



Beaver Bob

Beavers on the Nile?

"What do you think," I asked Mr. Chatterjee, "of Lanark County's wolf bounty?"

The Babu, seated in a corner of the cabin near the stove (it was a chill April day) looked out over the ice-choked and rushing Castor.

"It would seem to me," he said thoughtfully, "that the \$25 represents in effect, permission to Lanark County residents to shoot one another's dogs."

Major Whiffle, better known in Afridi circles as Punjab Dick, silhouetted his lean length against the window, knocking his pipe against the stove.

"I don't like this landscape," he said in a bored tone. "Too flat by far. Can't get along without my beloved Himalayas."

"Think I'll go down to the river. Punjab Dick went out, slamming the door and knocking several cups from a shelf. They were the only cups on the shelf and it was the only shelf in the cabin.

Mr. Chatterjee started nervously. "Do you think he will be all right? I mean, he would not go out on the ice floes, would he?"

"I doubt it. First of all, there isn't a floe out there that would support his bulk. Secondly, Punjab Dick's days of leaping are over. But to get back. You don't feel that the wolf bounty is a good thing?"

"Let me explain, my dear Beaver Bob." Mr. Chatterjee's eyes shone like new pennies. "Wolves are God's creatures. Like beavers. Like you and me."

"It only stands to reason," he began ticking off points on his fingers. "Unless the people of Lanark County are more honest than people anywhere else and unless officialdom is wiser than anywhere else, the wolf bounty is simply an invitation for a general massacre of farmers' dogs. When you consider that wolves, particularly brush wolves come in as many shapes and sizes almost as dogs (I understand they are not expecting to shoot timber wolves) then you can see the problem. The pelt of a dead dog is not so different from that of a dead brush wolf."

"Does it matter? After all, if dogs are out killing sheep, they must be treated the same way as wolves."

"What if they don't wait for the dogs to kill, but simply seek them out and shoot them for the sake of the bounty."

"Dog was shot just the other day. Not far from here, either," Punjab Dick re-entered, taking up the conversation as though he had never left, a trick he learned while sitting around camp fires in the Khyber.

"What do you think of the river?" I asked.

"Interesting. Chock full of big chunks of ice. Current moving at quite respectable pace. Water up to banks at both sides. Filling entire river bed as it used to do a hundred years ago, when they used it for delivering logs to the Ottawa."

"Why do they not raise the dam, or build a new one?" Mr.

Chatterjee suggested. "Then much of the water could be kept here all summer, providing quite a respectable river, instead of the insignificant trickle to which we are all accustomed."

"Excellent suggestion," Punjab Dick lit his pipe. "You are becoming quite irrepresible, my Parsee friend. What do you think of that, Bob?"

"Let the beavers do it," I replied. "Bring the little chaps back to their native stream. Let nature's engineers go to work."

"If Wolseley hadn't learned the use of rafts and the abilities of Canadian boatmen on the Red River Expedition when he trounced Riel, he never would have succeeded in getting up the Nile to the relief of Khartoum and perhaps no one ever would have heard of Winston Churchill, who won a name as a correspondent in the field," Punjab Dick gestured positively with his pipe.

"What is the connection, my dear chap?" Mr. Chatterjee feared that he might be missing something.

"With what?"
 "With beavers, of course."
 "There is none. Why do you ask?"
 "Do they have beavers on the Nile?"

"Of course not." Punjab Dick appeared irritated at Mr. Chatterjee's persistence.

"They have otters," Beaver Bob said.

"How curious." Mr. Chatterjee's round, moon face wore a expression of bewilderment.

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