, so the whole party went on with it."

"They might get three people into the runabout, by crowding," said Burton, "but they never could get four people into it."

"That's why the horse was taken from the monkey wagon," went on Matt. "Aurung Zeeb or Ben Ali must have ridden the animal."

"By Jove, King, I wish I had your head for getting at things! That was the way of it—it *must* have been the way of it. Let's pile back into the machine and hustle on."

They all felt that the chase was drawing to a close. The runabout was a faster vehicle than the monkey wagon, but there was not the ghost of a show for the Kentucky horse getting away from the automobile.

From that point on, the paper trail was not in evidence.

"Carl wasn't able to drop any more scraps," said Matt. "When he was inside the monkey wagon he was out of sight and could do about as he pleased; crowded into the runabout with Ben Ali and Haidee, and with Aurung Zeeb riding behind, he couldn't possibly drop a

clue to guide us."

"The Dutchman seems to have taken it for granted that he'd be followed," hazarded Burton.

"He knows very well," returned Matt, "that I wouldn't stand around and let him worry through this run of hard luck alone. Look out for the runabout. The way I figure it, the rig can't be more than ten or fifteen minutes ahead of us."

"How do you figure it, Matt?" asked Burton.

"Well, from the time Joe and I heard Carl call for help. I don't believe it was more than half an hour from that time until we were hitting the high places with this automobile. Eh, Joe?"

"No more than that, pard," answered McGlory.

"I should think we'd have gained more than fifteen or twenty minutes on the Hindoos, the rate we've been coming," remarked Burton.

"Possibly we have. If that's so, then the runabout can't be even ten minutes ahead of us. Now—"

"Runabout!" yelled McGlory.

He was standing up in the tonneau and peering ahead. The road, at this point, was bordered with heavy timber on both sides, but in half a minute Matt and Burton could each see the vehicle to which the cowboy had called their attention.

It wasn't a runabout, as it proved, but a two-seated "democrat" wagon, drawn by a team, and conveying another party townward—presumably for the evening performance of the Big Consolidated.

McGlory's disappointment was keen. And his feelings, for that matter, were matched by those of Motor Matt and Burton.

Matt halted the automobile and, when the wagon came alongside, asked the driver if he had been passed by a runabout farther along the road.

The party had come five miles on that road and, according to the driver, hadn't been passed by anything on wheels going the other way.

For a space those in the automobile were in a quandary.

"What's amiss?" fumed Burton. "Are we on the wrong track, after all, in spite of your Dutch friend and his paper trail, and McGlory's reading the signs at the monkey wagon?"

Matt suddenly threw in the reverse and began to turn.

"Only one thing could have happened," he averred.

"What's that?"

"Why, the people in the runabout must have heard us coming and turned from the road into the woods."

"Let her out on the back track, then!" cried Burton. "If the Hindoos think they've dodged us, they've probably pulled out into the road and started the other way."

This seemed to have been the case, for three minutes speeding over the return trail brought those in the automobile in sight of the runabout.

This time it *was* the runabout, and no mistake, and the Kentucky cob was stretching out like a race horse under the frantic plying of a whip.

Burton reached behind him, under his coat, and brought a revolver into view.

"We'll find out about this business before we're many minutes older!" he exclaimed grimly.

CHAPTER XII.

CARL TURNS A TRICK.

Something has been said about Carl Pretzel having an idea that was almost an inspiration, at the time he was approached by the Hindoo at the aëroplane.

This it was that led him into the monkey wagon. The slam of the door and the grate of the key in the padlock struck a sudden tremor to the Dutch boy's heart.

Was he making a fool of himself or not? Would a trained detective have proceeded in that manner?

His heart failed him, and he gave the wild yell for help.

He had hardly given the cry before he repented of it. What would Motor Matt think of his nerve if he could know the game he had embarked upon, and how he had been stampeded in playing it?

No; if that call had done no harm, Carl would not repeat it. He would see the business through and try and match wits with the Hindoo.

In spite of the noise on the show grounds, Carl heard Ben Ali's heels bang against the end of the wagon, and also the stern voice commanding him to keep silent.

Carl kept silent. He was almost smothered by the closeness of his prison chamber, and the terrific odor that assailed him, but he comforted himself with the thought that detectives don't always have things their own way when they're tracking down a criminal. Anyhow, even his present discomfort was better than the hard knocks his "sleuthing" had so far given him.

He was not long in discovering the hole in the floor

of the wagon. The memorandum book he had discovered soon after getting into the borrowed clothes.

Of course he knew that Motor Matt would follow him! That was the kind of fellow the king of the motor boys was; never had he turned his back on a pard in distress.

Carl, too, was morally certain that Ping had seen him get into the monkey wagon. Motor Matt would discover this from the Chinaman, and then would come the pursuit.

The thing for Carl to do was to point the way by which he had been carried off. The hole in the floor, and the memorandum book in his pocket, were not long in giving him the right tip.

Sitting down on the bottom of the cage, Carl occupied himself in tearing the leaves of the book into scraps and poking the scraps through the opening.

How far Ben Ali drove Carl did not know, but it seemed as though the Hindoo had been hours on the road. There was a pain in Carl's back, where the mule had left its token of remembrance, and the jolt of the wagon was far from pleasant.

Presently there came the rapid beat of a horse's hoofs, a whirl of wheels, and a sudden stop of the monkey wagon. The other sounds ceased at the same moment.

For a second or two Carl imagined that Matt had overhauled Ben Ali, but this fancy was dispelled by the strange words that passed between Ben Ali and some one else.

The mahout could be heard climbing swiftly down from his perch and moving around to the rear of the wagon. Carl slipped the book into his pocket and drew

away from the hole in the floor.

Once more the key grated in the padlock. The door was drawn open and Ben Ali was revealed, looming large in the rush of sunlight, a bared knife in his hand.

"You come, sahib," said Ben Ali.

Carl got up and moved toward the door. There Ben Ali caught his eyes for a space and held them with the same weird looks indulged in near the aëroplane on the show grounds.

The Dutchman instantly grew automatic in his movements, keeping his eyes straight ahead and following Ben Ali's every gesture.

Carl had seen persons hypnotized, and knew how they acted.

"You come," repeated Ben Ali sternly, and Carl jumped down from the wagon.

They were in a country road. There was a smart-looking horse and buggy beside the monkey wagon, and Haidee was on the seat. If appearances were to be believed, she was in another of her spells.

"Sahib get in de buggy," ordered Ben Ali.

Carl climbed over the wheel obediently and sat down beside the girl. She paid not the least attention to him, nor he to her. Ben Ali climbed in beside them, squeezed into the seat, and took the reins from Haidee's hands.

Meanwhile, Carl had been looking at another brown man in a turban who was unhitching the horse from the monkey wagon.

Ben Ali waited until the horse was out of the shafts and the second Hindoo on its back, then he started the Kentucky cob off along the road. His companion

trotted along behind.

Dropping any more paper scraps was out of the question. Carl was too tightly wedged in between Ben Ali and Haidee to use his hands; besides, he could not have made a move that would not instantly have been seen.

Presently the Hindoo on the horse called out something in his unknown jargon. Ben Ali answered, and the runabout was turned from the road and into the woods.

Possibly they proceeded a hundred feet into the timber. At the end of that distance their progress was halted by a creek with steep banks.

