

# EAST AND WEST

BY TALBOT MUNDY

TALBOT MUNDY—WNU SERVICE

## SYNOPSIS

Captain Carl Norwood has been sent from his native England to the Kadur River district in India, along with his indispensable manservant, Moses O'Leary, soldier of fortune. Norwood's job is to survey the district to determine whether a valuable secret diamond mine belongs to the temple priests or to the ruler, the Maharajah of Kadur.

## CHAPTER I—Continued

Noor Mahlam chuckled. It was like the gurgle of dirty water and it swallowed the silk of his voice. Even his gesture changed. He became as hoarse as an auctioneer encouraging a doubtful bidder:

"Sahib, there is newness at the palace such as never before was! There is a godsend in the guest-house. She has money, and a nice worth more than money. Oh, such loveliness! And oh, such ill temper! The aunt is never satisfied unless she is humiliating someone. She humiliates even His Highness. And the niece is never happy unless she can be as kind as her aunt is cruel."

"Why are they there?" asked O'Leary.

"It is a mystery. Nobody knows."

"Who wants to know?"

"Ah, sahib, you must not ask what I may not tell you."

"I'll bet a month's pay," said O'Leary, "that the temple Brahmins have sent out a call for information."

"Would it make any difference to you, Mr. O'Leary, where the two hundred rupees came from, supposing you had it?"

"Two fifty might tempt me. I'd think it over."

"Even that price might not be too high for exact information as to why Captain Norwood is in Kadur; and also why Mrs. Harding and Miss Lynn Harding are here at the same time. There is some connection. What is it?"

"I'll find out," said O'Leary.

"And you will sell me the information?"

"I'll think it over. If I can't find a higher bidder, maybe you and I can do business. You'd better watch out for me. I'll take a stroll through the bazaar later on."

"Very well, Mr. O'Leary. My office is—"

"What do I care where your office is. Do you think I'd let myself be seen calling on you? You keep a dekho lifting. You've plenty o' spies. Find out where I go, and follow, and bring your money with you. Three hundred."

"But sahib, we agreed to—"

"I said three hundred. You'd better go before I'm seen talking to you. Captain Norwood might be back any minute. If he should ask me who you are I'd have to tell him, and it wouldn't sound nice. Him and me never tie to each other."

## CHAPTER II

Captain Carl Norwood was in nothing yet that he or anyone could recognize as trouble. On horseback, followed by a mounted native orderly, he was entering the ancient gate of Kadur City. A good-looking fellow, young to be a Captain of Royal Engineers. He looked more like a cavalryman. Inside the city gates, there was a stinking herd of loaded camels. They blocked the street. Norwood's horse that wasn't used to camels went into a panic. When he had calmed the horse he dismounted, gave the reins to the orderly, and told him to let the horse get used to the smell of camels and follow as soon as the camels were out of the way. He wanted to stretch his legs anyhow. It was only a mile walk to the Residency, on the far side of the city. The swarming streets were interesting, just before sunset, with the night life just beginning.

The Residency stood in a vast compound amid neem trees. Guard-house—flagpole—Union Jack. The Residency guard of native Indian infantry was turning out to pay the customary honors to the flag at sunset. The Resident was on the front steps, middle-aged and military looking. Norwood had to wait until the brief ceremony was over. His reception was not cordial. The invitation to dinner was perfunctory, so phrased that it was easy to refuse.

"I'm tired, sir. Long march. I would like to turn in early."

"Very well, Captain Norwood. Don't let me inconvenience you. I was informed, of course, that you were coming. Can't say that I approve of this survey of the Kadur River. The priests will resent it bitterly. There may be trouble enough as it is over the temple boundary dispute. The Maharajah claims ownership of certain buildings, beneath which it has been an open secret for centuries that the priests have a diamond mine."

"That's why I'm here, sir. I was told that Prince Rundhia started the argument."

