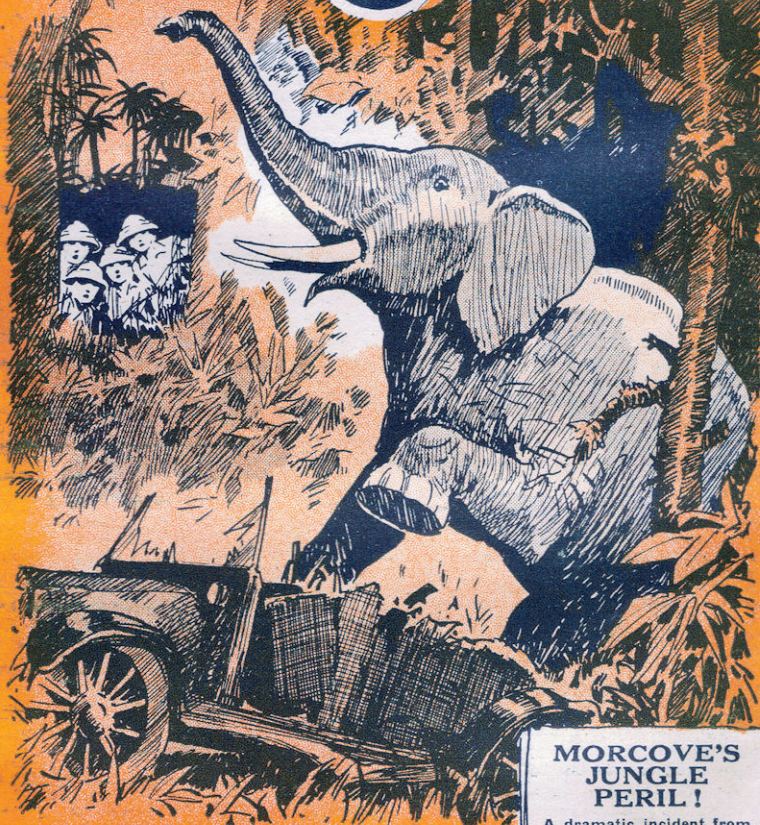


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"Betty and Co. In India" Grand Complete Morcove  
Holiday Story Inside

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>



**MORCOVE'S  
JUNGLE  
PERIL!**

A dramatic incident from  
this week's splendid story  
of Betty Barton & Co.

A DELIGHTFUL LONG COMPLETE STORY OF BETTY  
BARTON & CO. ON HOLIDAY

# BETTY & CO. IN INDIA



**W**ELL may Betty & Co. be excited. They are holiday-making in India, land of teeming millions and vast jungles, of beautiful temples—and bullock-carts! And en route for the mystic Temple of the Moon they meet with a startling adventure right at the very outset!

## East and West

"INDIA! It's so strange, so wonderful—India!" Tess Trelawney had to say it to herself.

For just this odd minute or so she happened to be without all those chums of hers, of Morcove School, with whom she had come out to India along with various grown-ups and a trio of school-boys.

Tess was that member of Study 12 at Morcove who had all the talent for painting. Her sketching materials had come out with her from the Home-land, and now she was wishing there was time to dash off a picture of the colourful scene that held her gaze.

But it was out of the question, she knew. The entire party was going on again, at any moment now.

Only for a night or two had they all rested at this "dak bungalow," from the veranda of which one could look across a vast, jungly valley, to mountain ranges of great grandeur.

The bungalow was one of those which Britishers rent furnished to one another at a moment's notice, so to speak. It was placed in the midst of its own compound, supposed to be private; but Morcove had found that Indian toddlers, adorable little lumps of humanity, strayed in to roll about in the dust, and that goats and old cows came in for a drink at times.

But now they were a couple of bullock-carts that suddenly enlivened the scene, with attendant natives in brown cotton and turbans, very excited over what they had to do.

## BY MARJORIE STANTON

"Oh, are you there, Tess!"

She turned round to find that Betty Barton—in term-time, captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove—had romped out to her, along with tall Pam Willoughby.

"Our luggage goes on those bullock carts, Tess! I say, isn't it thrilling, to be done with trains now!"

"But they've got hold of three cars for us," Pam remarked lightly. "Funny, isn't it, being able to travel by motor just as if we were in England."

Tess grinned.

"Cars, did you say? Sorry for their tyres, and their springs! Hope they're old ones!"

"They are," Pam agreed. "Very!"

Pam's father, at one time, had done great work in India. It was through his past association with India that this holiday trip for Morcove and Company had come about.

For if Mr. Willoughby had never lived in India, he would never have come in contact with famous Professor Donkin, that great authority on the India of pre-history. And without Professor Donkin, Morcove & Co. would never have been on its way to—the Temple of the Moon!

Meantime, here were some more of the girls, venturing out into the blinding sunlight, all suitably dressed for the great heat.

One of them, indeed, not content with sun helmet and the very flimsiest of white frocks, plied a paper fan. This was Paula Creel, given to languor even at bracing Morcove!

"Bai Jove, wawm!" sighed Paula. "Yes, wather! A twying day in fwont of us, geals, what?"

"A thrilling day, I hope!" sparkled Polly Linton, whose madcap nature was not, apparently, the least bit influenced by the heat. "This rajah who has invited us to be his guests, on our way to the Temple of the Moon—he's ever so handsome and rich they say. Speaks perfect English."

"Educated in Europe," nodded Pam serenely. "But now that he has become Rajah of Chodopore—"

There was an interruption. A sudden commotion amongst the bullock carts and the coolies—that was nothing. Morcove, by now, had learned not to let any native uproar disturb the conversation. But here was that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, Morcove's own royal scholar from a desert kingdom in North Africa, looking anything but royal as she came flying out to her chums with a glass jug, full to the brim.

"Bekas, refreshers, everybody! Before we start—no glasses—"

"Then drink fair!" pleaded Polly, playfully seizing the jug for first "swig."

"Hi, only down to ze top of ze handle!"

Polly treated the dusky one to a withering glare.

"You don't need to teach me manners, kid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know what it is, but it's better than nothing," said Polly, handing on the jug after a sip or two. "Phew! If it's hot when we have a heat wave in England, then what is the word for India, a day like this?"

"I know, but I shan't say," laughed Helen. "Here are the boys; you might ask them!"

Three of the jolliest, nicest boys! One of them, Polly's brother Jack; another, Judy Cardew's brother Dave—quiet, serious Dave, so different from fun-loving Jack! The third boy was Dick Cherrill, with no sister in the party—he hadn't one! Neither brother nor sister nor parents had Dicky, and so Morcove & Co. had "adopted" him for the holidays, knowing him to be "one of the best!"

"Talk about Samways' Circus, when it comes to Barncombe!" was Jack's chuckling comment on the loading up of the bullock carts. "Jello, jello!" he shouted, and Polly asked, with proper sisterly scorn:

"What do you think you're saying? A few days in India, and he thinks he can talk like a native!"