Ben Ali got out. While standing on the ground facing Carl, he made sinuous movements with his slim brown hands—passes, most probably, designed to keep Carl in a hypnotic state.

The girl shuddered, suddenly, and drew a hand across her eyes.

"Uncle Ben!" she exclaimed, with a sharp cry, "where am I?"

"You are safe," said Ben Ali. "You are not to work with de trapeze any more, not be with de show any more. We are quit with de show. *Kabultah, meetoowah?*"

"Yes, yes," breathed the girl, "I understand. But where are we going? I don't want to be in a trance any more. I want to know what I say, what I do—all the time."

The man's face hardened.

"You come, Haidee," he said, gently but none the less firmly.

The girl got up and climbed down from the wagon.

"Sahib!" he cried sharply. "You come, too."

Carl likewise climbed to the ground.

"You are asleep," went on Ben Ali, coming up to Carl and bringing his face close. "You know not anything what you do. Sit!"

Carl sank down on the bank of the creek.

The other Hindoo had dismounted. Stepping away from his horse, he turned the runabout rig the other way, so that the cob faced the road. Then he tied the animal.

Meanwhile, Ben Ali, seating himself cross-legged on the ground, had drawn a small black box from his breast. It was a lacquered box and shone like ebony in the gleam of sun that drifted down through the trees.

Haidee uttered an exclamation and stretched out her hands.

"It is mine, Uncle Ben! It belongs to me."

"Yis, *meetoowah*," agreed Ben Ali, "it belong to you, but I keep it. That is safer, better."

He put down the box and listened, hissing to attract the attention of the other Hindoo.

"Aurung Zeeb!"

The other turned, and Ben Ali motioned toward the road.

The sound of an approaching motor car broke the stillness. It grew rapidly in volume, passed a point abreast of those in the woods, and went on, dying away in the distance.

Excitement shone in the faces of the Hindoos, and there was alarm in the face of the girl.

"What is it?" she cried. "Uncle Ben—"

"Silence, *meetoowah!*" commanded the Hindoo.

Taking the lacquered box in his hand, Ben Ali leaped erect and chattered wildly with Aurung Zeeb. After that, he came to Carl, his face full of anxiety and alarm, and made more passes.

"You come," he ordered, "get back in de buggy."

Carl followed as Ben Ali backed away in the direction of the runabout. The Hindoo stood close to the wheel until Carl was in the seat.

At that moment a smothered scream came from Haidee. Aurung Zeeb jumped toward her, letting go the bridle of his horse as he did so. Ben Ali muttered something under his breath, put the lacquered box on the runabout seat beside Carl, and started toward Aurung Zeeb and the girl.

"You must tell me what you are doing," panted the girl, facing the Hindoos with flashing eyes. "That is Boss Burton's horse and buggy. Why have you got the rig here? What are we doing here? Tell me, Uncle Ben! I must know."

Ben Ali tried to quiet her. Carl was in a quiver. The lines were twined about the whip on the dashboard of the runabout, and both Hindoos were fully fifteen feet away. It looked like a propitious moment for escape. Carl had not accomplished much, but he was patting himself on the back because of the way he had fooled Ben Ali. Now, if he could get away, and take the runabout with him—

Carl never thought very long over any proposition. Nor did he give much time to this.

Swooping down on the dashboard, he grabbed up the lines and the whip.

"Gid ap mit yourself!" he yelled, and struck the horse.

With a snort the animal bounded forward, breaking the strap that secured him to the tree and almost throwing Carl from the seat.

The other horse took fright and bounded away, while Carl went lurching and plunging in a wild dash for the road.

How he ever reached the road without coming to grief against the many trees he grazed in his dash was something which would have puzzled a wiser head than his.

He paid not the least attention to the Hindoos, nor to Haidee. He was thinking of Carl, and trying to guess how much money he would get for bringing back the stolen horse and runabout.

For once, he thought exultantly, he was making the detective business *pay*.

Whirling into the road, he headed the horse back toward town, plying the whip and hustling the best he knew how.

It was a marvel that the runabout held together. But it did. Suddenly a firearm spoke sharply from somewhere in the rear.

Carl did not look behind. He had but one thought, and that was that the Hindoos must be phenomenal runners, and that they were chasing him on foot and firing as they came.

He bent forward over the dashboard and urged the cob to a wilder pace.

Then, while he was using the whip, an angry voice roared from alongside the runabout:

"Stop lashing that horse! Stop, I tell you!"

Carl became faintly aware that there was an automobile dashing along the road side by side with the runabout.

"Carl!" shouted a familiar voice. "Stop your running! Don't you know who we are?"

Then the excited Dutchman became aware of the situation and pulled back on the lines.

He chuckled delightedly as he jerked and sawed on the bit.

He, Carl Pretzel, had been running away from his old pard! What a joke!

And there, in the automobile with Matt, was the manager of the show.

It wouldn't be long, now, before Carl found out how much he was to get for recovering the stolen horse and runabout.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LACQUERED BOX.

Probably that Kentucky horse of Burton's had never been treated in his life as he was that afternoon. He was muddy with sweat and dust, and his high-strung spirits, by that time thoroughly aroused, rebelled against the curb.

In order to help Carl out, Motor Matt drove the car past the horse and partly across the road. This served to bring the animal to a halt.

"By Jove!" stormed Burton, "I wouldn't have had this happen for a hundred dollars! It's a wonder if the horse isn't ruined!"

He flopped out of the automobile and approached the horse's head.

"Whoa, Colonel!" he murmured soothingly. "Whoa, old boy!"

Then, getting one hand on the bit, he held the animal while he petted and wheedled and patted the lathered neck.

"Der rig vas shtole py der Hindoo," said Carl, "und I haf recofered it und prought it pack. Dot comes oof being a goot tedectif, py shinks! How mooch iss id vort'?"

"Worth?" scowled Burton. "If the animal is injured I'll charge you up for it. Don't you know how to take care of a horse?"

"Don'd you vas going to pay me someding?" gasped Carl.

"Pay?" snorted Burton, in no mood to consider a

reward after seeing his favorite horse mistreated. "Why, I feel like I wanted to use the whip on you! What did you run away from us for?"

"I t'ought you vas der Hindoos," explained Carl feebly. "Say, Matt," he added, turning to his chum, "der feller don't vas going to gif me someding! Vat a miserliness! Und me going droo all vat I dit!"

"Where did you get the runabout, Carl?" asked Matt.

He thought Boss Burton was a little unreasonable, but was not disposed to make any comments. Burton's ways were sometimes far from meeting Matt's approval—and they had never been farther from it than during the events of that exciting day.

"I shtear him from der Hindoos," said Carl, "und make some gedavays by der shkin oof my teet', you bed you! I hat to run der horse, Matt, oder I wouldn't have made der esgape. Vone oof der Hindoos had a knife, und dey vas bot' det safage I can't dell. Der odder horse vat pulled der cage vagon iss somevere aheadt. He got away und vent like some shdreaks."

"You climb down," snapped Burton, coming back to the side of the runabout. "I'll take the rig back to the grounds and send one of the teamsters for the monkey wagon. You'll bring along the automobile, Matt?" he added, getting into the runabout as Carl got out.

"Yes," answered Matt.

"Ain't you going on with us to look up the Hindoos and Haidee?" asked McGlory. "Going to hang back before we run out the trail, Burton?"

