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CHAPTER XXIII.

Sir Donald Faversham Volunteers. N his search for the Hindu, who had bought the idol containing the plans of the mother lode of the "Master Key" mine, John Dorr had recourse again to the pawnbroker,

That individual's curiosity was aroused by now, and he asked a great many questions, which John answered evasively.

When it came to getting a description of the Hindu the broker could give but few details,

He laid emphasis on the fact that he sold rugs and that he looked like any one of a dozen East Indians frequenting a Pacific port. He knew of no ad-

With this Dorr had to be content, and be returned to Ruth to discuss with her what they should do next.

"If Wilkerson gets it there is an easy way to get him," be said in the course of their conversation.

"How?" demanded Ruth. "Have him arrested as a fugitive from justice and held for the county sheriff and the warrant that Tom Kane swore out," he replied.

Ruth considered this thoughtfully and shook her head. "It would mean our going back to

the mine and all kinds of trouble," she said wisely. "Besides, we wouldn't be any nearer the papers father wanted me to have."

"That is very true," John agreed. "We'll keep that in reserve in case we discover that he has the idol. Ouronly plan, then, is to trace this Hinda. That will be a hard job." "Why not put detectives on the trall?"

"I don't think any detective could do better than myself," was the reply. "But you-can't do it all," she argued. "You can't be looking for this peddler and keeping an eye on Wilkerson and seeing to me at the same time."

"The seeing to you is the pleasantest part of the job," he said laughingly. "I refuse to delegate that to any one. Of course you're quite right, though, about it's being too big an affair for me to handle alone. I think I'll ask Everett to join us. Maybe he can suggest something. I'll wire him, and then we'll take a trip down to the water front and interview our launchman again. He seemed to me a pretty level headed chap, and be'll maybe be able to put us on the track of the Hindu if he took a steamer for the north, as I strongly suspect he did."

peddler should do this, and Dorr explained that the Hindu evidently had set great store on the idol, as be had not only paid cash, but had given a rug | was silenced by a smile. as well in exchange. "He would know that the thing was

worthless as an article of merchandise," he went on. "In the next place, he wasted no time in getting possession of it once he saw it. I have no doubt that it is sacred in his eyes-a god. It was stolen at some time from



"Seeing to you is the pleasantest part of the job."

a temple. What more natural than that he should see the chance of a great reward for doing a plous duty and returning it to its native place?"

"But that's all guesswork," Ruth in sisted practically. "I know it," he admitted. "But a

good guess is better than nothing to work on. Let's go and see our skipper person." The launch captain received ther

genially and listened to John's story. At its finish he agreed with John that it was very likely that the Indian had recognized a native god and would restore it to its own temple. "I've visited those eastern ports

good deal," he told them. "I know boys on a lark from the ship will do just that trick-run off with an idol for a curlo-and I know the fuss the

Before they left be promised to keep an eye open for the Hindu and inform them if he got the smallest clew. With this they had to be satisfied, as in-

When he had asked a few questions conceal. he and John looked at each other. Finally Everett spoke.

thoughtfully. "I don't doubt that your | movement. father, Miss Ruth, spent many a long we must have the plans if it's in the Francisco. bounds of possibility to recover them.

"There is the question of the mine," steerage passage for Bombay.



"But Mrs. Grundy insists on the maid." been allowed to go pretty much to ruin. Tom Kane would do his best, of nursed the end of his stick awhile in course, but actually we are looking for | very apparent perplexity. the bird in the bush when we have one in the hand."

Ruth could not understand why the | too. So you can be care free so far as | don't see how you are going to accomthat goes, John."

"You know I wouldn't take it for myself," John began awkwardly and us!" said Ruth impulsively. The next morning they had barely

finished breakfast when the launch captain was announced. The three of them found him bursting with news.

"I think I located your Hindu," he told them. "He came down at day light this morning looking for a steamer sailing for the north. The Halcyon leaves at noon, and the steward gave them behave." him a job in the galley."

"But it might be another Hindu," Ruth suggested.

The captain turned toward her and shook his head. "I don't think it's possible," he said. "He answered the description clear down to the rugs. ett. Besides that, he seemed kind of nervous, and when one of the sailors follied him the man nearly bad a fit. I'm sure he's your man."

"There's only one thing for you to do." Everett said promptly-"take passage on that steamer yourselves to Sa Francisco. By that time you can be pretty sure whether he's your man or

This was agreed upon, and Ruth started on her preparations immediately. Everett insisting that she take her maid with her.

"But I don't need her!" Ruth protest ed. "She's so expensive too!"