"It's made them get a jerk on, anyhow," Jack claimed proudly. "Look at those porter-wallahs, jumping to it now. I don't know how you spell it; but say 'jello, jello!' to any of these native jokers, and they hurry up."

"Jello, jello!" somebody said to Jack himself at this moment, and he flashed round, then saluted.

"Oh, Professor Donkin!" voiced several of the girls, with that enthusiasm which proclaims popularity. "Are we starting now?"

Professor Donkin, middle-aged, genial, learned-looking, was obviously ready for the journey. With his quizzical smile, he said:

"Yes, boys and girls, and it's 'jello, jello!' for all of you, if you want to look round and see that you have got everything. The ladies are locking up—and I think Mr. Linton has both cars ready."

"Ooo, geeek, I must take ze jug back!" shrilled Naomer, knowing that it was an inventoried item. "But, what ze diggings, we haven't finished ze lemonade! Professor Donkey?"

It was no use; Naomer never would get out of the habit of addressing the learned gentleman by that name. She had made it "Professor Donkey" when he had first come into the lives of the juniors at Morcove, and "Professor Donkey" it would remain.

Not that he minded, in the least.

"My dear, not for me, thank you," he most politely declined the offer.

"Give me the jug!" said Jack, in Macbethian style. "Well, sir!" to the professor, "here's success to your work in connection with the Temple of the Moon! And thank you once again for letting us come!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Polly, whilst running off with the others girls back into the bungalow, for that last look round.

"Thank you, Jack my lad," the Professor responded genially. "For my part, I'm sure it has been a great delight to make this journey to the Temple in such jolly company! Er—"

He paused, and the boys thought he was collecting his thoughts for something to say, in his semi-humorous way, about his pet theme. But instead:

"Er—the Rajah of Chodopore," he said at last hesitantly.

"Yes, sir?" came from all three boys eagerly.

Professor Donkin's lean face, under the sun-helmet, had assumed a very grave expression.

"Mr. Linton, Mr. Willoughby, and I are feeling a good deal perplexed by this invitation that has been sprung upon us. Er—we are not saying anything in front of the girls," glancing over his shoulder to make sure that they had gone. "Mrs. Linton, Mrs. Willoughby, and Mrs. Cardew—they, of course, share our thoughts."

"Why, sir what's the trouble then?" jerked out Jack.

"There are rumours that the rajah may not mean us well," Professor Donkin said softly.

"But we are in this difficulty; we dare not flout the invitation. The Temple of the Moon lies in his territory. Offend him, and we might easily find that we have come all the way from the Homeland for nothing."

"Gosh!" said Jack. "We can't have that! But, sir—surely he's all right, educated in Europe!"

"Ah, my boy, those who know India know only too well that a European education often produces the least-to-be-desired results upon such men. Don't think for a moment that I mean all rajahs are like that. Most of them are the soul of courtesy and honour—"

"But this chap's—well, different?" spoke Dave tersely.

"Yes, my boy; I'm afraid he is from all accounts. Er—you lads will keep an extra-careful eye upon the girls, when we get to Chodopore? I know you will! And the thing will be for us to make as brief a stay as possible."

"In other words, professor, the rajah chap has let his position spoil him?" Jack inferred crisply.

The professor nodded tranquilly.

"It is quite easy to understand. He has only lately succeeded to the Raj, through the death of his elder brother. It is, as you say, a princely position that has probably gone to his head. But—er—"

"That isn't all?" Dick Cherrill guessed, from the professor's looks.

"Why, no—far from being all, if reliance is to be placed upon the rumours. One is, that the rajah's elder brother—Hunda Khan, a great friend of mine, as you remember my telling you—is not dead, but has been put out of the way."

"What!" gasped Jack. "Sort of banished, like?"

"Ah, it would be something worse than banishment, I fear."

The professor was silent for a full half-minute. "Noising, I think, has ever disturbed me so greatly," he murmured at last, "as this whisper that goes about, concerning my old friend Hunda Khan. At home in England I heard that he had died almost at the same time as his father, the then rajah. Out here I find the belief held that Hunda Khan is still alive, but languishing in captivity. His wife and only child—a young girl—are still in Chodopore; but they are not at the palace. They, too, have been banished to a mere hut on the fringe of the jungle."

"But that's pretty awful!" said Jack, whilst his two chums let their looks proclaim a similar horror. "Shall we see them—be able to do something for them?"

The deep-set, thoughtful eyes of Professor Donkin seemed to fire up all at once. In a flash, as it were, there was being revealed that which at all ordinary times was hidden behind a somewhat ordinary exterior; British chivalry, and plenty of it:

"We must make it our purpose to do that," he said, with stern emphasis. "You youngsters know how the mystery surrounding the Temple of the Moon has long been the ruling interest in my life. But now, if I had to make my choice between solving that mystery and helping the widow and child of my old friend—perhaps saving the life of Hunda Khan himself!—I know the choice I would make!"

"You won't have to choose, sir," smiled Jack. "You'll do both things, with any luck! Gee, though, look at all that smoke coming from the garage!" he cried. "Come on, boys, and if it's the whole jolly place going up, we must help to put it out!"

But it was not as bad as that, as Jack himself well knew. Only his father and Mr. Willoughby, starting up cars that had been given an extra dose of oil for luck! The professor to whom cars were fearsome creatures with which he dare not meddle, looked amused as the boys went speeding across to an out-of-the-way part of the compound. But in a few moments the smile faded.

Left to himself, he indulged in a train of serious thought, out of which he was startled by hearing a jocular cry from Polly Linton to her girl chums, as they all came out of the bungalow again.

"What I want to know is, girls—when are we going to see a tiger? Professor Donkin," Morcove's madcap blithely hailed him, "do say if we are likely to see a tiger to-day!"

"Oh, yes, you may see a tiger," smiled the professor.

He did not add that the tiger might prove to be a human one, and that his name—the Rajah of Chodopore!

## En Route

MORCOVE and the boys need not have made quite so much fun of the start-off of the bullock-carts, with all the stores.

That strange outfit, with its score of attendant natives, and a rabble of native children, certainly moved off amidst a hair-raising din. But the old, open cars proved to be as noisy as farm tractors, all three being terribly knocked about by up-country work.

And when it came to shouting and yelling, Morcove could always do its share. The chums of Study 12, being assigned to all three cars in batches of two or three to each car, had all the more reason for shouting in such a divided-up state. Not to mention that Jack had joyously started a notion that there was to be great rivalry as to who would get there first—if any of the three cars got there at all!

"Now, Mrs. Cardew," said Jack, to the mother of Judy and Dave, having been honoured with a seat next to her; "I'm sure you've got the best car of the three to drive. So don't let 'em beat you!"