"Yes, he's heir to the throne. He had to start it in the Maharajah's name, but it was Rundhia's idea.

The Maharajah is a quiet old gentleman, thank heaven. No initiative. Satisfied to let things take their course. I believe the quarrel would settle itself, if we would let it alone. The diamond mine is one of those open secrets that do no harm until they're aired by busybodies. The arrangement has worked perfectly well all these years. The priests don't win many diamonds from the mine. Sometimes years go by without their finding any stones worth putting on the market. But they make an occasional find. They turn over a certain percentage to the Maharajah, and sell the remainder for temple revenue.

"Yes. There's a rumor the mine is dangerous."

"Good God, man! They don't let anyone near the mine—not even the Maharajah!"

"Provision has been made for that, sir."

The Resident squirmed. "Well, take care that you—" he selected a word; he used it tartly:—"spies don't make trouble."

Norwood returned to the city. The new street lights had been turned on. There was a swarm of homing traffic—bullock carts, camels, droves of pedestrians, scandalously noisy and decrepit autos. Norwood stood on a sort of traffic island in mid-street—an oasis of palms with an ancient fountain and one big glaring arc-light. He could see the orderly bringing the horses; he might just as well wait for them.

Threading its way through the traffic in the direction of the palace, there came one of those old-fashion-

ed carriages in which zenana ladies take the air. It was magnificently horsed. Two mounted men rode ahead to clear the way, and they were followed by two runners armed with sticks. Two men in splendid livery on the box. Two footmen on a platform behind the carriage. Two more horsemen bringing up the rear.

As the carriage drew near Norwood, a terrifically noisy truck frightened the horses. Almost at the same moment, two elephants loomed into view from a side street. The horses plunged. The driver had hard work to control them. The carriage swayed violently. The right front wheel struck the curb, close to Norwood. The shock jerked open the door. The electric arc-light shone in, revealing the occupants. The coachman reined the horses to a standstill, shouting to the footmen to seize their heads.

Diamonds, pearls, zephyr silken saris of the hue of Himalayan dawn. Two women. The older, stout one raised a fan to hide her face. It was the other who held Norwood spellbound.

She was young. She was full of laughter. She had mocking, excitable, generous eyes that looked wild to lose their innocence and revel in what shouldn't be, but is, and is amusing. She saw no evil, only humor in being stared at by a man who shouldn't see her, and hadn't expected to. Indian zenana ladies are supposed to shrink from men's eyes. Hers met Norwood's full, and full of laughter.

Norwood, of course, recovered self-possession. He was in uniform, so he saluted. He was about to speak; he had thought of a properly gallant remark that would sound almost like a quotation from the "Arabian Nights," when the palace servants took the situation in hand.

The driver recovered command of his horses. The carriage moved on. The footmen jumped up behind. Norwood was left wondering. He had had a vision. He had never seen such a beautiful girl.

The older, stouter woman, who had used the fan to hide her face, should be the Maharane of Kadur. But Norwood knew she was childless; otherwise Prince Rundhia, the Maharajah's nephew, would not be heir to the throne. The ladies of Kadur have black, not golden hair,

so the younger girl could hardly be a relative. She might be a princess on a visit from some northern Indian State.

The orderly, selected because he was a native of Kadur, rode up with the led horse.

"Has Prince Rundhia taken a wife?" Norwood asked him.

"No, sahib." One does not discuss zenana ladies—not with men of an alien race. The orderly grinned himself into the kind of silence that suggests the subject is forbidden.

Norwood rode back to his camp, where Moses Lafayette O'Leary lied, like three men of three different races, about who had drunk the whiskey.

"It was an emergency," said O'Leary. "Yes, sir, I took the liberty. But how can I get information if I mayn't count on your knowledge o' my honesty, and take a chance now and then on your overlooking what would be impudence if someone else should do it? I have to treat my informants decent. Have you heard who's staying at the palace? There's a guesthouse in the palace full o' women. Americans. Two. A young one. And an aunt who'd fill a hotel. Truck-loads o' luggage. I've heard say the aunt could make a brace of tigers wish they'd looked the other way. They say she's a holy terror. But they tell me the young one 'ud melt your heart to look at her. They call the young one Miss Lynn Harding."