"You are merely a youngster," Everett said quietly, "and you must have a woman traveling with you. It is all right to do as you like in the mines, where no one would dream of speaking evil or thinking it, but Mrs. Grundy insists on the maid." John agreed with Everett and de

parted to get the tickets, in spite of Everett's warning that he had better send and get them.

The result was that George Drake, just landed from the mine and in search of Wilkerson, found him shadowing Dorr.

Drake explained his coming by saying that be had heard nothing from either Wilkerson or Mrs. Darnell, and

he could be of no use at the "Master Key." "It's just as well." Wilkerson said sulkily. "I have a dozen things to attend to, and you can belp. The first is not to let that man Dorr get out of

know it." In a few sentences filled with bitterness be told the story of the finding of the chest and the futile search for the plans and the abstraction of the id

When Wilkerson found that Dorr and Ruth booked passage on the Halevon for San Francisco and had inquired about the next sallings for the Orient he took Drake aside and they determined that this could only mean

Dorr was on the track of the idol.

heathens make about it too. They'll and listened to Wilkerson's explana. so foreign to your western America "He has already started, I undergo any length to get back a first chop | tion of his new scheme without a | that I fear you will not easily recover stand from some of the natives i

Her stormy eyes boded no good to would alundon him.

quiries elsewhere developed nothing gress in her passions, and now she knowledge that a thing is impossible," could not give up her sweet revenge faversham warned him, "and the east Everett arrived on the evening train nor forego the thought of possessing has driven him mad. However, I am and after dinner listened to the story | the wealth which had once been Tom | much interested myself, not only for of their adventures with great interest. Gallon's and which he had tried to the sake of Viss Ruth, but from a

She agreed to go, and they decided till do my best to help you." to leave by train that evening, thus "It might take years to locate that being in San Francisco in time to meet

Two days later Everett again met hour and day prospecting for it. So John and Ruth in the hotel in San John's news was that the Hindu they

I think you will have to find your sought had undoubtedly been on the Haleyon and that John had bought a John said soberly. "It has already "You ought to get the plans before

you get to India," Everett said ear-

of your man." Dorr acknowledged this and outlined his tentative plan of getting hold of the idol during the passage.

"After all, we don't want the idol. I shall try to persuade the man of this and get him to let me have the papers concealed in it."

At this moment Sir Donald Faversham was announced. The entrance of the Englishman who

had made himself so attentive to Ruth at the southern hotel awakened little enthusiasm in either Dorr or Everett. but for Ruth's sake they played the civil part. She, on the other hand, received Sir

Donald with every evidence of lively pleasure. "We are this minute talking of go-

ing over to India, where you lived so long," she told him after the first greetings. "And you are just the man fess, to tell us all about it." "Going to India!" ejaculated the bar-

onet "My word!" "Yes," she proceeded. "We are after a Hindu and his idol." At this point John laughingly came

to the rescue and briefly explained the object of their quest. Sir Donald listened quietly, occasionally glancing at Ruth, whose beauty was enhanced by pretty excitement. At the conclusion of the tale he

said, addressing John, "that India is ance they shortly found themselves in "I see your point," the promoter said a large country filled with millions of India and installed in a very good hopromptly. "My offer of days ago still different races. Even granting that tel. holds good. I'll finance this matter to this man is a Hindu and that your the end, and I'll look after the mine surmise about the idol is correct, I

> plish anything." "That is just where you can help For the instant Sir Donald actually

> blushed with embarrassment. Then be gathered bimself together and went into details of what they must encounter.

"If you could only go along!" Ruth said plaintively when he had got them thoroughly discouraged. "You could talk their borrid language and make

"By Jove," said the baronet, smiling. "that's not a half bad idea! I have nothing to do, and I might as well see the chaps in India again as stay bere." "You know, Sir Donald was in the army there," Ruth explained to Ever-

"Brought up there," Faversham added. "Know India pretty well. I really believe I'll go with you if you'll acept of my company. What a lark!" Neither John nor Everett received this proposal with undue warmth, but Ruth found it delightful, and before any of them realized the seriouspess of the conversation everything had been arranged. Outside Faversham spoke to Dorr as

man to man. "I don't want to thrust myself o you in any way," he said briefly. "I happen to know India and to be sure that I can be of service to you. In fact, I should think it a jolly trip.

But if you think I took advantage of the little lady's courtesy say so." Entirely disarmed, John Dorr bad to confess that Sir Donald's offer relieved him of a responsibility too heavy for him.

The two parted the best of friends. though John could not refrain from an expression of jealousy to himself. But he knew that Ruth's interests

were now doubly safeguarded and tried to restrain his unruly heart. As the steamer sailed the pert day they had little time for their preparations, but John made sure that the Hindu was on board before the last line was cast off and the big liner backed into the stream and beaded slowly round for the channel to the

CHAPTER XXIV. "He Is a Prisoner!"