Charming Mrs. Cardew could do no more than answer with a smile. Her great concern at this moment was not to let the engine stop running. Mr. Willoughby had started it up for her, and it did not "tick over" at all sweetly.

"And you girls," said Jack, speaking round to Betty, Polly, Paula, and Naomer, with whom sat Dick Cherrol; "don't talk, don't breathe!"



"Look out for yourselves!" Jack yelled. It seemed as if the huge snake was going to plunge right into the car. The Morcove party crouched down breathlessly.

"I'm not likely to hear, if they do!" laughed Mrs. Cardew, as she extracted an awful groan from the "works" by fiddling with a lever.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jello, jello!" cried Jack gaily. "And it's all right, boys, if the radiator leaks away all its water. I've got a water-wallah following behind, with a skynful!"

"You haven't!" cried Polly, looking behind. Nor had he. It was only the mood Jack was in.

"The great Chodopore rally, boys! Hurrah!" he cheered. "Now to see Tin Lizzie win the Endurance Test. Hey, shoo!" to several featherless chickens that were running about in front of the car, "shoo!"

"Oh, and mind the goat!" Polly yelled to Mrs. Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Cardew let in the clutch. Partly, the resulting screech came from the car, and partly from Paula. They had started with such a jerk—nearly knocking down a mud wall—that Paula Greel had slipped clean off her seat on to the car's floor.

"My advice, stay there," counselled Polly, making a footstool of the beloved duffer. "There's nothing to be seen but smoke."

"Gee, she does smoke, no mistake," chuckled Jack. "What about treading on the gas a bit more, Mrs. Cardew? Give her a good roar?"

"How can I," bleated the lady driver, "when there's this cow walking down the middle of the village—"

"Just as if it had come into town to shop!" was Polly's comment. "Hi, shoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jello, jello! See?" said Jack proudly. "She knows! You people come out to India not knowing a word of the lingo!"

Bump! went the car.

"Wow! Heap!"

"It's nothing," Jack calmly reported to Mrs. Cardew, after a glance behind. "It's only Paula, with Naomer on top of her now. Carry on. One thing about these Indian villages; no traffic signals. I say, Mrs. Cardew, the others have got ahead of us! Give her a bit more pep?"

"Was that something dropping off?" Mrs. Cardew asked, with rightful anxiety.

"No," said Jack, looking behind again to count the passengers. "They're still there! Gosh, don't run over the old man, Mrs. Cardew, sitting bang in the middle of the road. Hey! Jello, jello!"

Before they were clear of the native village they overtook the bullock-carts, and already one of them had come to grief. Mrs. Cardew was still driving very slowly, and the juniors had a good chance to enjoy the serio-comic scene, with its inevitable jabber-jabber.

Then, along a road of sun-baked mud, they ran between rice fields and other cultivated land. Oxen that were all skin and bone pulled wooden ploughs at a snail's pace.

And, for mile after mile they were constantly coming upon little villages with more brown mites sucking their thumbs as they sat about on the dry mud.

Morove glimpsed little local temples, with gaunt priests in charge of them, and there were the wells and water-holes, where young women filled ancient earthen pitchers.

Bump, bump, the car got along somehow, keeping its passengers a good deal on the jog and a good deal inclined to laugh.

Then, presently, they came to timbered country, with mountains close at hand, and the wildness of such surroundings gave the girls a sense of awe.

Rougher than ever the narrow track became, and Morove felt really sorry for Mrs. Cardew as she slaved at the steering-wheel. The forest was being cut for timber, and the so-called road was deeply scoured by the massive tree-trunks that had been dragged along it.

"Oh, look, girls—look!"

It was a sudden cry from Polly, as the car took a bend in the road and a clearing was revealed, with gangs of natives at the work of felling.

"Gosh, boys!"

There was an elephant, trained to the task of helping with the work. They saw him pick up a twenty-foot length of felled timber with his trunk and amble away with it, to dump it elsewhere.

Then, for the usual serio-comic touch, there was an old man, with a white beard down to his waist, squatting on top of a timber-dump, reading something out loud in a sing-song voice, from a book.

"Is he the foreman, or what?" chuckled Jack.

"No—that's the foreman, look!" cried Betty, in anything but an amused tone.

She was pointing to a swarthy fellow who had suddenly swooped upon a couple of labourers for idling. The work they were doing looked to be the sort that demands a breathing space now and then; but this overseer was evidently a bully.

Whilst the car floundered along, the juniors watched the overseer as he lashed out with a stick after shouting his abuse of the idlers.

Mrs. Cardew, tight-lipped and pale, seemed to know what was happening over there, although she had to keep her eyes upon the rough road. Her passengers, free to watch, and compelled to watch by a kind of fascination, felt their blood boiling.

"Gosh, I'd like to get down and set about that chap with the stick," Jack said tensely.

"The brute, yes, wather! Ah, deah," sighed tenderhearted Paula.

The uncut forest closed in again, on either side of the lumpy road. The branches of mighty trees interlaced above their heads, and not a ray of the blinding sunlight flicked upon the travellers for the next half-hour or so.

Instead, there was deep gloom and a steamy heat, and the wild life of the forest provided strange cries and screeches to leave the travellers with a deepened sense of eeriness.

Suddenly Jack spoke back to those who were huddled together in the body of the car. He had noted the mileage by the speedometer.

"We must be in Chodopore territory by now, boys." He always called the girls "boys," as if they were so many of his chums at Grangemore School. "Suppose the other cars have got along all right, that we haven't overtaken them."

"Unless they've taken the wrong turning—or we have!" jested Polly. "Which would be a scream, wouldn't it?"

"Howwows!" said Paula. "Don't talk about our getting separated, geals, in a place like this, bai Jove! I wouldn't wegawd that as a joke—"

"No, bekas, you never know!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, tigreses!"

"Just about the right spot for 'em," grinned Jack. "Amongst this grass; snakes, too!"

"Healph!"

"Why, can you see one, Paula?"

"No, Polly deah—n-n-no!" palpitated Paula.

"And I'm sure I don't want to!"

"But here is one, anyhow! Gee boys, loo-oo-ook out for yourselves!" Jack shouted, his gaiety tinged with alarm. "Gosh, he's going to drop bang amongst us!"

A big snake, coiled along an overhanging branch, was lithely sliding a yard or so of its

length down towards the car, as it plunged along. For one horrifying moment, never to be forgotten, the juniors had that hideous snake licking its forked tongue towards their cowering figures.

Then Mrs. Cardew, having accelerated in an unnerved manner that was excusable, failed to right the car after a wild sideways lunge. There was a jolt, jolt, *jolt*, and then a minor crash! And they were stopped, with the bonnet in some bamboos.

"All change!" said Jack. "Tickets, please!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" came the relieved laugh.

### Morcove Is Amazed

"BAI Jove, geals! Haow you can laugh!"  
"Oh, get on out, Paula!"

"Er—?"

"Jump out!"