"What else have you found out?"

"Not much."

"You're about due for an Irish promotion. You're getting too fat. I've my eye on a man who knows what work is."

"All right, sir. If you want me to talk before I know what I'm talking about, I'll do it. Here goes. The whole bazaar's as full o' dirty rumors as Stoddard's dog is o' fleas. There's a game on, and it's all set. They're laying for us, and the way they figure it we're in the bag already. I've been offered a bribe to tell you where you're in Kadur."

"Cash?"

"No. Promises. Man name o' Noor Mahlam."

"Beyond that you were offered a bribe, did you get any other line on their intentions?"

"No. I know we're being spied on. There's a saying in Kadur that diamonds see in the dark. We're being watched now. We can't afford a mistake. But they'll try some more bribery first before they act ugly."

"Don't take their money. Don't take a gift of any kind from anyone."

"Me?"

"Yes. You."

"I'm incorruptible."

## CHAPTER III

Mrs. Deborah Harding, in leggings, a short skirt, and a wide pitch helmet, wearing goggles, and with a camera suspended somehow from her portly figure, prodded ruins with the ferrule of a green silk sunshade. Two palace servants danced attendance on her, doing their obsequious utmost to prevent calamity.

"Sahiba! Not good! Much too many cobra—kerait—scorpions—too bad. Come, look this way. Plenty ruins this way."

But Mrs. Deborah Harding wasn't in the habit of taking the advice of anyone less than a Supreme Court Justice; nor would she hesitate to question that if it didn't agree with her own convictions. She was dynamic, opulent, willful dignity personified. As honorary special correspondent to The Woman Citizen, of Aaronsville, Clarendon County, Ohio, she was being an authority on ruins. She looked like authority. She had authoritative gestures, and a notebook.

It was close on sunset. Mrs. Deborah Harding's goggles were dusty.

## Old Fort Laramie Proclaimed National Monument

Old Fort Laramie, in Wyoming, army general headquarters during the Indian wars on the plains and long-time capital of the wilderness west of the Missouri river, has been proclaimed a national monument. The score of crumbling buildings that still mark its site at the junction of the Laramie and North Platte rivers are to be preserved and restored as a memorial to the dauntless traders and soldiers who maintained this greatest of all refuges along the covered-wagon trail by means of which the West was won.

The first known white men to visit the site were members of the Stuart party of the Astorians in the winter of 1812-13. Later it was a fur-trading post. In 1849 the United States army purchased Fort Laramie in order to establish authority over the streams of emigrants who were passing through the fort en route to California. By 1865 the Indian situation became so troublesome that Fort Laramie was made general headquarters of "the military district of the plains."

When the arteries of transconti-

The blood-red sunrays confused her vision. She was one of those people who always believe what they see but nothing that they don't see. She saw a cobra. She did not see that the stone, on which she set her foot, was loose, curved on its under side and resting insecurely on a flat rock. So she twisted her ankle and sat down—hard. It jolted every bone in her corpulent body.

Two hundred and eight pounds of widow with bankers' references and one hundred per cent opinions, can sit down harder than a crate of groceries.

"I never saw such people—such a country. I have travelled all around the world from America. I have visited numbers of countries. I have not seen your equals anywhere for inefficiency and lack of human intelligence. What shall I do now? I am in pain. Have you no ideas? Can't you suggest something?"

One of them mounted the pony and cantered away for assistance. Mrs. Deborah Harding sat fanning herself and making impotently harsh remarks about the swarms of flies that were looking for a last, lazy meal before going to sleep.