"I don't care anything about them," was the reply, "so long as I've recovered my own property. What's this?" and the showman picked up the lacquered box.

Carl stared at it. Evidently he had forgotten all about

it, up to that moment.

"Py chimineddy!" he muttered. "Dot's der Hindoo's! He tropped id on der seat pefore I run away mit der rig."

"Then I'll take it with me," said Burton. "Perhaps it's of enough value so that the rascal will come after it. If he does, I can read the riot act to him."

"I guess you'd better leave that with Carl, Burton," spoke up Matt. "You don't care to bother with the Hindoos, and we may think it's worth while."

"Oh, well, if that's the way you feel about it," and the showman tossed the box to Carl. "Mind," he added, as he started off, "you're not to get into any trouble with that automobile."

Burton was soon out of sight.

"He's the limit, that fellow!" growled McGlory. "He might have tipped Carl a five-case note, but he wouldn't. He's a skinner."

"Nodding doing in der tedectif pitzness," said Carl resignedly, getting into the automobile beside Matt. "Same like always I ged der vorst oof id. Vile vorking on der Manners gase, I haf peen in a row mit Ping, in a row mit a canvasman und a 'parker' for der site-show, in some more rows mit a shtable feller, got kicked in der pack mit a mu-el, und carried away in some vagons vat shmelled like a glue factory. Und vat I ged? Dot Purton feller he say he vould like to pound me mit der vip. Ach, vell, ve can't pecome greadt tedectifs mitoudt a leedle hardt luck at her shtart."

"Tell us what happened to you, Carl," said Matt, "and be quick about it."

Carl sketched his adventures, with now and then an urging toward brevity from Matt.

"Ven I see dot Hindoo coming, at der time he made some brisoners oof me," expounded Carl, on reaching that part of his recital, "I remempered der girl vat come down in der flying machine, und vat he valked away mit, und I got der t'ought, like lightning, dot meppy der feller know someding aboutt Markaret Manners, vat iss atverdised for in der Lonton baper. Abner nit, it don'd vas der case. I schust let meinseluf pretend dot I vas mesmerized so dot I could go along by der Hindoo und meppy findt oudt someding. I don't findt oudt anyt'ing."

Carl's disgust was great, and he brought his story to a quick conclusion.

"We'll go look for the Hindoos and Haidee," said Matt. "As I jog along, Carl, you keep watch for the place where you turned from the road. Meanwhile, Joe," Matt added, "you take the lacquered box and open it. We'll see what's inside. The contents may shed a little light on this mystery of the girl."

"Der Hindoos und der girl von't be vere dey vas," remarked Carl, handing the box to McGlory.

"They can't possibly be far away," answered Matt. "They have to travel on foot, now, and will be compelled to go slow."

"This box is locked, pard," called McGlory.

"Force the lid, then," said Matt. "It's necessary, according to my notion, that we try and find out something about Haidee. And for the girl's good."

McGlory opened his pocketknife and inserted the blade between the box and the lid. The lock splintered out under pressure.

"She's open, pard," announced the cowboy.

"What's inside?"

"A bundle of letters tied with a piece of twine."

"Ah!"

"They have English stamps," went on McGlory, "and are postmarked at London."

"Better and better! And they're addressed to—"

"Miss Margaret Manners, Calcutta, India."

Carl nearly fell off the seat.

"Ach, du lieber!" he sputtered, "I vas ketching my breat'. A clue, py shinks! Dot Haidee knows vere der fife-t'ousant-tollar girl iss, I bed you!"

"Knows where the girl is?" echoed Matt.

"Sure t'ing. How wouldt Haidee haf Markaret Manners' ledders oof she ditn't know somet'ing aboutt der English girl? A few more knocks, py shiminy, und I vill make der fife t'ousant tollars!"

"Carl," said Matt, "you've got a wooden head when it comes to sleuthing. Why, Haidee is Margaret Manners herself. I've had a hunch to that effect for two or three hours."

Once more Carl had to hold on with both hands to keep from going by the board. He could only breathe hard and think of what he would do with all the money that was coming to him.

"What else is there in the box, Joe?" asked Matt. "Anything but the letters?"

"Just one thing, pard," replied McGlory. "It looks like a decoration of some kind."

McGlory held the object over Matt's shoulder, so he could see it.

It was a bronze Maltese cross, with a royal crown in the centre surmounted by a lion, and the words "For

Valour" stamped on the cross under the crown. The cross hung from a V-shaped piece attached to a bar, and the bar was attached to a faded red ribbon. Across the bar was engraved the name "Lionel Manners."

"I feel like taking off my hat in the presence of that, pards," said Matt.

"Why?" demanded Joe.

"It's a Victoria Cross," returned Matt, "and is only given to persons for a deed of gallantry and daring. When the ribbon is red, it shows that the winner of the cross belonged to the army; when blue, to the navy. Captain Lionel Manners must have been a brave man, and it's a pity his daughter should be treated as she has been. Carl, you've blundered onto a big thing—and you couldn't have blundered so successfully once in a thousand times. Put the letters and the cross back in the box, Joe. We'll keep them safe for the girl. If—"

"Dere's der blace," interrupted Carl, pointing to the roadside.

Motor Matt brought the automobile to a stop.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HYPNOTIST'S VICTIM.

"You and I will go and look for the Hindoos, Joe," said Matt, getting out of the car. "Carl will stay here and take care of the automobile."

"Vat oof der Hindoos ged away from you und come ad me?" queried Carl, in a panic. "I bed you dey vas sore ofer vat I dit."

"If they should happen to attack you," answered Matt, "run away from them. You used to know something about driving a car, Carl."

"All righdt," said Carl, with deep satisfaction. "I'll run away from some drouples oof any come in my tirection. Look oudt for Ben Ali. He has a knife."

Matt and McGlory, after securing a few further directions from Carl, started into the woods on their way to the creek. They moved warily in single file, Matt taking the lead.

As they made their way onward, they saw evidences of Carl's wild dash for the road in the runabout, broken bushes and trees blazed at about the height of a buggy axle.

"It's a wonder that runabout wasn't strung all the way from the creek to the road," murmured McGlory. "The Dutchman's luck has landed on him all in a bunch."

"Carl has a knack for blundering in the right direction," said Matt. "But he has as much grit as you'll find in any lad of his size. Think how he fooled that Ben Ali! Made the Hindoo believe he was hypnotized."

"And Carl had only the faintest notion what he was doing it for!" chuckled McGlory. "Say, pard, I'd like to have seen those Hindoos when Carl woke up and used the whip on that horse of Burton's."

"Hist!" warned Matt, "we're close to the creek."

There were evidences in plenty that the bank of the creek had been recently occupied—broken bushes and an imprint of human feet in the damp soil. As Matt and McGlory had supposed, however, there was no sign of Haidee or the Hindoos in the vicinity.

"Here's where we're up a stump, pard," said McGlory. "I wonder if I could pick up the trail and find which way the outfit went?"

"Try it," said Matt.

McGlory skirmished around for ten minutes.

"I reckon I've got it," he announced, at the end of that time. "Unless I'm far wide of my trail, Matt, they went down the creek."

"Then that's the direction for us. Step off, Joe, and be lively."

Although the boys believed the Hindoos and Haidee must be far in advance of them, yet they moved forward cautiously, being exceedingly careful not to rustle the bushes as they passed or to step on any twigs that would crackle under their feet.