"May I," inquired Jack, "assist you, Paula?"

He had already handed out Mrs. Cardew from the driver's seat. Dick Cherrol, looking just as stoically cheerful as the madeap's brother, had acted with similar promptitude, jumping out from the offside door at the back of the car, and then helping Betty and Naomer to alight.

"So sorry, all!" Mrs. Cardew apologised ruefully. "I'm afraid it was that snake!"

"And I don't wonder!" laughed Betty. "Ugh! And he can't be far from here even now. He was only just there!"

"Ow, don't!" shuddered Paula. "I sus-say, c-c-can't I remain in the car? We are going on again?"

"We hope so!" said Jack cheerfully. "With any luck we can pull her out."

"Zen queek, queek! Bekas, you never know!"

"Phew!" fumed Polly, doffing her sun-helmet for a moment, to run fingers through her hair. "Warm!"

"The car doesn't exactly help to make it cooler," grinned Jack. He placed a hand upon the bonnet, then sharply withdrew it.

"Gee, she is warm! Might open the bonnet," he said, suiting the action to the word.

"Er—I say, Dick," next moment. "Is this the petrol-gauge?"

"That's the petrol-gauge," Dick Cherrol was certain. "Bit low?"

"She is low! Cosh, boys, half a jiffy!"

And Jack hastily unscrewed the cap of the petrol-tank. He peered inside, with one eye, and then invited Dick to peer.

Then the two boys looked at each other glumly.

"Why?" asked Mrs. Cardew, with sudden misgiving. "Are we as low as all that?"

"It isn't that we're low," Jack announced, with stolid cheerfulness. "We're as good as drained out."

"What!"  
"Howwows! Ow," Paula wailed dolefully. "You don't mean to say we are—stwandered!"  
"Bekas— Ooo, and zere goes another snake!"  
yelled Naomer. "Eeenormous!"  
"Stabp it!" Paula entreated, meaning, of course, any reference to snakes.  
"Well!" said Betty, with a forced laugh. "This is a nice fix to be in! We can't go on!"

"Not unless Dick and I tow all you others in the car," jested Jack. "What about it, Dicky? Or shall we pop back and hire that elephant?"  
"I think we ought to ring up the palace," said Polly. "and let the rajah know that we shall be late!"

"Be careful about telephoning, boys," counselled Jack, with mock sageness. "Out here in India it's easy to mistake pythons for pylons.



"Allow me to introduce myself," said the stranger with a smile that held a hint of mockery. "Your friend and host—the Rajah of Chodopore!"

I knew a chap who went to ring up a pal, and he found he was grasping the neck of a boa-constrictor. Thought the snake's head was the receiver."

"This isn't the time," said Polly witheringly. "to try and be funny. What are we going to do?"

"I'm wondering!" said Mrs. Cardew, still looking very rueful. "It can't be far to the palace now."

"There are two things we can do," Jack said. "We can walk, or, if you prefer it as a means of keeping out the cold, we can run. Jello, jello, anyhow!"

"Tiresome," sighed Mrs. Cardew. "And all my fault!"

"No!" cried Betty blithely. "In any case, we'd have been stopped for petrol. The old thing must simply leak it away. Oh, we'll manage!"

"Cut ourselves sticks," said Dick brightly. "We'd better. Jack and I've got jack-knives, and it won't take us any time to—"

He broke off there, open-mouthed. His eyes had taken on such a sudden fixed stare, the rest felt quite sure he must be seeing another snake, or some other fearsome creature.

Then they all saw—a native girl, all by herself in the rank undergrowth, looking astonished, loathsome, wistful.

"Goodness!" broke from Polly. "Is she lost then, or what?"

"And not one of us can speak her lingo," Jack deplored. "That's the bother!"

But now came a bigger surprise than ever. Mrs. Cardew had only to make a friendly, beckoning sign, when the native girl stepped nearer, saying in quite good English:

"No, I am not lost—are you?"

### Who Is This Girl?

FOR a moment or two, Mrs. Cardew and the juniors were mute. This second surprise had taken their breath away; had left them tongue-tied, agape.

Even in one or another of those Indian villages at which halts had been made, they would never have expected to find a girl who could speak English as this girl spoke it—and she was only so young, too! No older than Betty or any of the other Morocco girls.

Astoundedly they scrutinised her, and could see no trace of anything that was not pure Indian, in her looks, her figure, her raiment. Pure Indian she was—and yet even at her age she could speak English so well! And she had appeared before them here in this wild spot, amongst the age-old trees of the forest.

Alone, in spite of all the deadly danger that she must have known it meant to be—alone!

"Oh, you can speak our language?" Mrs. Cardew exclaimed at last, with relief.

"Yes, I can speak the English; my father could speak it, and he taught us—my mother and I."

"Fancy that!" gaped Polly.

"Yes, bekas—what ze diggings, she spik ze English better zan me even!" was Naomer's half-indignant cry. "And I go to Morocco School!"

"Come here, my dear," said Mrs. Cardew, with another inviting gesture. "This is a surprise, and a very welcome one. You see how we are placed? The car—you understand all I am saying? The car has no more petrol! How far to the Palace of Chodopore?"

"Chodopore?"

Echoing the word, the native girl seemed to dilate her large dark eyes, as if from fear.

"We are members of a party out from England," Mrs. Cardew further explained. "And we are invited to stay at the rajah's palace—"

Breaking off there, the lady turned puzzledly to her young companions.

"Is it only my fancy, boys and girls? It is so gloomy here, one can't rely too much upon one's eyes. But to me this girl seems to be—"

"Scared stiff on our account, I should say," broke out Polly. "It started directly you mentioned Chodopore."

"Yes!"

"Chodopore is that way," the native girl said, pointing in the direction that the car had been going. "There have been two—like so," she meant two other cars, pointing now at the one Mrs.

Cardew had been driving. "They will be at the palace by this; it is so little way."

"Good!" cried Jack heartily. "Then all we've got to do is to 'jello, jello,' and we'll still be there in time for lunch, boys!"

"Will you walk with us, my dear?" Mrs. Cardew asked the native girl engagingly.

"Perhaps you are going back that way?"

"Me, go back to Chodopore?" was the girl's tensely-spoken answer. "I must not go back to Chodopore. I must not go—anywhere. My uncle would punish me, if I dared to."

The listeners felt each a cold thrill go down the spine.

"But, who is your uncle then?" Mrs. Cardew asked.

"My uncle is the Rajah of Chodopore." Again a thrill for those who heard it.

"Cosh," jerked out Jack. "Here, Dick—what the professor was saying to us chaps this morning! I do believe this girl is—in fact she must be, at that rate! The daughter of Hunda Khan!"

He turned to the native girl. "Are you—are you?"

"Yes, I am the daughter of Hunda Khan; but he is dead, and my mother was banished to the forest when he died. So I live with my mother—there." A pointing hand indicated nothing better than the depths of the forest; no track, however narrow, seemed to lead in that direction. "We are banished, and if we go from where the rajah has said we are to—suffer a worse fate."