The cantering servant drew rein at an outlying police kana and, after a heatedly uncompromisingly debate with the policeman in charge, phoned the palace. The Maharaneit was out. It entered no one's head to consult the Maharajah; it was his hour of the day to study postage stamps, so he was incommunicado, except to the physician who should bring him his evening tonic. However, Prince Rundhia had returned that afternoon, from a visit to Delhi. Someone phoned him. Things happened.

There are two palaces. Rundhia's is separated from the Maharajah's only by a high wall and two widths of glorious garden. Rundhia's imported patent automatic garage-door swung open. His imported ex-Czarist chauffeur whirled a Rolls-Royce to the front door. Rundhia took the wheel. They opened the front gate just in time. Another split second and he would have crashed it, sacked the lot of them, and bummed a new car from his aunt.

There was a whirl of dust, a din of tooting. Headlights flooded the narrow roads with blinding glare. Three dogs and some belated chickens died the death. Three villages gapsed and called on thirty gods to witness their piety. Rundhia rammmed on the brakes and got out of the car to bow to Mrs. Harding just as calmly, as blandly, as amusingly courteous as if he were entering her drawing room.

"Well, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Deborah Harding. "I don't know who you are, but—"

"Prince Rundhia, your host's nephew."

"How d'you do. You took your own time, didn't you? I had begun to think no one was coming."

The garden guesthouse was a copy of a cottage at Juan les Pins. It had been Rundhia's idea. The Prince had persuaded his aunt the Maharane to go thoroughly modern for once.

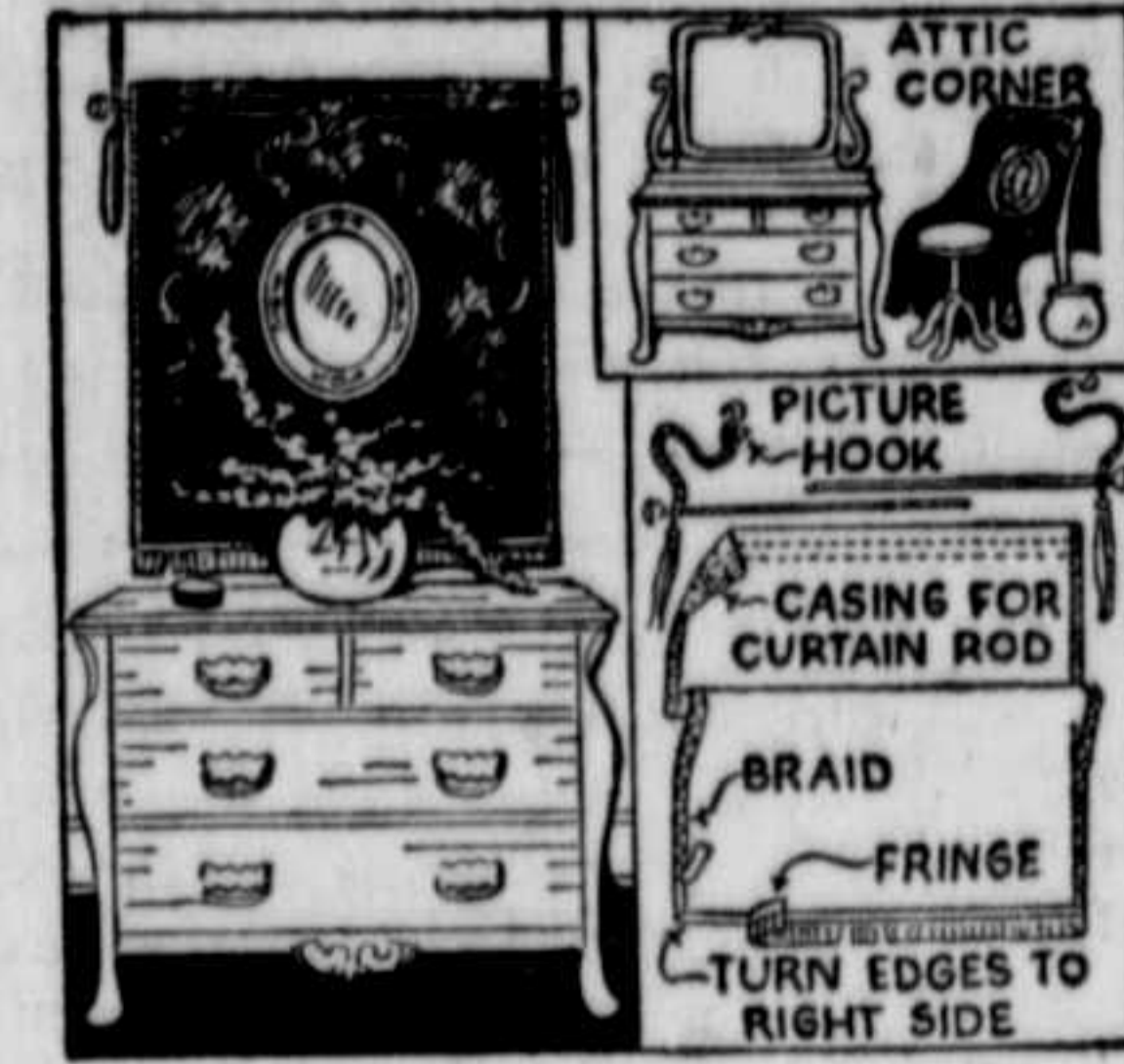
The Maharane almost worshiped Rundhia, but she had compelled him to return from Europe by cutting off the supplies of cash. She wanted him to learn to be fit for the throne. But Rundhia was always threatening to go to Europe again unless she made things tolerable; so she had to make good his gambling losses and to humor his whims.