As a matter of fact, they had not been five minutes on their way down the creek before the cowboy whirled abruptly with a finger on his lips; then, motioning to Matt, he dropped to his knees.

Matt followed suit and crept alongside McGlory.

"We're in luck, too," whispered the cowboy. "They're right ahead of us, all three of them. Listen, and you can

hear them talking."

Matt raised his head and listened intently. A faint sound of voices was borne to his ears.

"Let's creep up on them, Joe," he suggested. "They're two against us, you know, and they'll make a pretty big handful, if they're armed."

"We know Ben Ali has a knife, but that is probably all the weapons they've got. If they had guns, then Carl would never have made his getaway."

Redoubling their caution, the boys crawled forward, screening their advance by keeping bunches of undergrowth in front of them as much as they could.

The voices grew steadily louder, until it became manifest that the brown men were jabbering in Hindustani.

Finally the boys arrived as close as they deemed it best to go, for they had Ben Ali, Aurung Zeeb, and Haidee in plain view.

The three were in a little oak opening on the creek bank. Haidee was sitting on a log, and the other two were standing and talking rapidly.

A moment after the boys were able to see them and note what was going on, the Hindoos stopping their talking. Aurung Zeeb drew off to one side, and Ben Ali stepped in front of the girl.

"Haidee, *meetoowah!*" he called.

The girl lifted her head.

"You must go into de trance, *meetoowah,*" said Ben Ali.

With a heart-breaking cry the girl flung herself on her knees in front of him.

"No, no, Uncle Ben!" she wailed, "don't make me do things I can't remember—things I don't want to do! What happened during the parade this morning? And what happened while I was in the air with Motor Matt? You will not tell me and I do not know! Oh, Uncle Ben —"

"Haidee!"

The voice was clear and keen cut. There was something in the tones of it that lifted the girl erect and uncomplaining, and held her as by a magnet with her eyes on the snaky, dancing orbs of Ben Ali.

The power of the Hindoo over the girl must have been tremendous.

The boys, shivering with horror, watched the Hindoo as he waved his arms gracefully and made his sinuous passes. He was no more than a minute or two in effecting his work.

By swift degrees Haidee's face lost its expression and became as though graven from stone; her eyes grew dull and her whole manner listless.

"Haidee, you sleep," came monotonously from Ben Ali, as his hands dropped. "You hear me, *meetoowah*? You understand?"

"Yes," answered the girl, in the clacking, parrot-like voice with which the boys were somewhat familiar.

"You are never to remember, *meetoowah*, what you do in de parade, or what you do on de flying machine," continued Ben Ali. "When you wake, you forget all that, and how I tell you to pull the lever when de parade reach de min'ral well, or pin de fireball as it smoulder to de wing of de machine. You forget all that, huh?"

"Yes."

"You are bright, lively girl, *meetoowah*" went on the Hindoo. "You are gay, happy, but you are under de power, yes, all de time. You go back to de show, and you tell them that Ben Ali and Aurung Zeeb ver' bad mans and run away with Haidee, that you make de escape. Then you get from Boss Burton the money he owe and come to Linton Hotel in Lafayette sometime this night. You understand, *meetoowah*?"

"Yes."

"And you not let anybody know you come to Linton Hotel, *meetoowah*."

"No."

"And at all time when you wake you forget you was Margaret Manners, and you remember all time when you wake that you only Haidee."

"Yes."

"Also, you try get back de box that b'long to you, de little lacquered box. Remember that, Haidee. Get de box if you can and bring it with de money to Uncle Ben Ali at de Linton Hotel in Lafayette."

"Yes."

"And you all time forget when you wake dat you Margaret Manners, and—"

Something happened to the hypnotist, right then and there.

Unable to endure longer the scene transpiring under their eyes, the boys had crept forward until they were close to Ben Ali and Aurung Zeeb.

Matt, behind Ben Ali, arose suddenly and caught the Hindoo by the shoulders, flinging him down on his back and holding him there with both hands about his throat.

McGlory, it had been planned, should make a simultaneous attack, in the same manner, upon Aurung Zeeb; but that individual was keener-eyed than his companion. He saw McGlory just as the cowboy was about to spring. With a loud cry of warning, Aurung Zeeb broke away in a panic and fled into the timber.

McGlory did not follow him. Ben Ali, choking and wriggling under the tense fingers of the king of the motor boys, had made a desperate effort and drawn his knife. The cowboy had glimpsed the blade, shimmering in a gleam of sun, and had leaped forward and caught the Hindoo's hand.

"We've got the scoundrel!" exulted McGlory. "I reckon this is the last stunt of this sort he'll ever lay hand to."

Ben Ali tried to speak. Matt saw the attempt and removed his rigid fingers from the prisoner's throat, slipping his hands down and gripping one of the man's arms.

"Hold his other arm, Joe," panted Matt. "I want to talk with him. I've got to talk with him. A great wrong has been done Haidee, and if it is righted Ben Ali is the only one to do it."

McGlory was puzzled, but yielded immediate obedience.

"Look at the girl," he whispered, as he laid both hands on the prisoner's other arm.

There was a look of sharp pain in Haidee's face. Her hands were clutching her throat, and she was swaying where she stood.

"Haidee feel what you do to me," gurgled Ben Ali. "You hurt me, you hurt her. You do not understand de power."

"He's talkin' with two tongues!" declared McGlory.

"No," said Matt, "he tells the truth. As I told you, Joe, we've got to make use of the scoundrel for Haidee's benefit. Don't mind Haidee—she'll be all right by the time we are through with Ben Ali."

CHAPTER XV.

"FOR THE SAKE OF HAIDEE!"

Motor Matt knew something about hypnotism, having acquired the knowledge in the casual way most boys learn about such occult and, at times, fascinating subjects.

The young motorist knew, for instance, that if it was suggested to Margaret Manners often enough in a hypnotic state that she was only Haidee, the girl would come to forget her own personality. Even when out of the trance she would be confused and bewildered in trying to recall her real name and her past life.

It was to undo some of this evil that Matt was eager for a talk with the Hindoo.

"Ben Ali," said Matt sternly, "we have the box of letters and Captain Manners' Victoria Cross. In order to make you suffer terribly for what you have done, we have only to turn you over to the authorities and let them cable to London. There is a thousand pounds sterling offered as a reward for the recovery of Margaret Manners; and for you there would be a long term in prison. You understand that, don't you?"

There was a crafty look on the Hindoo's face as he answered.

"Yes, sahib. But you not do anything with me. De girl is in de trance. I have her in my power."

"And we have you in our power," said Matt, appreciating to the full the strong hold Ben Ali had on them, as well as on the girl.

"But, by and by, when we have finished de talk, de young sahib will let me go."

Matt was deeply thoughtful for a few moments.

"Yes," he answered deliberately, "if you will answer my questions, and do what I tell you to do, we will let you go."

"Pard!" remonstrated Joe.

"I know what I am doing, Joe," returned Matt.

"De young sahib is wise," put in the smiling Ben Ali, his eyes beginning to gleam and dance in an attempt to get the king of the motor boys under their influence.

"Pah!" murmured Matt disgustedly. "You can hold his arm with one hand, Joe. Place the other hand over his eyes."

"He's a fiend," growled McGlory, as his palm dropped over the upper part of Ben Ali's face.

The Hindoo laughed noiselessly.