"Awful!" breathed Betty.

"Shocking!" Polly fumed.

What made the native girl's remarks all the more appalling was her resigned tone. That terrible, lonely life had been ordered for her, poor child, and for her mother, and apparently they had both to submit, without a murmur.

Now Dick Cherrol spoke.

"We were told something about this by the professor, just before we set off this morning. The present rajah must be an absolute rotter, and the less we have to do with him, the better."

"But we must push on and get to the palace," Mrs. Cardew realised aloud. "I hate the idea of leaving this girl, but it's obvious we can do nothing for her—at present."

Those last words were given a good deal of emphasis, whilst the speaker conferred a pitying look upon the ill-fated girl.

"Is your mother far from here? Listen," the juniors were glad to hear Mrs. Cardew continue eagerly; "if we wish to get a message to you, could you and your mother be here at sunset—tonight and again to-morrow, in case?"

"Oh, do—do say you can manage that!" Polly urged the girl. "It's so awful! We must—we must help you both!"

"I will be here," was the low-spoken response. "My mother—no. She is very ill, and soon she will die. It is the forest. It is why we were banished to the forest, so that we could be no trouble. It is all we can do to guard against the wild beasts and the fever that comes out of the ground."

"The brute that rajah chap must be!" Jack exploded. "Cosh, I'll be setting about him myself. Kid," he added suddenly tapping the native girl kindly upon the shoulder, "you tell your mother—"

"Yes, do that as well, please!" Mrs. Cardew implored; "tell her that help is coming. Tell her that Professor Donkin is in Chodopore with all of us. She will remember him as a British friend of her husband's. Tell her that at all costs we shall—"

"St! Mrs. Cardew!" several of the juniors

together warned her; for there was someone coming now—on horseback, or so the first faint sounds suggested.

That there was need for immediate caution, the native girl instantly made clear. She flashed about and was gone, and after her first darting movements had caused the crackle of a twig or so underfoot, not another sound of her was audible. One of the snakes abounding in the forest could not have slipped away with greater suppleness and secrecy.

Another moment, and the Britishers were certain that two riders on horseback were at hand on the forest-track.

There was just time for them all to collect themselves, and affect amusement over their stranded state, and then, sure enough, a man came cantering up, riding a marvellously beautiful horse, whilst close behind him rode his "syce" or groom.

They were Indians both; but the master—young and handsome—wore European riding kit, his turban alone being in accord with that dark face of his. And, reining up, he spoke at once in fluent English.

"Ah, an English lady—in distress. Two of England's public schoolboys. And the young ladies—how do you do!" he smiled, with a flourishing hand at his turban. "Salam!"

"We are indeed in an awkward fix," Mrs. Cardew laughed a little uneasily. "There were three car loads of us when we set off this morning; the others have got there all right, we suppose. But this car—it can never take us on to the palace at Chodopore. So if you should be going that way, would you mind delivering a message for us?"

"But I can do better than that, madam," said the Indian, coming down from his saddle with a swaggering grace. "Allow me to introduce myself," he said, with a grand gesture and a vivid smile. "Your friend and host—the Rajah of Chodopore!"

THE rajah himself!

It was he, of whom they had heard such unpleasant things, bowing low with a kind of mocking gallantry to Mrs. Cardew.

His dark, narrow eyes smiled aside upon the juniors.

"Madam, you must have my horse, and I will ride my groom's," he suddenly decreed, and turned to say a few words to the syce, who salmamed and then became very active.

The rajah's saddle would not suit Mrs. Cardew, so it was being removed.

"I should be at the palace, receiving those other guests," he smiled on; "but mine is a busy morning always. I have to get things done, as you say in England; in my father's time Chodopore went to pieces. Now, I am pulling it together again. I saw you when the car drove past the timber clearing."

"Oh, were you there?" Mrs. Cardew said, with lifted brows. "Then perhaps you saw one of your overseers beating two of the workers?"

"Ah, yes; he is a good man, that overseer!" The juniors exchanged glances.

"May I?" he offered to assist Mrs. Cardew to mount; but she declined his help a little coldly. In a moment she was settled comfortably upon the bare back of the sleek, mettlesome horse. The rajah sprang to the saddle of his groom's horse, at the same time giving a further command to the native.

Then the juniors realised that, whilst following on foot, they would have the groom coming on behind them, last of all.

Did he understand English? It was quite likely. The rajah, after his several years at school and 'Varsity, would probably prefer personal attendants out here in India who had a command of several languages.

At any rate, the boys and girls were not for taking any risks. They were longing to be able to discuss matters amongst themselves, but they did not mean to run any risk of being overheard.

All joyful excitement over the invitation to the palace was now ended. In its place had come excitement speckled with dislike of the rajah himself and vague fears.

Even if he meant no treachery in regard to them all, as being on an expedition to the Temple of the Moon, there was that business of the widow of Hunda Khan and her young daughter. An ugly business, that—terrible!

And yet, being British, the professor and his party would be bound to feel all the more thankful to be out here in Chodopore, when their presence might mean a chance to do something for that ill-fated widow and her child.

Every step of this last stage of the morning's journey, the boys and girls were greatly rejoicing over one thing at least.

Mrs. Cardew, by those last words spoken to the native girl in the forest, had made it quite clear; there was to be no "perhaps" about an attempt to help the unhappy pair. Instantly, it had become a case of "must"—and the other grown-ups would feel just the same.

Suddenly, the rough road through the forest widened considerably, becoming a broad avenue

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leading out on to a great open space, going back in terrace upon terrace, to the palace itself.

Thus a front view of the palace came, a few moments later, in full view, and the juniors lost their breath in wonderment at the vastness and grandeur of the whole scene.

The terraced grounds were marvellously lovely, with many marble-rimmed lily-ponds, ancient stone elephants. Peacocks strutted about, mischievously picking to bits flowers that were even then being tended by numbers of native gardeners.

As for the palace itself, it was all white marble, with columned verandahs and arched-in alcoves offering shade from the blinding sunshine.

Pencil-like towers rose up here and there, and there was one huge pointed dome, of bright copper for a sort of crowning glory.

"Some palace!" muttered Polly.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove; the palace is all right," Paula acknowledged, implying that the same could not be said of its princely owner.

"Gorjus!" said Naomer. "Bekas, what ze diggings, zis has got my own palace at Nakara beaten! Ze jolly old rajah has got a better palace than mine!"

"Never mind, kid," said Polly tenderly. "Nakara has got a lot that Chodopore hasn't got, I'm sure!"

"Yes, my people are happy, any old how," her royal impishness found comfort in thinking. "I don't know about ze people here!"

"He's a doubtful blighter, what say, Dick?" came from Jack, in a tight-lipped manner.

