

THE GRAY GOOSE.

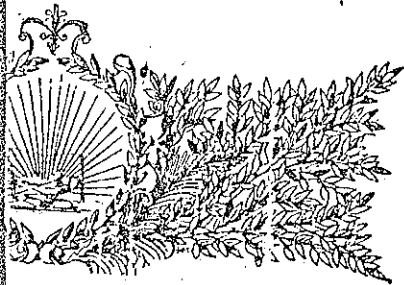
ly mentioned about you and Jones look-her there."

that there was but one thing to do,—and

d, and I know there were tears in my
nt to have sat at the Round Table! You

er my breath, "a confounded one!")
day," he resumed, "at a little railway
were solemn words, 'for better, for
funeral service half so sad." But here
"She is happy, poor child, radiantly

g with pitiful desperation to my hand,
cautiful promise, 'until death do us
in it; and now—oh Blake!"
nvulsive wring, and went abruptly
pon the clever play the girl had made,
e-card,—that lie about our seeing her
of town that day and I,—sick.



*Gray
Goose
9 am 1899*

WHY THE POLICE SUBALTERN FLED JAGADHRI.

BY J. OLIVIER CURWOOD.

YOU see Fleetwood struck the Station like this. Fleetwood's name, and incidentally the rank of his pecuniary attachment, had preceded him by at least a fortnight and several hundred miles, so Subaltern stock suddenly took a sensational flier among the marriageable young ladies of Jagadhri. He came in on the wings of a sand-bull right straight from the shoulder of the Rajputana, and that, in a measure, as Mrs. Colonel Hotspur afterward declared, concealed his branded cheek.

Now the deceased Colonel's wife had reverently and with a befittingly appropriate sacrifice of tears, planted her beloved spouse beneath the family holyhock nearly three years previous, and the advent of the Colonel's old Punjab associate awakened interests in her that rejuvenated the inflexible pangs of romantic sentiment lost in her youth. She was pretty, very pretty when the sun or torch-light shone on her golden-red hair, and fascinating. This much the marriageable young ladies acknowledged; but nothing more. They were listed in the ranks, and moreover, they conceded it respectfully; while *she* simply posed as a delightful chaperon.

But Fleetwood was only a police subaltern, and that struck watchful papas and fanciful mammae as too stringent a circumstance to pass unobserved. True he exercised authority over a scant sextette; but that in turn revolved with the ideas of a senior-subaltern at department headquarters. Besides, the duties of Fleetwood carried him, and his sextette, off into the jungles, and that was worse still. If prepossessing personal qualities could have wiped out the insane notions of elders, it is morally safe to conjecture that he would have experienced an existence in Jagadhri little less than that of a paradise beyond

the Hills. But only Mrs. Hotspur was safe with him, and she the safer because of the scarred brand on his cheek. There were whispers current that young Fleetwood had received this while tracking out a furlough across the Himalayas with a murderous Hindustanee sirdar. But a departmental aide from the north suggested that it was the imprint of a tiger's tooth, and to his immediate adjutant she confided remarks intended alone for very conservative ears. His name was Yarkand.

Fleetwood oftentimes detailed his first man to the authority of his own rank, and spent the hours he purloined from the department in Mrs. Hotspur's parlor, that sweetly unconscious lady herself insisting that it was the height of impropriety for him to leave before late—occasionally *very late*—tea. On these occasions he always seemed like one half under the influence of a strange dream, and once, late at night, when the moon was glimmering sickly yellow through lurid clouds of storm-dust in the east, he beat lingeringly over Mrs. Hotspur's golden head and whispered softly: "O, by the way, Mrs. Hotspur, were you ever carried away by a tigress?" When Fleetwood asked the question he fainted dead away.

Mrs. Hotspur divulged her secret with exquisite talent, and after the imperturbable police subaltern had complimented her rare tact by a sympathetic proxy, he courteously retired with his sextette to the jungles. When the incident reached Yarkand's ears he winked slyly, and entered a red-ink memorandum in his note-book.

Then came the little, raw, weazened Commissioner, Benares, and with him intelligence that turned the phlegmatic station upside down. Fleetwood? Why, of course he knew Fleetwood. "A deuced good chap, you know, jolly, but a trifle eccentric—father carries votes in London—son rather irregular and inclined to ease off a little on fever-swamps and jungles. Not bad, you know, but just incredibly wretched taste, when the gov'ners allowance would carry him shoulders' high in the South. There's a mystery back of it all, somewhere, an' the gov'ner I knows it. It's five years since father and son have met." Yarkand immediately made a confidant of the new arrival.