"Will you talk with me frankly and answer my questions, Ben Ali," proceeded Matt, "providing we promise to let you go?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Then, first, who are you?"

"De brother of a great rajah in my own land, and de brother of de great rajah's sister. That sister married de Captain Manners, Margaret's father."

"I see," breathed Matt, his eyes wandering to the girl.

Haidee had grown quiet, her face expressionless and her eyes staring and vacant, as before.

"I, with my rich rajah brother," continued Ben Ali, with bitterness, "was only de driver of his elephants. No more. I work. He live in luxury and do not anything. Captain Manners die. Then his wife, she die, too. *Suttee*. She burn on de funeral pyre, as our custom

is in my land. De husband die, then de widow die. Margaret she live. My brother, de rajah, give me money, send me to Calcutta after Margaret. I go. I get de girl and we take ship to America. Hah! On de way I tell Margaret it is her uncle, de rajah's wish, that she go to de Vassar school in America, that I follow order when I take her there. She believe what I say. On de steamer I begin de trances. She not like them, but she agree at first. By and by she not able to help herself. I tell her she not remember who she is when she wake, that she only Haidee. She b'leeve." The scoundrel laughed. "I have de so great power with the eyes and the hands, sahib."

"Why did you join a show and take the girl with you?" demanded Matt, a feeling of horror and repulsion for Ben Ali growing in his heart.

"I have to live, sahib. My money give out. I know how to drive de elephant, so I hear of de show and go there. Boss Burton hire me. I speak of Haidee. He hire her, too."

"Did she know how to perform on the trapeze—she, the niece of a powerful rajah and daughter of an English gentleman?"

"She know not anything about that. I put her in de trance and tell her she know. Then she perform on de trapeze better than any."

"Why did you want her to go up on the flying machine?"

"Cut it short," growled McGlory huskily. "I feel like using the knife on the villain, pard. He ain't fit to live."

"You listened to me while I was talking with my friends in the calliope tent this morning," continued Matt. "Why was that?"

"I was afraid of de Dutch boy," answered Ben Ali,

"and I was more afraid when I hear what he tell. After that, I be afraid of all of you. You understan"? I thought you take Haidee away from me."

"You hypnotized her before the parade and told her to do something to make me trouble?"

"Yes, sahib," was the prompt response. "I wanted you out of de way. I was afraid."

"Scoundrel!" muttered Matt. "Why, you placed Haidee herself in danger."

"I was Rajah's mahout. I could have kept de elephant from hurting Haidee."

"Was she hypnotized when she came to the aëroplane and played that trick to go up in the machine with me?"

"She was, yes, sahib."

"And you gave her something to be used in setting the aëroplane afire?"

"Yes, sahib. It was de smouldering fire ball, with de coal in its heart. When de machine go up, and de win' fan it, den by and by it break into flame and set fire to de machine."

Ben Ali was frank, brutally frank. But he had Motor Matt's promise that he should go free, and he seemed to gloat over his evil deeds and to wish that not a detail be left out.

"She did not act, when she was in the aëroplane, as she did when she was in the parade," said Matt.

"I make her act different, sahib. I tell her how she was to be. I have de so great power I do that. Other fakirs not so great as Ben Ali."

"We've heard enough," said Matt. "Now, as yet, you have only partly earned your freedom, Ben Ali. You

have still to do what I shall tell you."

"What is that, sahib?"

"You will, by the aid of hypnotism, undo all the evil you have done, as much as possible. For instance, you will impress on Haidee, as she stands there, the truth that she is Margaret Manners, and that she will remember it, and all her past, when she wakes. After that, you are to waken her and take yourself off."

"Yes," answered the Hindoo. "My freedom is dear to me. Perhaps"—and he smiled—"I have something yet to do with Motor Matt."

"If you cross my path again, Ben Ali," returned the king of the motor boys, "there will be no promise binding me to let you go free. If you are wise, you will stay away from me and my friends, and from Haidee."

"I take my chance, if that is it. To awaken Haidee I must be on my feet."

"You will lie as you are!" declared Matt sharply. "You can do your work as well this way as in any other."

"I will try," said the Hindoo, after a moment's pause. Then, in a loud voice, he called: "Haidee!"

The girl turned her eyes upon him.

"Yes," she answered.

"When you wake, *meetoowah*, you will remember that you are Margaret Manners."

"Yes."

"You will remember all, everything—Calcutta, your father, Captain Manners, your mother, your mother's brother, de rajah. But you forget Ben Ali, and you think no more of him. You understand?"

"Yes."

This, in a little different language, Ben Ali repeated several times.

"Now, young sahib," said he, "let me up till I wake Haidee."

"Hold to him on that side, Joe," cautioned Matt, "but give him the use of his hands. When Haidee wakes, release him."

"Sufferin' fairy tales!" grumbled McGlory. "I hate to do it, pard, and that's honest, but I reckon, from what I've heard, that you know what you're about. It's a hard way to bring right and justice to the girl by letting this scoundrel escape the law, but there don't seem to be anything else for it."

Slowly the boys got up and permitted Ben Ali to struggle to his feet. When he was erect, both still gripped him by the waist in order to prevent him from committing any treachery.

Ben Ali leaned forward and waved his hands.

"Awake, *meetoowah!*" he called sharply. "You are yourself again, Margaret Manners! Awake!"

The girl started, and lifted both hands to her temples. It was enough, and Motor Matt was satisfied.

"Let him go, Joe," said Matt, "but keep his knife."

The boys, at the same moment, withdrew their hands and stepped back. Ben Ali, with a wild, snarling laugh, sprang into the woods and vanished.

"What is it?" asked Margaret Manners, in a puzzled voice. "Where am I? Ah, is that you, Motor Matt? And Joe!"

"Yes, sis," returned the cowboy, his voice full of gentleness, "it's your friend McGlory, and the best friend you ever had if you did but know it—Motor

Matt."

"Come," said Matt briskly, "we must hustle back to the automobile. Carl will have a fit wondering what has become of us."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RAJAH'S NIECE.

The events of that wonderful day all seemed like a dream to Motor Matt when he came to look back on them. The coming of Carl, loaded with a joke sprung upon him by the detectives in Chicago—a joke, by the way, that proved a boomerang—and the dangers and perils that trailed after the Dutch boy and finally ended in most marvelous success—all these seemed but the figments of disordered fancy.

But the damaged aëroplane remained to tell of the dangers, and Carl was there in the flesh, and Margaret Manners was present, freed of the evil shadow that had blighted her young life.

The afternoon performance had been over for some time when Matt, Joe, Carl, and Margaret—for now she must be Margaret and not Haidee—returned to the show grounds.

The owner of the motor car was walking up and down in fretful mood, thinking, perhaps, that he had done a most unwise thing in letting his machine get out of his hands.

Burton was with him and seeking to pacify his fears. But the sight of the motor car alone did that.

"Well," exclaimed Burton, "you've got one of 'em, Matt. She is the most valuable of the lot, to me. Where are the other two?"

"They escaped," answered Matt shortly. "And Haidee, Mr. Burton, is no longer an employee of the Big Consolidated."

"What!" cried Burton. "Do you mean to say she isn't going up on the aëroplane any more, and that she'll not touch off Roman candles or—"

"I told you she'd never do that, some time ago," said Matt keenly.

Burton seemed to have a way of forgetting the things he did not want to hear.