"A twister, too," the girls heard Dick Cherrol



give his opinion disgustedly. "Sooner we are out of here, the better."

"Only, even by going on to the Temple of the Moon," Polly rejoined softly, "we shan't be out of his territory! That's the sickener; the Temple is only a few miles from here."

They could talk freely now. The syce had kept close behind them, but in the last few moments he had hastened forwards, to be ready to hand for the riders when they should choose to dismount.

"Shouldn't wonder," Jack whispered, "if this rajah chap was at the bottom of all that trouble the professor came in for, months ago at Morcove."

"Just what I've been thinking," nodded Polly. "When the professor was translating those ancient native writings dealing with the Temple of the Moon, and the attempt was made to steal all his papers!"

"What is the secret of the Temple—I wonder!" Dick Cherrol exclaimed eagerly. "S'pose the professor has a theory to go upon; but he never says a word about it."

"Not he!" laughed Polly. "He was just the same when we got to know him at Morcove. And one thing is certain; if he couldn't feel that it was safe to tell us anything at home, he certainly won't feel that it is any safer at this—Oh, look!" she broke off, giving a sudden wave of the hand, "there are the other cars; there are mother and dad! There they all are!"

And Polly was suddenly her madcap self again, starting to run the rest of the way, as if making for Morcove's own great schoolhouse, after a turn on the games-field.

"Yes, queek, come on, everybody!" shrilled Naomer. "And all I hope is zat we get a good refresher, bekas I could do with one. I could do with a nice soft drink," said Naomer, "and plenty of fizz to him, don't forget!"

### Oriental Magnificence

AN hour later, there went through the vast Palace of Chodopore the brassy whang-whang of a huge gong.

"Um! So now we must go down, I suppose, Betty," grimaced Polly.

"Yes. Reminds me rather of the Morcove dinner-gong!"

"I wish it were the Morcove—No, I don't," Polly promptly changed her mind. "For if all of us weren't here, then there'd be no hope for that native girl and her mother. Poor things!"

"Yes! But we'll manage, Polly. It was a treat to see how your father and mother, and the other grown-ups, were all of one mind instantly. Meantime, I suppose it's all right to go down to 'tiffin'—if that's the word for the meal we're going to be given!—in these things?"

"Why not?" shrugged Polly, who never did give much thought to personal appearances. "We're travellers, travelling light—at least, I am! I don't know about Paula!"

"We had better go and see—about Paula," laughed Betty. "You know what she is!"

The pair of them, who had been alone together in the sleeping apartment that had been assigned to them, needed only to go to an adjoining room, to find both Paula Creel and Naomer in a panicky state about what to wear.

"Bekas, Madge has just looked in to say zat she has seen ze rajah walking on a terrace, and now he is all dressed up to ze nine!"

"He can be; it won't make him seem any different to me," was Polly's withering comment.

"Hurry up, you two; anything will do! Cosh, we're only staying a night."

"All the same, gals, one pweumes that luncheon will be a wather swagger affair, what? And we don't want to disgwace our own country by wearing the wong clothes, bai Jove!"

"Oh, if it's to be like that!" snorted Polly. "Well, I am sorry; I didn't bring all my Morcove sports medals, or I'd wear 'em!"

"And me—I can't wear ze zings I wear in Nakara, or I would show him!" exploded Naomer, abandoning all idea of a special toilette. "Ah, bah, he hasn't got a crown to wear, any old how!"

But the young rajah certainly wore a most magnificent jewel in his turban, as part of all that Eastern finery into which he had changed, after his morning ride.

Morcove rejoined the rest of the "expedition" in a great hall of the palace, to find the rajah in raiment as colourful as one of the peacocks in the grounds. Morcove fancied, too, that there was a good deal of peacock vanity about the man.

Not only was he coated and sashed in such a multi-coloured style; he was smothered with jewels. But that blazing red jewel in his turban was surely the most priceless one of all. It, and the jewelled handle of a dagger worn in the sash, attracted the eyes of Morcove more than anything else.

The juniors could tell that they were to be treated to a great display of Oriental magnificence, and so it proved. Five minutes later they had the rajah sitting in a throne-like seat at the head of a long table which could have accommodated twice the number that were his guests to-day.

And yet that table, huge as it was, seemed to be lost in the vast spaciousness of the banqueting hall.

Native servants in spotless white had freedom to glide swiftly here and there. The food was rich and strange, but Morcove and the boys would have shown good enough appetites, if only there had been less pomposity.

Had the rajah come out in a good light to all of them, they would have been extremely careful to take all this display and ceremony quite seriously. Morcove could behave, when it liked; so could the boys!

But the whole thing jarred. It was odious, to be aware of the rajah at the top of the table, carrying on over-polite conversation in a silken tone, whilst there was that banished widow to think of, and her daughter.

"Just hark to him, gassing away about his 'Varsity days," Jack muttered, towards the end of the wonderful repast. "Making out that he thinks all the world of Europeans, and at heart—he hates them!"

"That he does," Dave quietly agreed, with a V between his brows. "No, thanks," the school-boy said to a servant who had flitted up, with fruit on a gold dish.

And the girls, one after another, shook their heads when they were invited to help themselves.

"Can't stick it!" Polly said under her breath, to Madge Minden. "Every mouthful I've had has been nearly choking me. Supposing that poor woman is dying of fever, Madge!"

"I know," was the sadly nodded response. "Down in that swampy forest—deadly."

"Makes one long for the hour, when—" Polly was whispering on, but a gentle tap on the shin checked her.

It must have been Dave Cardew, who was on her left. Discreetly, in a moment or so, Polly turned to him, and then his eyes said:

"Careful! These servants

A little after this the rajah suddenly clapped his hands, to obtain the attention of the juniors, where they sat at the lower end of the table.

"If you boys and girls like to rise, you may," he spoke down to them, with that smile which always seemed to make his upper lip go out of sight under a dropped nose. "And go wherever you like out of doors; quite safe, as I have been telling your fathers and mothers. Except the forest!" he added impressively. "You can very easily get fever, down there in the forest."

Then Morcove and the boys, hitching back chairs, got up to march out, a good deal head in air.

A white-coated servant held some rich curtains apart to let the youngsters out, and they were no sooner past this dignified sentinel, with his black beard and villainous black eyes, than there was some giggling to hold in check.

"Gee," grinned Jack, "Well, that's over, anyhow!"

"And a sweendle, I call eet," seethed Naomer.

"Bekas, I didn't get half enough to eat, no! All gold plates, and nuzzing on them! Not zat I want to be stood treat to, by him! Ze sooner I am out of here, ze better!"

"And so say all of us,"

chanted Jack, whose frivolous nature was surviving all damping effects. "And so say all of us! For, boys—"

"For he's a jolly poor ra—jah, And he's a very poor ra—jah! For he's a—"

"Shut up," tittered Polly, whilst her eyes sparkled loving pride in her brother, for being so outright. "Look here, what are we going to do? The others will have to stick with him, I suppose—smokes and coffee for a bit?"