URING the long voyage to Hongkong the three were thrown much together, and Sir Donald learned in full the history of the "Master Key" mine and the present search for the plans of the site of the mother lode.

to be satisfied would stop at nothing.

India," he told John many times. "The the god is angry with them, and for country is immense, it is inhabited by some years they have quietly conduct races of different speech and habits ed a search for it." and religious, and yet over it all there | "And this man will take it to Bhala?" Jean Darnell received Drake coolly is the vague spell of the east which is demanded Ruth. what you seek."

"But I must get the papers back," some one, and Wilkerson feared she said John quietly. "There is no ques-

"Many a man has refused to a

porting standpoint, and I promise you

They considered the suggested plan of taking the idol away from the Hinlode without the exact plans," he said the steamer and watch for Dorr's next du during the voyage, but Faversham vetoed this after a somewhat extensive investigation.

"You see," he told Ruth, "I know he fellow's language, and be comes from a tribe far in the north of India. Most of those chaps are looked upon as rather sacred, and this man in special, I see, is much respected by the other natives in the steerage. To desecrate his image would simply mean nestly. "You'll find yourself in a strange an uproar that we could never explain land, where it will be like looking to the satisfaction of the captain and for a needle in a haystack to get hold his officers. In fact, we should all get into the most serious trouble."

"Then your advice is to wait?" she murmured.

"Most decidedly," said the baronet. 'And the waiting isn't so bad, is it?" The steamer was slipping easily along across a moonlit sea that night, and Ruth and Sir Donald were far in the bow watching the waves foam softly away from the cutwater.

The girl had awakened during the past few weeks to the dim happiness of being always the center of men's thoughts. She was not in love, but she was

ready to be. The experienced man beside her surmised this. His own heart was beating a new tune. He had lived much, and women had not been aloof from his life. But this fair, proud, inexperienced,

a deeper feeling than he cared to con-To be sure, he had John Dorr to contend with. Faversham did not underestimate him as a possible rival when

yet self contained girl wakened in him

he allowed himself to go so far as contemplating marriage with Ruth. He liked the young American, and none knew better than he the effect that constant association with Dorr must have upon a young and very impressionable girl. John's own sentiments were unmistakable-he was | festivity.

deeply in love.

From Hongkong they transshipped to a P. and O. steamer for Bombay, | safe." "You know, my dear fellow," he and under Sir Donald's expert guid-

> "We must wait here till I discover through natives just where that fellow is bound for."

"Why not simply trace him?" demanded Dorr, impatient to be about his errand. "That would be out of the question,"

Faversham explained. "In the first place, you don't understand any native tongue, and in the second place the must expect and the difficulties they | British government doesn't look with favor on strange and unattached Europeans stumbling about among the

> "If you leave it to me I think ! not only can ascertain the exact place where this fellow comes from, but the temple where the idol belongs." Several days passed, during which

Sir Donald was busy among old acquaintances, leaving John and Ruth to their own devices. They occupied their time in sightseeing. At last Faversham came into

dinner one evening with a smile on his something of the history of the image." | we shall have trouble."

"And we can get it back?" Ruth inquired promptly. Sir Donald shook his head gently. "Not so fast, young lady!"

"But that is what we came for." she went on. "The fact of the matter is this," said the baronet-"that image was stolen



"Not so fast, young lady!"

At first he could hardly believe that ! several years ago-a great many, in such things could happen, but slowly | truth. It is the tutelary deity of a he came to understand that the tre- small city on the river Bhala, and it to mendous passions that were fighting about as sacred an article as you could "I fear you will find it different in that since they have lost their image

"Then what are we to do?" demand "Bhasa is some hundreds of miles up

country," Sir Donald continued. "Part

of the way we can go by rail, but part he had also ascertained that they had of the road we must travel either on left for the interior under the escort of foot or by litter-if we go."

"Of course we are going!" said Ruth. know your India as I do, and even if from the mob who had seized him we accomplished our purpose we should run double risk in getting back."

They argued the matter for some time, but Ruth refused to consider retreat at this stage, and John, impressed though he was by the other's evident sincerity, could not belp feeling that as an outsider he did not understand the necessity of the recovery of

When he and Sir Donald talked it over alone the baronet was even more

He characterized the whole expedition as rash and plainly stated that should the British government get wind of such a search immediate steps would be taken to see that the Americans went no further. Dorr was unconvinced and finally in-

timated that Faversham had not meant what he said when he had volunteered to help them. Sir Donald shrugged his shoulders and admitted himself helpless in the

face of such arguments. "At least I can go along and do what I can to save the young woman from actual peril," he remarked. "I by no means promise to give you active as-

"I'll be satisfied if you'll just tip me off once in awbile," John responded. They made the journey to Bhala safely. Ruth and John viewing the novel sights that met their eyes on every hand, Sir Donald acting as general guide and instructor.