"Well, anyhow," went on the showman, as soon as they had all alighted, and the owner of the car had got into it and tooted joyfully away, "come to the mess tent and tell me what happened."

"Haven't time, Burton," said Matt. "Miss Manners is going to the best hotel in town, and I've got some telegrams to send."

"Telegrams?" Burton pricked up his ears and showed signs of excitement. "There isn't another show trying to hire you away from me, is there? Don't forget your written contract, Matt!"

"I'm not forgetting that," returned Matt, inclined to laugh. "The telegram I am going to send is to the British ambassador at Washington, and the cablegram I am going to get on the wires is to an attorney in London, England."

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Burton. "It looks to me as though you wouldn't get through in time to go on with section two of the show train."

"We won't," continued Matt, "and that's what I'm going to tell you about. We'll be a couple of days making repairs on the aëroplane, and we'll make them here. After the work is done, we'll join the Big Consolidated at the town where it happens to be at that time."

"Your contract, sir!" fumed Burton. "You are—"

"No repairs on the aëroplane would have been necessary," interrupted Motor Matt, "if you had not played that trick on me and substituted Haidee for Le Bon. Just remember that. I shall expect you to pay the bills for the repairs, too."

Burton received these remarks in silence.

"When I and my friends are ready to join you," went on the king of the motor boys, "we'll go by air line in the *Comet*, and if you have any good paper, we'll scatter it all along the route. It will be the biggest kind of an advertisement for you, Burton."

This was a master stroke, if Burton yearned for one thing more than another, it was to make his name a household word.

"Great!" he cried. "But you won't be more than two days here, will you, Matt?"

"We'll try not to be."

"And you'll scatter the paper?"

"Certainly."

"Fine! I'll have it for you. Where'll I send it?"

"To the Bramble House."

"It will be there. Make the bill for repairs as light as possible, and draw on me for the amount. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Just about."

"Ask anybody and they'll tell you Boss Burton is the soul of honesty, and that every promise he makes in his paper is carried out to the letter. What will you do with the aëroplane?"

"McGlory and Ping will look after it to-night. Tomorrow they will have it removed to some place where we can work on it comfortably."

"All right—have it your way. I'm the easiest fellow to get along with that you ever saw, when I see a chap is going to treat me square. Good luck to you—to all of you."

The party separated. McGlory went over into the show grounds to join Ping at the aëroplane, and Matt and Carl escorted Miss Manners to the Bramble House. Carl went to the show, when the tents were being pulled down that night, and got Miss Manners' trunk and his own clothes from the calliope tent. Carl, it will be recalled, was wearing McGlory's work clothes, and McGlory was going to need them.

Most of the luggage belonging to Matt and his friend went on by train with the show impedimenta, to be reclaimed at some town farther along the route.

Matt sent his telegram and his cablegram, and in neither did he conceal the fact that all the glory of the achievement belonged to Carl Pretzel.

The Dutch boy was terribly set up over his success. Until far into the night he kept Matt up, trying to find out what he should do with his five thousand dollars. Carl was about evenly divided, in his opinions, as to whether he should buy an aëroplane of his own, or a circus. Matt discouraged him on both points.

Next morning the *Comet*, under its own power, dragged its battered pinions to a big blacksmith shop, and there the motor boys got actively to work on the repairs.

The damage was confined almost entirely to the canvas covering the left wing. None of the supports were injured.

In two days' time the aëroplane was as good as new. At the close of the second day, when Matt and McGlory reached the hotel with their work finished, so far as the *Comet* was concerned, they found an English gentleman who represented the British embassy.

This gentleman had come, personally, to assume charge of Miss Manners; and, by this very act, the boys understood that the young woman was something of a personage.

The Englishman said nothing about the reward, and Carl began to worry. Finally he broached the subject himself, only to learn that the five thousand dollars must come from India, and that it would be a month, possibly two months, before it could be turned over.

Carl was disgusted. He had expected to have the money all spent before two months had passed.

"Dot's der vay mit der tedectif pitzness," he remarked gloomily. "Even ven you vin you don't get nodding."

"But you're bound to get it, Carl," laughed McGlory, "sooner or later."

"Meppy so mooch lader dot I vill be olt und gray-heated und not know nodding aboutd how to shpend him. How vas I going to lif in der meandime, huh? Tell me dose."

"Come along with us," said Matt, "and stay with the Big Consolidated until your money comes."

"I don'd like dot Purton feller," growled Carl. "He iss der vorst case oof stingy vat I efer see. Shdill, id iss vort' someding to be mit Modor Matt. Yah, so helup me, I vill go."

Ping was not in love with this arrangement, but had to bow to it.

The gentleman from Washington took the next train back to the capital, arranging to have Miss Manners left in the care of an estimable lady in Lafayette until word should come from India.

THE END.

The next number (28) will contain:

Motor Matt's "Short Circuit"

OR,

THE MAHOUT'S VOW

The Serpent Charmer—A Bad Elephant—Burton's Luck—Motor
Matt's Courage—Dhondaram's Excuse—Robbery—Between the
Wagons—A Peg to Hang Suspicions On—A Waiting Game—A
Trick at the Start—In the Air With a Cobra—A Scientific Fact—
Ping On the Wrong Track—Facing a Traitor—Meeting the
Hindoo—A Bit of a Backset

MOTOR STORIES

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SAVED BY A FALLING TREE.

Winter still reigned, and Louis and Allen Wright were snowshoeing back to the lumber camp where they worked.

It was a small camp upon the Tobago River, near the Ottawa, close to the border between the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the pine had for the most part been cut long ago. There was a little pine left, however, with a good deal of pulp wood and mixed timber to be got out, and the foreman had sent the boys to look over a patch of spruce about twelve miles from the shanty. They were returning with their axes upon the frozen Tobago River, which formed a convenient roadway through the tangled and snowy Canadian forest.

The boys were not professional "lumber jacks," but they were both deeply desirous of acquiring a couple of hundred dollars to cover the expenses of a course in mining engineering, and that winter high wages were being offered for even inexperienced men in the lumber camps.

As they were country-bred youths, they took to the work naturally, and Allen, although he had not yet come to his full strength, speedily developed a surprising dexterity with the axe. He could "lay" a tree within a few inches of where he desired it to fall, and had been the instrument of victory several times in lumbering matches with rival camps.

It was late in February and still bitterly cold, but the deep snow was packing and softening. In a few weeks the ice might break up, and mountains of logs were piled upon the river in readiness for the drive.

About three miles before it reached the shanty the

river broke into rapids for about thirty rods before it fell tumultuously over a low ridge of rocks.

It was necessary to make a detour round this obstacle, and Allen went ashore at a cautious distance from the water. Louis, however, remained upon the ice, walking almost to the verge, and looking over into the inky stream.

"Be careful, Lou! That ice is getting rotten!" Allen shouted from the bank.

"It's as strong as rock. Look!" answered Louis, jumping in his rackets with a heavy thud upon the snow.

He proved the reverse of what he intended. There was a dull cracking under the snow and a startled shout from the reckless snowshoer. A great cake of ice broke off, drifting away, with Louis standing on it. He balanced unsteadily for a moment, staggered, and plunged off with a terrified yell, going clean out of sight under the icy water.