"Come on out," Jack suggested promptly. "I want to admire all those stone elephants! No, I don't. Boys," he whispered, including the girls, of course, for they were all swarming away with him, "I'm for taking some petrol down to that jolly old car, and starting her up, and bringing her in!"

"You're not licenced to drive!" Polly playfully reminded him.

"Who's to stop me, in Chodopore?" was the grinned retort. "Anyhow!"—and a wink said the rest.

Morcove understood, as did Dave and Dick. If possible, they were all to slip away and get back to the stranded car.

"For, don't you see," chuckled Jack, as soon as they were in the open air; "the rajah won't be thinking we are worth troubling about. So long as he is keeping the grown-ups in talk, it's all right—so he thinks!"

"Then he doesn't know Morcove!" smiled Betty. "You mean, Grangemoor," corrected Jack genially.



"Those who seek to help us will come to harm," the sick woman murmured. "So I beg you, please go!" Betty, Judy and Tess listened in amazement.

"No," said Betty, very decidedly; "I mean—well, both Morcove and Grangemoor!" And then they all laughed.

IN a sequestered part of the gorgeous grounds the girls waited, presently, whilst Jack, Dave, and Dick went off "scouting for petrol."

There was more hilarity when, in a little while, Jack and Dick came back, each carrying a two-gallon tin. The incongruousness of petrol cans amongst peacocks and stone elephants and lily-ponds struck Morcove as being highly comic.

"And this is not some of the rajah's juice, either," Jack jubilantly announced. "We got it from the cars that got here all right, leaving ours an also-ran."

"Where's Dave?" asked Pam.

"He ran back into the palace—er—to get something," said Dick, with a mysterious smile. "Here he comes."

The brisk approach of Dave caused some of the girls to cease from smiling and let charmed eyes rest upon him. Dave looked so brisk, so efficient and brainy—and so nice, in his hot-weather clothes and sun-helmet!

"Got what you wanted, old son?" asked Jack.

A nod from Dave.

"Then, fall in, A company," continued the facetious one. "Sergeant Cherral, just fall out two girls to carry the juice!"

"Sergeant Cherral," said Polly, "just fall out two boys to carry Paula. For I'm sure she's going to need it!"

"On the contwaw!" protested the beloved duffer, putting on a lively air; "I am perfectly weedy for the twamp, yes, wather! I wewgawd it as extremely wisky; howevah, as it is in a good cause."

"St!" Helen Craig warned, under her breath. A Hindoo gardener was coming by, so they hurried on.

"Here, Judy," Dave presently said to his sister, as she walked with Pam and Madge, "you take charge of these."

He was ready to hand over that mysterious "something" which he had run back to the palace to get, whilst Jack and Dick were seeking petrol.

That which Judy received from her brother was a small case of medicines, put up in phials and tabloids.

The expedition had, of course, come well provided with quinine and other remedies, and this little case could easily be spared from the stock.

"How thoughtful of your brother," murmured Pam, when Dave had turned to speak to some of the other girls. "That poor woman in the forest may be needing just such things, Judy!"

"If only we can find the hut or whatever it is, to which she has been banished," was Judy's fervent rejoinder. "All we know is, that it can't be very far from where we left the car."

The talk lapsed. It was not that the girls were without plenty to say concerning the drama of native life, with all its cruel aspects, in which they had become involved. But they and the boys were now traversing this rough road through the Indian forest, and if there was the risk of walls in the palace having ears, how much greater was the risk of being overheard—spied upon—out here!

Again and again they had to control the impulse to stand still and listen for the creeping step of someone who might be tracking them. Again and again they looked behind them, or glanced to right and left. How were they to be sure that the rajah had not given orders for them to be watched in all their roivings!

Suddenly, when they were within a couple of hundred yards of the abandoned car, Tess Trelawney nudged chums on either side of her, whispering:

"To the right there—look."

The nudged girls were Judy and Betty. Glancing aside, discreetly, to the right of the road, they saw signs of a passage way through the undergrowth.

At best, it was only wide enough for people to use in Indian file, and even so the tall jungle grass would brush close on either side, and there would be drooping branches to dive under.

Next moment, Dave, who had been walking at the head of the party, with Jack and Dick, dropped back in a most nonchalant manner.

"They don't want my help with the car," he remarked, in a clear, casual voice. "I wonder where that footpath leads?"

"I want to see," said Tess, with similar loudness, in case of eavesdroppers. "I want to find a paintable bit of the forest, if I can."

"I'm going with Tess," announced Judy lightly. "You come, too, Dave," she added, knowing perfectly well that he had turned back for the purpose. "Betty dear?"

"Yes, I'd like to take a look!"

Then Dave called out to the others that they wouldn't be long! It was all done in the way that roving holiday-makers part to meet again, as the fancy seizes them. And those who remained as the batch going on to the car were secretly on the

chuckle—the more so, as they comprised the skittish section.

"Stuff to give 'em," Jack said, in that ventriloquial fashion acquired by much talking in class at school. "Now, boys, the thing is for us to have a good old lark with the car, by way of a bit of camouflage!"

ONE behind another, Dave and the three girls prowled along the ill-defined pathway through the gloomy Indian forest.

Dave, going first, made good use of the stick that he carried, bashing right and left as a precaution against snakes. He had calmly remarked to Judy, Betty, and Tess that he didn't suppose there was any danger from wild beasts at that time of day, and as calmly the girls had answered:

"Oh, we don't mind!"

Nor indeed could fears of that nature find much room in their minds, when they seemed to hear a clamant call for help; the cry of those languishing under the rajah's cruel ban, only to be picked up by the inward ear of fellow beings to whom ready sympathy was second nature.

The forest grew denser, darker, but still the little-used track continued. It took the intrepid juniors between trees of mighty girth, and all the time there was a rank undergrowth growing out of spongy, swampy ground.

If one of the monarchs of the forest had fallen, through sheer old age and decay, the gap had soon become choked with grasses and reeds of enormous height.

Suddenly Dave stopped dead; but he signed to the girls to come on until they were close behind him.

They did so, and then their eyes took in the scene that had opened out to him.

The track had brought them to a small clearing, in the centre of which stood a low, rambling wooden building, gloomy in the extreme. It was somewhat like a bungalow; but there were reed curtains instead of glass windows.

The general air of desolation was accentuated by the utter stillness. Close to the building there was a kind of wooden shrine, where a great brass Buddha squatted.

Dave looked round upon the girls, and they looked at him with brows raised questioningly.

Was this the place? Was it here that they would find the victims of the rajah's anger?

#### Doomed

"HARK! That's someone now!"

Betty whispered it, after they had all stood mute and still for a full minute, hesitant—listening.

