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MADE IN CANADA — OF CANADIAN WHEAT

TO THE HILT

By
Percival Christopher Wren

CHAPTER IV

Suddenly a rifle banged and a swift silence fell upon the noisy assembly. Turning sharply, Vere-Vaughan saw that a man standing behind the Malik had fired the shot, doubtless by his order, and probably a variation of the idea of ringing a bell for silence.

The Malik was on his feet. "Hearken, oh men of Kurnai. The Pir Sahib has said his say, and to the words of so holy a Mullah all must give ear.

"The Mullah has said that the prisoner must die; his throat must be cut as that of a sheep or goat, making him an acceptable sacrifice at the Mullah's shrine and in the sight of Allah.

"If we obey the Mullah, we have his blessing and the favor of the light of his holy and lovely countenance. If we disobey him, we have ten thousand rupees.

"Which is it to be? Are we to lose this great sum at the Pir Sahib's whim? Or are we to show him that though he be a judge he is not a ruler? For who made him a ruler and a judge over us? Are we to lose our money—or our favor in the sight of the one eye of our Mullah?"

* * *

Applause and laughter from lewd fellows of the baser sort.

"Suppose we do neither?" he asked.

"And both," he added, leering round. "Suppose I, in council with the other leaders who forever watch over your interests and consider what is best for you—suppose we use our brains while you use your strong right arms and the keen sight that Allah gave you for the true aiming of your rifles. And suppose we think of a plan whereby we lose not this great sum of money and yet retain the favor and the blessing of our holy Pir."

"Upon every problem the wise man sleepeth. Tonight the prisoner will be closely guarded and tomorrow we will decide his fate. I have spoken. The durbar is closed."

"Come on quickly," said Wali Dad, seizing Vere-Vaughan's arm and pulling him to his feet. "Follow me . . . Close round him, my brothers."

And while babble of argument and noise of wrangling arose about them, Wali Dad and his followers with Vere-Vaughan in their midst, thrust their way through the crowd of men and the mob of screaming and reviling women, out of the compound, down the street, across the center of the village and to a house somewhat bigger and more strongly fortified than the rest.

"This is the Malik's house," said Wali Dad. "You will be safe here, Sahib. Until the Mullah's men storm it and get you out," he added with a malicious grin.

A real Pathan humorist.

Unlikely as it seemed, he must have slept, for in the small hours of the morning he was wakened by the sound of rifle fire, and he wondered what was happening.

A few minutes later the door of his cell opened and two men entered, one of whom carried a small crude oil lamp which gave forth more smoke and smell than light.

By the flickering yellow flame of this miserable vessel he saw that one of his visitors was Wali Dad, son-in-law of the Malik and prominent member of the anti-Mullah party. The other was a man he had not seen before, or at any rate had not noticed—a rather good type Pathan, with something clean-cut and smart about him.

* * *

Producing a biddi from his cummerbund, Wali Dad lit it, puffed forth a cloud of stinking smoke, eyed Vere-Vaughan lazily through half-closed eyes and remarked in Pushtu:

"This man talks Hindustani. You'll be able to understand everything now. He learned to speak it in India."

"I suppose he did," replied Vere-Vaughan in Hindustani, a language which he understood and spoke far better than the more difficult Pushtu. "Learnt it, no doubt, when his battalion was stationed in Karachi, Bombay and Poona, eh?"

The man grinned disarmingly.

"What is your name and regiment?" asked Vere-Vaughan.

"Khoda Khan Abazai," was the reply. "I was sergeant in the Pathan Company of Sandeman's Rifles."

"Oh? How is it you are here, then, at your age?"

"I deserted, Sahib," smiled the man.

"Oh! One of that sort are you?"

"No, no, Sahib! It wasn't my fault. I didn't want to go. I loved the regiment. But Khawas Khan of Khairastan shot my brother, and there was no one to carry on the feud," replied the man, as if that naturally accounted for everything as indeed it did from the Pathan point of view.