The cake of ice drifted over the rapids and broke up. Allen had scarcely time to move before his brother reappeared, struggling feebly, and evidently almost paralyzed by the cold immersion. By good luck he managed to catch the top of a projecting rock at the head of the fall, and there he clung, driven against the rock by the force of the current.

"Hold on a minute, Lou! I'll get you out!" screamed Allen frantically. Louis turned a blue face toward him, without answering.

Allen tore and kicked off his snowshoes, and was on the point of plunging into the water; but common sense returned to him in time. Louis was in the middle of the stream, thirty feet away. Allen could never reach him through that swift, deep current, and if he could, he would be so chilled as to be incapable of giving any

sort of help.

But the boy certainly could not hold on long in his present position, and should he let go he would be swept over the rapids and under the ice at the foot. His life hung on seconds.

Allen could think of no plan. He shouted encouraging words without knowing what he said, while his eyes roved desperately up and down the snowy shores in search of some inspiration.

If he had only a rope, or anything to make a bridge—and then his eye fell upon a tall, dead pine "stub," barkless and almost branchless, standing a few feet back from the stream.

It was long enough to reach to the imperiled youth, if it could be felled so accurately as to lie close beside him. But a foot or two above or below him would make it useless, and to aim too closely would be to run a deadly risk of crushing the boy under the falling trunk.

By a queer vagary of his excited brain he remembered William Tell and the apple. He would have to perform a somewhat similar feat of marksmanship; but it was the only chance that he could think of. He plunged through the snow for his axe, wallowed back to the dead stub, and began to chop.

In the need for action his nerves grew suddenly cool. The feat was a more delicate one than he had ever attempted, and his brother's life hung upon his steadiness of nerve and muscle. But he cut quietly and without haste. The great yellow chips flew, and a wide notch grew in the trunk.

In a few moments he shifted to the other side, cut another notch, and sighted for the probable direction of the fall of the stub. He could not tell how the roots held. He would have to leave that important factor to

chance, but he cut, now delicately, now strongly, till the tremor through the axe handle told that the trunk was growing unsteady.

It was a critical moment. He sighted again most carefully, and cut out a few small chips here and there. The stub tottered. It was standing poised upon a thin edge of uncut wood, and he stood behind it and pushed, cautiously, and then heavily.

The tall trunk wavered, and the fibres snapped loudly. It hesitated, bowed, and Allen leaped away from the butt. Down came the pine, roaring through the air.

It crashed into the water with a mighty wave and splash that hid boy and rock. Allen had a moment of horrified belief that his brother had been crushed under it. A moment later he saw that Louis was unhurt. But the tree had actually grazed the rock. It had fallen within eight inches of the boy's body.

It made a perfect bridge as it lay, but in his nervous reaction Allen was almost too shaky to walk the trunk and pull his brother out. He did it, although how he got him to land he never quite knew. Louis was almost unconscious, and his wet clothes froze instantly into a mass of ice.

He would certainly have lapsed into sleep and died, but Allen piled the pine chips about the stump and had a fire blazing in a few seconds. The dry stump burned like pitch, producing a furnace-like heat; and Allen partly undressed his brother and rubbed him hard with snow. Under this heroic treatment Louis came back to painful consciousness, and the fierce heat from the pine did the rest. But it was several hours before he was able to resume the tramp, and it was dark when they reached the shanty.

How They Captured the Python.

Hamburg, as many know, is the great headquarters of the trade in wild animals for menageries and "zoos." To Hamburg are shipped lions, elephants, and giraffes, captured in South and East Africa, tigers from India, jaguars and tapirs from South America, gorillas from the Congo, orang-outangs from Borneo, and, in fact, about every kind of beast, bird, and reptile from all quarters of the globe.

The warehouses of the two principal firms engaged in this business are interesting places to visit after the arrival of a "beast ship," with news of unusually large specimens of animal life.

The narrator made such a visit some months ago on the arrival of a remarkably large, brilliantly marked python, shipped from Padang, Sumatra. This colubrine giant is more than thirty feet in length, and was bespoken by the Austrian government for a zoo at Budapest.

But the story of its capture is even more interesting than the huge creature itself, for this python had fallen a victim to its fondness for the notes of a violin.

There is a telegraph line extending across Sumatra, from Padang, connecting that port, by means of submarine cables, with Batavia, and Singapore.

Along this line of land wire are a number of interior stations. One of these, called Pali-lo-pom, has been in charge of an operator named Carlos Gambrino, a mestizo from Batavia, Java, educated at the industrial school there.

The station is on a hillock in the valley of the River

Kampar, and is adjacent to dense forest, jungle, and a long morass. It is a solitary little place, consisting merely of four or five thatched huts, elevated on posts to a height of six feet from the ground, to be more secure from noxious insects, reptiles, and wild beasts.

As a general rule Gambrino has little enough to do, except listen to the monotonous ticking of the instrument. For solace and company, therefore, he frequently had recourse to his violin.

Thatched houses on posts in Sumatra are not commonly supplied with glass windows; but Gambrino had afforded himself the luxury of a two-pane sash, set to slide in an aperture in the side wall of his hut, and some five or six months ago, during the wet season, he was sitting at this window one afternoon, as he played his violin, when he saw the head of a large serpent rise out of the high grass, at a distance of seventy or eighty yards.

His first impulse was to get his carbine and try to shoot the monster, for he saw that it was a very large python, and not a desirable neighbor. But something in the attitude of the reptile led him to surmise that it had raised itself to hear the violin, and he passed at once to a lively air.

As long as he continued playing the python remained there, apparently motionless; but when he ceased it drew its head down, and he saw nothing more of it that day, although he went out with his gun to look for it.

Nearly a fortnight passed, and the incident had gone from his mind—for large snakes are not uncommon in Sumatra—when one night, as he was playing the violin to some native acquaintances who had come to the hut, they heard the sounds made by a large snake sliding across the bamboo platform or floor of the little

veranda. On looking out with a light, one of the party saw a huge mottled python gliding away.

But it was not until the reptile appeared a third time, raising its head near his window, that the telegrapher became certain that it was really his violin which attracted it.

In the meantime the operator at Padang, with whom Gambrino held daily conversations by wire, had told him that the German agent of a Hamburg house at that port would pay ten pounds, English money, for such a python as he described.

Gambrino began scheming to capture the reptile. In one of the huts at the station there was stored a quantity of fibre rope, such as is used in Sumatra for bridging small rivers and ravines.

Gambrino contrived three large nooses from this rope, which he elevated horizontally, on bamboo poles, to the height of his window, and carried the drawing ends of the nooses inside the hut.

This was done after the operator had ascertained that at times the snake would come about the house and raise its head as if it heard the violin.

Some time later the python was beguiled by the music into raising its head inside one of the nooses, which a native, who was on the watch while Gambrino played, instantly jerked tight.

What followed was exciting. The reptile resented the trick with vigor, and showed itself possessed of far more strength than they had expected.

The rope had been made fast to a beam inside, and the snake nearly pulled the entire structure down, making it rock and creak in a way that caused Gambrino and his native ally to leap to the ground in haste from a back entrance. The reptile coiled its body

about the posts and pulled desperately to break away. Altogether, it was a wild night at this little remote telegraph station.

The next morning a crowd of natives collected; and as the python had by this time exhausted itself, they contrived to hoist its head as high as the roof of the hut and to secure its tail.

It was then lowered into a molasses hogshead, which was covered over and trussed up securely with ropes.