The Colonel's wife sent a plaintive little missive to Fleetwood exculpating her deplorable indiscretion; but somehow, no answer came from the jungles, and the departmental aide

shrugged his shoulders insinuatingly, as he watched the regular excursions of Benares from the station.

Mrs. Hotspur then virtually abandoned herself to the prudent advances of the commissioner; but back of it all there lurked something that cautioned Benares against dispensing too liberally his subaltern tirades. This happened just when the fever season was at its worst.

It was now that the shriveled old Nepaleese, whose cousins had occasioned Fleetwood's police such a wretched lump of trouble, serenely sauntered down from the sand-hills and petitioned the station for a tiger's worth of men; which meant the jungle sahib. Of course Fleetwood was detailed to go.

The homes of the lower people were hot with malaria; and where the tiger-kittens gamboled in the moonlight on the outskirts of the thicket, their parents coughed a sickly offal, and together they spattered their mangy hides till the stench was sickening. It rose above the jungles, and carried with it the fever germs.

Coincidental with Fleetwood's injunction came a ten days' furlough for Yarkand, and he joined the party. Benares chewed his finger nails, and Mrs. Hotspur began to find an interest in the departmental aide.

It was a red-headed tiger, somebody said, and the Nepaleese corroborated it in his own peculiar style. Directly from the moment the fact was thoroughly substantiated, Fleetwood began to grow thinner every day; and by the time the sand-hills were reached one could indisputably see the fever had taken root in him. The police subaltern computed his time, and composedly subjoined three days of grace; which is the ordinary time between the symptomatic derangement and death. Then he wrote a letter to Mrs. Hotspur, the most pitiful thing of all, and committed it to the care of Yarkand. After that he rode in a hekka, and doctored up on quinine.

It was two days and a night before the transgressor was substantially located, and then after a few transient glimpses of a spotted red and yellow hide it disappeared again. The Nepaleese was fearfully apprehensive, and Fleetwood feverishly impatient to accomplish his purpose. The plans for its final consummation were accurately developed by a lucky predestination of fortune, and one late afternoon the mottled head of the tigress was brought in on a native stretcher.

Fleetwood was just on the verge of mental collapse when the information, along with the head, was carried to him. He smiled gravely at Yarkand, and motioned him to his side. "Was it true," he whispered eagerly, "that the—the—that it was a red-headed brute?"

Yarkand pressed a glass of cold water to the police subaltern's lips before he answered, then replied in the affirmative.

The spy man shuddered, and his fingers clutched convulsively at the aide's waist-coat. "Was it—a—tiger?" he asked feebly.

"No!" said Yarkand, pitilessly. "It was a *tigress*, Fleetwood!"

That settled the police subaltern, and that night the departmental aide and a trio of hillsmen carried him northward from the sand-hills into Rajputana and upper India. The sextette returned; to Jagadhri, and the names of Yarkand and Fleetwood were wiped off the government list.

It was months before Mrs. Hotspur could bring herself to the tearful realization that Fleetwood had, indeed, gone out of her life forever. She learned the subaltern's letter by heart—Yarkand had sent it on by a hillman—and wept over it, and cherished it night and day in her bosom. Benares found it a convenient opportunity to apply for change of location, and ultimately established his residence at a line-station farther south where cosmopolitan commissioners were more fully appreciated.

It was utterly impossible for Mrs. Hotspur to remain at Jagadhri, and only the poor Thing sleeping unconscious beneath the hollyhock bade her stay a little longer. What Fleetwood said in his letter was so hopeless and touching, and it must have told his piteous story well, too; for the woman simply cried her feelings aloud without caring to hide them. Yarkand had died with the police subaltern, they intimated at the station: their graves were plotted somewhere in the North, and the government didn't propose to expend a fraction of its valuable resources in investigating the remains of lost deserters. The Nepaleese tendered Mrs. Hotspur a fabricated clew for the fabulous sum of three rupees, and she accepted in good faith. Because she had no one to advise her she forthwith hired an elaborate outfit for the Colonel's old stamping-ground in Rajputana.

The next season's exodus to the Hills had just begun when she returned, and with her came Yarkand. The whole sta-

tion turned out *en masse* to welcome home the retrieved departmental aide and the Colonel's wife. She was a trifle older, and Yarkand merely a distempered semblance of his former self. In the hot summer nights that followed they often confided to one another the strange story of the police subaltern, illustrated partly by the half-crazed contents of the letter, and less indifferently by Yarkand's own experience during the deranged man's fever days.