* * *

Vere-Vaughan had been long enough on the Border to know that it was as imperative and sacred a trust for the Pathan to avenge the death of a relative who died doing his duty in the matter of carrying on the family vendetta, as it was the imperative and sacred duty of an Englishman to feed, clothe and educate his own children.

And there sat Khoda Khan Abazai, defaulter, deserter, rifle thief and man of strictest honor, who had done his bounden duty as he saw it at the risk of his life and the loss of career, comrades, promotion, success and pension.

Presumably his present task was to talk clear and simple Hindustani to the sahib, make all things plain unto him, and see to it that there was no misunderstanding between him and his captors on the subject of his position, prospects and chances of ransom.

And as Vere-Vaughan studied the man he was amazed to see that his right eye slowly closed and opened again in a most indubitable wink, and even as he looked searchingly at the fellow's face the latter yawned, put his hand up to his mouth, murmured some apt quotation or incantation suitable to the occasion of yawning, and as he did so placed his right forefinger against the side of his nose and winked again—a gesture unmistakable in any unspoken language and in any part of the world.

* * *

The gleam of hope broadened and shone more brightly. This Pathan, brought in by Wali Dad himself, was secretly signaling to him, making covert overtures and signs which were tokens.

"Now," said Wali Dad, having got his stinking biddi satisfactorily burning, "I'm going to tell you what I have come about. It's like this. We have got the tup-tup rifle out of the broken flying devil carriage and we want to know how to use it. Do you understand what I have said?"

"No," replied Vera-Vaughan.

"Oh, don't you? Well then, that's where this man, Khoda Khan Abazai, will come in useful. He'll talk to you in Hindustani. He'll make you understand all right."

Whereupon the ex-sepoy repeated what Wadi Dad had said, making clear that which was already abundantly clear, explaining fully, carefully and patiently that Vere-Vaughan was expected to get the gun satisfactorily mounted and fully to demonstrate its working and use, care and keeping, to his captors who, every one of them, loved weapons, adored rifles, and were prepared almost to worship a real tup-tup or bah-bah rifle that was a genuine and going concern.

"Well, do you understand now?" asked Wali Dad when the other had finished.

"No," said Veer-Vaughan.

"You don't?" exclaimed Wali Dad. "I see. But I think you'd better understand before sunrise, because if you are not going to show us how to mount and use the tup-tup rifle we are going to hand you over to the Mullah and before long you will wish you had done as we asked. But it will be too late then," he added grimly.

(Continued Next Week)

Not A Picnic

British bombers were over Berlin, the sirens were screaming and people were racing for the shelters.

"Hurry up!" cried the housewife to her spouse.

"I can't find my false teeth," called the befuddled and tardy husband.

"False teeth!" returned the exasperated wife. "What do you think they're dropping? Sandwiches?"

NO REGRETS

Smiling Nazi paratrooper seems quite undismayed by his capture by Allies in Tunisia.

Queen Just Like Any Other Person

Cpl. William Goldstein of the United States army is used to meeting a lot of people because he was an assistant manager of a grocery store, but nobody like the Queen ever dropped in on him.

At least not until the other day when she visited unexpectedly an exhibition in London where Goldstein, of Baltimore, Md., and three other American soldiers also were sightseeing.

"I was surprised when the Queen started talking to me and I got very nervous, but that soon passed because she was so charming that I was put completely at ease," Goldstein said.

"What amazed me most was the fact she had no retinue and no one standing around to protect her. She just walked in like any other lady visitor."

TABLE TALKS

SADIE B. CHAMBERS

A Soup Discussion

This week I have had two requests for my method of making tomato soup. Maybe I have neglected this topic for we all do use a certain amount of canned soup. However, always remember that whenever possible, soup should be made up specially, if we are watching closely the budget line.