No one had stayed at the guesthouse until Mrs. Deborah Harding heard about it during her tour of India. She knew exactly how to contrive invitations. She considered she conferred a favor on the rules of Kadur by accepting their hospitality for herself and her niece.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

# HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears



What became of the stool and the mirror will be told next week.

NOTE: Readers who are now using Sewing Books No. 1, 2 and 3 will be happy to learn that No. 4 is ready for mailing; as well as the 10 cent editions of No. 1, 2 and 3. Mrs. Spears has just made quilt block patterns for three designs selected from her favorite Early American quilts. You may have these patterns FREE with your order for four books. Price of books—10 cents each postpaid. Set of three quilt block patterns without books—10 cents. Send orders to Mrs. Spears, Drawer 107, Bedford Hills, New York.

## Wren Had Last Laugh On Critical Councillors

Sir Christopher Wren, builder of St. Paul's cathedral, and many other famous churches, was partly responsible for the Town Hall of Windsor, in 1686, but the good councillors had misgivings about his work.

They complained to him that the big hall had no pillars to support it, and despite Wren's assurances that it had been designed that way and was safe, demanded that supporting pillars be placed in position.

Wren agreed to do so, and had four pillars erected. But some years later it was discovered that the pillars came one inch short of reaching the ceiling.

## Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

### The Questions

1. What is the difference between a contest and a tournament?
2. Why did George Eliot, the English novelist and poet, not live to be an old man?
3. How many time changes from Chicago to San Francisco?
4. What is a trade dollar?
5. For what do the following abbreviations stand: Ad lib.; e.g.; i.e.; viz.?
6. Would you call a person living in Rome a Roman or an Italian?

### The Answers

1. A contest is any battle for supremacy; a tournament usually refers to some test of athletics or card skill.
2. George Eliot was a woman.
3. Two—one to mountain time, and one to Pacific time.
4. A U. S. coin not minted since 1885, made for trade in the Orient.
5. Ad libitum, at pleasure; exempli gratia, for example; id est, that is; videlicet, namely.
6. "Roman" generally implies the early Roman empire. "Italian" is used.

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### Art of Health

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