On their arrival at the teeming city they were soon installed in an inn outside the center and some distance up

Faversham wasted no time in looking up certain people he knew among the natives and was in a position to inform them that be had not only discovered the temple, but that he had learned that the idol had been recovered and would be restored to its proper shrine with due ceremony and great

"That will be just our chance," said John. "In the crowds we ought to be Faversham tried to convince him

that this was not so, but Dorr insisted so strongly for the Englishman yielded to his better imment. "I'll try to get you within sight of the idol anyway," he consented. "But I must insist that you obey my instructions implicitly. Otherwise we shall

tually kill any chance you may have of attaining your purpose." The result of this was that Ruth late that night was wakened by Sir

all get into trouble and you will effec-

Donald's rapping on her door. When she had flung on some clothes and opened she saw from his manner and his disheveled dress that all had not gone well. "It's true," Faversham told her.

"Dorr couldn't resist what he thought was a chance to get hold of the idol. He was captured, but I managed to get away by my knowledge of the language and the help of some natives who are friendly to me." For the moment Ruth was speech-

less; then she inquired for the particulars, and Sir Donald gave them briefly. At the conclusion be remarked, "They won't harm him, but if it gets out that "I've found your man and learned he really intended to steal that image "But he is a prisoner!" she cried.

> "True," said Faversham wearily. "I didn't dare stay. If they had got me too, you wouldn't have known anything about what had happened for days "But you will save him?" she pleaded. In her appealing beauty Ruth stirred

Sir Donald to the depths. He knew new than woved her. For love of her he would do what he knew might mean his own death, but he was helpless in the grip of this sweet passion.

Yet he would not go without at least a word of hope and promise. "I'll get him," he told her. "It will be a hard job, but I'll save him for your sake, Ruth, and when I come back with him"-

She leaned forward, gloriously content that John was to be brought back to her. She did not read aright the expression in the man's eyes. She threw out

"I'll always love you if you will," she whispered He stared dizzily, and she withdrew say a word. Five minutes later he was hastily making his way back toward the temple

her little hands to him joyously.

from the howling mob who yelled for the life of the impious man who had laid foul hands on their god. His own recollection was of desperately using his tongue, his muscles and his knowledge of the usual intricacies

of a native city. John thaself could give no clear description, but confessed that he had given up hope of rescue when Sir Donald appeared as by magic.

It was dawn when they reached the notel, and Ruth was on the balcony watching. When Faversham looked up and called out, "I managed it?" she eaned far over, her eyes shining, and threw him a kiss.

The baronet's heart beat high. He

had won her for his wife. The fact that Dorr and Ruth had sailed for India did not escape Wilkerson and Mrs. Darnell's sharp senses, and they sailed, with Drake as their companion, on the next steamer. "We can easily pick up Dorr's trail when we land," Wilkerson told them.

He found this true. Within two days

Sir Donald Faversham.

Without delay they followed and in "I most earnestly beg of you to stop due time landed in Bhala, not long here," said the baronet. "You don't after Sir Donald had rescued Dorr when he had tried to recapture the idol. Witkerson grinned when he told Mrs. Darnell of this fiasco. "But will you fare any better?" she

> demanded. "Sure," he said confidently. "I'll let



"Then the 'Master Key' will be ours." their fingers getting the thing; then I'll get it away from them. It's a long way back to America, and if we stick tight to Dorr we'll sooner or later be able to handle the plans ourselves. "Then the 'Master Key' will be ours for good and all."

(Continued Next Tuesday.)

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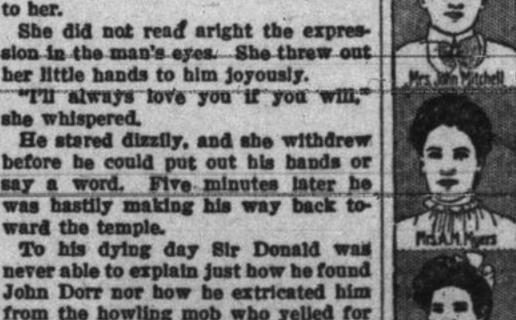
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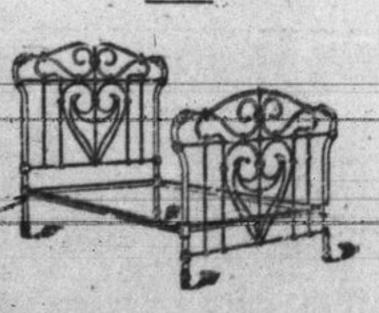
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