Cream of Tomato Soup

Strain canned tomatoes; place on heat and bring to boil. Season with pepper and salt and a little sugar. (I am not giving the amounts for all tastes for seasoning are different). Melt butter (in measurements it should be 1 level tablespoon to each cup of tomatoes). To each tablespoon of melted butter add a tablespoon of flour). Blend carefully and add to the tomatoes, as it reaches the boiling point, the butter and flour mixture. Stir constantly until it thickens, then allow to cook on slow heat until no taste of starch remains. Now add a pinch of soda. Stir until effervescing lessens, then add the milk, which has been heated but not boiled. Stir well and serve when real hot but try to avoid boiling.

Cream of Corn Syrup

1 medium sized onion
1 can corn
3 cups water
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper
3 cups milk
Finely chopped parsley
Paprika

Combine the chopped opion, corn and water. Cover and cook gently for 30 minutes. Press through a coarse sieve. Melt butter and blend in the flour, salt and pepper. Stir and cook until thick. Add the corn mixture and reheat well. Sprinkle each serving with chopped parsley and paprika. Six servings.

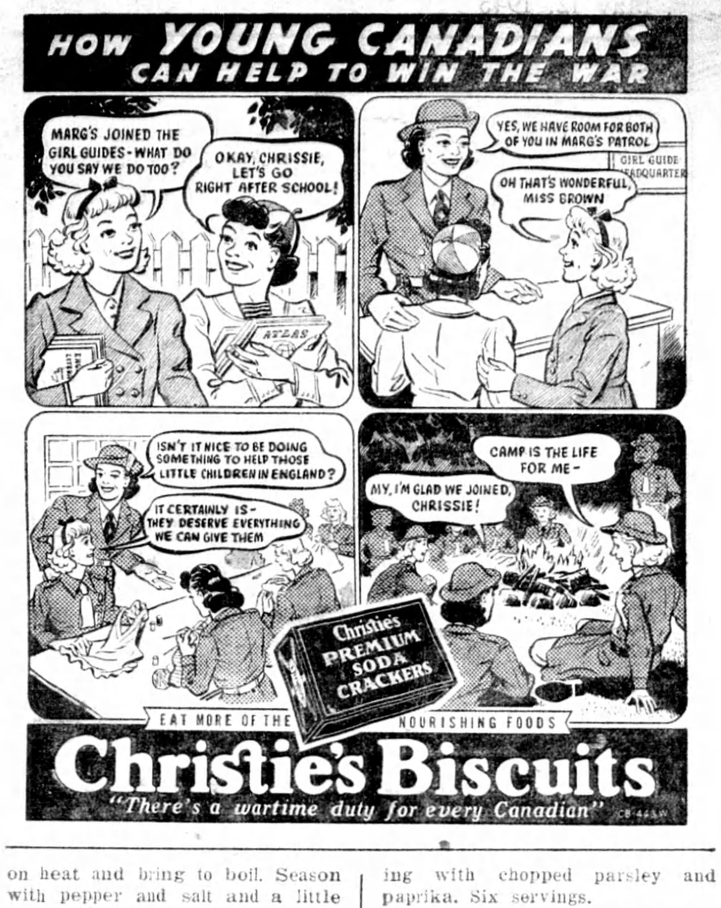
Cream of Carrot and Pea Soup

1 cup sliced carrots
1 cup canned peas
1 thick sliced onion
2 cups boiling water
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons flour
3 cups milk
1 teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper.

Combine the carrots and onion with the boiling water and cook for ten minutes covered. Add the peas and cook for five minutes. Press all through a sieve. Melt the butter and heat in flour. Add milk and carrot mixture. Cook stirring constantly until thick. Season to taste. Reserve a few slices of carrots and peas for garnish.

Always remember that the water in which you have cooked your vegetables should never be thrown away — it is a splendid foundation for creamed soups. Then with miki soups the homemaker has a splendid opportunity to vary the milk budget. Remember each adult should have one pint of milk a day and each child one quart.

Miss Chambers welcomes personal letters from interested readers. She is pleased to receive suggestions on topics for her column, and is always ready to listen to your "pet peeves." Requests for recipes or special menus are in order. Address your letters to "Miss Sadie B. Chambers, 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto." Send stamped self-addressed envelope if you wish a reply.



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