When Benares became cognizant of the facts—by rumors, it seems, he dappled his finger-tips in red ink and revenged himself with a pithy expatiation in his book of personal memoirs. It savored strongly of the disgusted commissioner's rancor, and ran somewhat like this: "That pig-headed police subaltern, Fleetwood—mightily whole-souled fellow, but a deuced idiot—finally jumped the margin! Old woman's considerably cut up now, since she knows the whole thing, and trying to make the station believe she is going crazy. Seems Fleetwood was fool enough to get married a while back, and then ran off on a honeymoon into the jungles where he contrived to oaf 'round just long enough to get his wife chewed up by a tiger—No, confound it! 'Twas a *red-headed tigress*—and *that's* what set the poor witting agog when he stumbled into Jagadhri! Hotspur was an alluring resemblance of Mrs. Fleetwood, deceased, only a bit older—considerably so, if the dolt had only possessed sense enough to see it,—and together with the discovery of the only red-headed tigress in India the poor fellow's brain—what little he had—went crazy as a laughing jackass! He's dead now, poor cuss, and Hotspur's still wearing weeds, but whether for *him*, or the one under the hollyhock, would be dishonorable for a gentleman to say!" When Yarkand read this a year later he thought it pretty good.

Jagadhri hadn't missed a dust-storm since the station was planned, and as the windy season drew on the aide often explained to his protege how the police subaltern had stolen from his hut in the dead of the stormy night and disappeared forever. Yarkand believed the fever had indirectly drawn Fleetwood to his grave. Thus matters stood when the storm that shattered Sorgut struck Jagadhri.

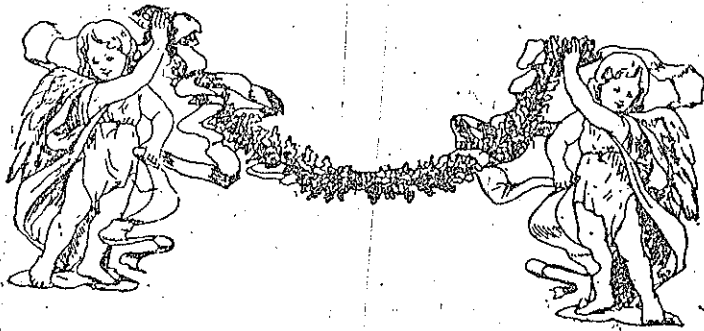
First came a burning-hot wind that lashed the tree-tops like a thousand furies. Then the sand-hills seemed to be tumbling down in great heaps, and the atmosphere grew stifling even in

cellars. The warm torrents of rain came and strove to clear a way for the floodlight of the great, red, throbbing moon, but the palpitating waves were lost before they had cast more than a fleeting reflection athwart the wind-tossed sky. The Colonel's wife pressed her white face against the window-pane and watched the roaring, whirling darkness outside. Close beside her stood Yarkand.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning streamed the whole breadth of the firmament, and with one triumphant cry of joy the woman staggered backward and fell in a dead faint at Yarkand's feet.

My God! Fleetwood!

The police subaltern was presented a re-listment by the government, but first confirmed the equity of his claim to a six-months' furlough, during which he ran down to show off his new prize to the man who carried votes in London. How do I know this to be true? Well, you see, I am Yarkand.



BUTTONS.

BY SEYMOUR S. TIBBALS.



HERE had always been something uncanny about the hut in which Buttons lived. It still stands on the edge of a thriving little city in Southern Ohio and is a relic of the early settlement of the village that has since grown to the dignity of a municipality, boasting electric lights and water works that are not yet paid for. Buttons was a character, one of those wrecks that strew life's pathway. Of his early life little was known although it was whispered about that before the war broke out he had worn a silk hat and held a paying position in a leading store in a neighboring city.

As long as I can remember him, Buttons had lived in this little log hut, and by selling water-cress, horse-radish and mushrooms, earned an occasional penny which he immediately spent for bad whiskey. A season of prosperity in Button's precarious market was invariably followed by a protracted spree, the extent of his dissipation being limited by the proceeds from his sales. He had always lived alone and was known as a bachelor. I can recall now the occasion when a rosy-cheeked lass laughingly asked him why he had never married. There was a tender light for a moment in his washed-out eyes which disappeared as he replied, "Well, you see the girls I wanted I couldn't get, and those I could get the devil wouldn't have."

He was a disreputable-looking person, certainly, as he sat smoking his pipe in the door-way of his log cabin in the summer twilight. He was tall, rawboned—in fact, a skeleton. The extreme pallor of his complexion, especially noticeable in the drooping corners of the loose, half-opened mouth, was lit up startlingly by the ruddiness of the nose, into which all that re-