In this condition the python was drawn to Padang on a bullock cart. It is said to weigh more than four hundred pounds.

ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY.

All of us who were singing "On the Road to Mandalay" a few years ago—and there were mighty few of us who let it alone vocally—will be a bit surprised to be informed that Rangoon, where the dawn comes up like thunder and other interesting things happen, looks to the approaching tourist like an up-to-date American business centre.

In fact, according to a writer, the capital of Burma has many American towns beat a mile in the civic improvement line. "Its electric-lighted highways, all broad, neatly paved and well drained; its brilliantly illuminated boulevards, with rows of graceful, well-trimmed trees bordering both sides; its blocks of buildings, all laid out after a carefully considered plan, showing little of architectural beauty but much of austere regularity, astonish the stranger.

"When you take into consideration the fact that Rangoon has a system of parks and parkways with beautiful shade trees, choice flowers, and crystal lakes, artificial and natural, dotted about them, and that it provides breathing spaces for people living in congested districts, you cannot but form a good idea of the aliveness of the municipal corporation. A good horse-carriage service, now being rapidly superseded by the trolley, makes transportation easy and cheap. The city has provided splendid schools and playgrounds. Yet sixty years ago Rangoon was a mere fishing village."

One item from Mr. Kipling's picture of Rangoon referred to the elephants hauling teakwood in "the slushy, squdgy creek." Well, they are still at it, working

with wonderful precision and an apparent sense of responsibility. They don't try to soldier, never get in one another's way or mixed up with the machinery, no matter how cramped they may be for room.

Some of them take the teak logs which have been floated down the river and tow them ashore. Then they drag them to the sawmills, either rolling them with one foot while they walk on three, pushing them with their tusks, or pulling them with a chain attached to a breast strap.

Inside the mill an elephant selects a log, picks it out with his tusks, kicks it up to the saw with his toes, then tying his trunk in a kind of knot around the log, holds it against the teeth of the saw while it is made into boards, pushing aside the outside slabs as they are cut off and adjusting the log to make boards of the proper thickness.

Then he piles the boards up neatly, standing off to examine the effect, and if he finds a board out of line carefully adjusting it. Sometimes a pair of elephants working together exchange peculiar grunts, as if they were giving and receiving directions.

They are used in Burma for various purposes. The young calves are ridden like horses, with a soft pad and stirrups. They are found especially valuable in bad country, and may be ridden fifty or sixty miles a day. A tap on the side of the head, a slight pressure of the knee, or a word whispered in the ear is all that is required to guide them.

It is not at all a difficult matter for an elephant in prime condition to outrun a fast horse, but they cannot jump. A deep ditch only six or seven feet wide is impassable to them.

Working elephants are in their prime when they are twenty-five years old. They are expensive to feed, it

being declared in Rangoon that an elephant eats a quarter of his weight in feed every day. An average day's food for one is certainly eight hundred pounds.

Socially Burma is unlike other Oriental countries. Men and women—even young men and women—walk together in the streets and mingle in social gatherings. Courtship always precedes the marriage.

The Burmans are ardent lovers, and when a young man and woman find that their parents do not approve of the match they usually repair to the woods and return after a day or two as man and wife, sure of parental forgiveness. Marriage among Burmans is an extremely simple affair. The only ceremony performed is the eating together out of the same bowl of rice. Usually a feast is given to the relatives and friends of the families concerned. No sacrifices are offered, no services are performed.

The Burman wears a smile on his countenance, laughs and looks upon life through rose-colored spectacles. Both the women and the men wear rich-hued silken clothes. But while there is gayety there is no indecorum or impropriety.

For women Burma is a little heaven on earth, if we are to believe enthusiastic writers. Mrs. Burman is ubiquitous. Jewelry stores containing untold wealth in pearls, rubies, and other gems are in charge of women. Markets and fruit stalls are run by women.

At the railroad station a woman sells you the tickets and another one is ready to take dictation and to do your type-writing. Not long ago a woman stockbroker died leaving a fortune which she had made herself. But the Burmese woman does not let business interfere with motherhood. She runs the shop with one hand and the children with the other.

When she marries the woman retains her own name,

and any property she may have inherited or acquired. When divorced she is expected to support her children, but this is no hardship for her, since she cared for them when she lived with her husband. The Burmese child rarely sees the father, but is brought up to look to its mother for guidance and support.

The Burmese woman takes a great interest in public affairs, and the portals of the University of Rangoon have been open to her for a number of years. Her intelligence, her beauty, her freedom from racial caste prejudice, all make her an acceptable bride in the eyes of foreigners who go to Burma.

Marriage with a foreigner means as a rule that she can live in plenty and comfort without working. Naturally she looks upon such a marriage with favor. The Burmans are of Mongolian origin, and consequently the Chinese and Burmese marriage produces a virile race. With this exception the intermixture of races in Burma has not proved desirable.

This is especially so in case of marriages between Europeans and Burmans. The offspring of such marriages are termed Eurasians, who unfortunately seem to be looked down upon both by full-blooded Europeans and Burmans.

Almost as difficult a problem as that of the Eurasian is the tobacco problem in Burma. Men, women, and children smoke. The cheroot at which they almost incessantly puff is eighteen inches long and about a quarter of an inch in diameter. It is wrapped in a banana leaf, and its mouthpiece consists of bamboo. The Burman tobacco is so strong that only one-fourth of the filling of the cheroot consists of tobacco. The balance is a mixture of innocuous herbs.

If possible the Burman exceeds other Asiatics in

hospitality. He is par excellence the host of Asia. Any stranger may stroll into a Burman dwelling and demand hospitality for at least three days. No remuneration is expected. Opposite a Burmese house one usually finds earthen pots of water placed for the use of the traveler, under a roof especially made to shelter the water from the hot rays of the tropical sun. These pots are tightly covered with earthen lids, which protect the water from dirt and dust.

The social life of the Burmans is interesting in the extreme. They indulge in boxing matches, pony, bullock, and boat races, cock fighting, splitting cocoanuts, snake charming, and juggling. Chess and dominoes are the favorite games. Theatres are in great vogue. The plot of the play is usually somewhat monotonous, for almost invariably the hero is a prince of the blood royal, the heroine is a princess, and the rustics from the villages figure as clowns and jesters.

The dancing, though different from what it is in the Occident, is not without interest to a Westerner. The motions of the dancers are graceful and spry. Burman amusements last days and nights. The best known secular festival is the pwe.

The entertainment is melodramatic. Comedy and tragedy are introduced, music and dancing are included. The plot of the play is flimsy. The performance includes tricks of clowns who are masters of their art and intensely amusing. The musical instruments in the orchestra consist of a circle of drums, gongs, trumpets, and wooden clappers, and the music out-Wagners Wagner in its deafening noise.

Many religious festivals are celebrated. Probably the occasion when presents are distributed to the priests is the most interesting. The people bring their presents and pile them up outside an alley made of bamboo latticework. One brings candles, another matches,

another brass vessels, etc., as though some previous arrangement had been made as to just what each one shall give.

For the most part the donors are women, and all of them are dressed in their best. The monks, attended by a boy carrying a large basket, pass down the bamboo alley in single file, and each basket is filled with presents. A trio of masqueraders with faces blackened, dancing to comic music, follows the procession. Anything that has not been distributed to the priests is gathered up by them.



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