Next moment, they saw the reed curtains, at a way-in to the desolate building, part to let someone come out. And—it was that native girl of this morning!

They saw her start violently at sight of them; saw how her lips parted as if to give a wild cry.

Instantly Dave and the girls made friendly signs, and then she as quickly nodded. But instead of running out to meet them on the rank space in front of the building, she flashed back behind the curtains. Their heady rattle sounded clearly in the death-like silence that was upon this strange spot.

Betty glanced upwards. The height of surrounding trees told her that the Indian sun only found its way on to the forest-dwelling at midday, when it would be at its very hottest, sucking up moisture from the swampy ground.

Then she found her chums advancing towards

the building, and she put herself in step with them. The squatting idol stared and stared at them as they passed.

A few moments more, and they mounted to the rotting wooden veranda. They had no sooner reached it than the girl again appeared, and never in their lives had they seen a more pitiable blend of looks than was hers.

Gladdness, fear, emotionalism that left her ready to weep violently—all were in the dark, comely face of this native girl, the daughter of Hunda Khan!

"Your mother?" Judy questioned softly and eagerly. "Is she here? Can we see her?"

"I have told her," the native girl whispered back. "But she say—no! If the rajah knew—"

"That's all right," Betty interposed. "We're chancing that anyhow. We all came back—to find that motor-car, you understand?"

"I'll stay around outside," Dave said crisply.

"You girls ought to see if you can do anything."

"Yes! Right-ho, Dave!"  
By now, the native girl seemed to be transfixed with amazement at their wonderful composure. Not until the Morcove girls had made urgent signs to be taken inside did she come out of her trance-like state.

Then, with a final wondering stare at Dave, she glided back to the curtained entrance, motioning to the girls to follow.

They went behind the rattling curtains, and in deep gloom they saw how poorly furnished the place was. Another idol with gold-painted eyes gazed upon them, from where it was set upon the one bit of furniture in the hall—a chocolate-coloured table, with mother-of-pearl inlay.

Gliding before them, in his flowing Indian raiment, the native girl held up a cautioning finger as she brought them to more reed curtains, on either side of which were hung ancient Indian weapons.

Silently she parted the reed hangings and went through, afterwards holding them apart for her British companions to enter.

It was a low-roofed room, as gloomy as the hall. A bamboo chair or two, a carved chest, and a pallet-bed—there were the only furnishings. From a carved corner bracket another idol gazed upon the visitors, with the same eternal expression of aloofness.

On the pallet-bed lay an Indian woman, still young, but her black hair snaked about a face ravaged by sickness.

And so these three girls, who had first heard of Hunda Khan whilst at school at Morcove, were now in the presence of Hunda Khan's wife and that daughter who must share the same terrible exile, unless—unless "Morcove" could save them both!

UNSPEAKABLY sad was the smile that the stricken woman gave, as the three girls approached her bedside.

"You poor soul," Judy exclaimed tremulously.

"Your daughter has told you about us?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" was nodded feebly.

"Your husband was a friend of Professor Donkin's?" Betty carried on the sympathetic talk. "And now Professor Donkin has come out to India and is here in Chodopore, and we are quite a big party."

"So we ought to be able to do something for you," Tess put in her kindly word. "In fact, we've made up our minds not to go back until we have saved you from—from all this."

"Ah," sighed the native girl's mother, "Naina did not have time to tell you. It is the rajah's

will, his pleasure, that we remain here. Those who seek to help us will come to harm. So I beg you, please, go!"

Her daughter Naina had taken up a fan of plaited grass, to wave it coolingly close to the feverish forehead. The sufferer, lifting a wasted hand, took the fan, and murmured something in the native language that was evidently an entreaty that the visitors be shown out again.

"We may stay just a minute?" Betty pleaded, "really, it is quite all right. We have arranged things so that no one will suspect. How well you speak English!"

"My husband taught me. He was a great scholar, and so he met your wonderful professor. My husband loved all things European! But his brother, now the rajah, not so!"

The voice was faint at the finish.

"Let us leave these medicines with you," Judy said, laying down the case. "I expect you know the use of them, and there is certain to be something that will help you. Have you been ill long?"

There was no response. The woman, sighing faintly, had closed her eyes.

Judy opened the case and took out a phial of quinine pills. Unstopping it, she was tilting one or two pellets on to the palm of her hand, when the brooding silence was put to flight by a great and strange commotion, outside in the forest. The eyes of all three girls met in sudden alarm.

"What's that!" wondered Tess and Judy aloud, whilst Betty exclaimed:

"Yes, Naina—do you know?"

But Naina Khan, if she answered, was not heard by the schoolgirls, for in a single instant the unearthly din—shoutings and yellings and tremendous crashing sounds had grown louder than ever.

### The Boys Hit Out

IT was a minute before Polly, her brother, and those others at the car, were due for the same startling scare, when Jack, sitting at the driving-wheel said gaily:

"Now, boys!"

He was going to start up the car.

"Bai Jove!" Paula exclaimed, and took steps to stand clear.

"Yes," grinned Naomer, doing the same. "Bekas, you never know! He may go off with a bang!"

Jack depressed the starting-stud with a foot, and—whirr-rr! the engine roared to life. But it was as mild a start as anyone could have hoped to make with such an old, worn-out car, and Jack bowed to his onlooking chums, taking their admiration for granted.

"And now, boys and girls," he lectured them, as if they were in class and he a learned science-master; "I want you particularly to notice! On my letting in the clutch—"

Wurr-rrr-rupp, gurr! went the works.

"Oh, dear!" said Polly. "That's torn it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh, what?" bawled Jack, above the din of the engine. "What?"

For Polly was suddenly making frantic signals.

"You're going forward, ape! You want to reverse!"

"Oh, ah, of course!"

Wurr-rrr-rupp, gurr, scroop!

"Gosh—"

Scroop, gurroop, prahhh, whiirrup! spoke the gears, in loud complaint.

"You see?" Jack proudly smiled, a few

moments later. "So simple! And now, by letting in the clutch, the car will be seen to glide backwards— Whoa, mare, whoa!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The car, instead of gliding, had jolted backwards with terrific violence. After all, the girls and Dick were not standing too much out of the way. They did some wild leaps, whilst the old motor whizzed backwards in a semi-circle, bumped its back wheels into deep ruts, heaved out of the ruts, and roared on again, still in reverse.

Just in time to avoid a backward crash into a tree, Jack cut off the spark.

"So far, good," he blandly commented. "Now, if you will all get in—"

"No, thanks," said Polly.

"What!" And Jack looked indignant. "Paula?"

"Er—thanks awfully, Jack, but—er—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on then, Dick," said Jack, as if he were done with his sister and her schoolmates. "Hop in, and you and I will take her along to the palace, and do a few stunts amongst the jolly old stone elephants. Gosh, though!" And, like the rest, he became mute with sudden alarm.

For this was the moment when these youngsters heard the same sudden, terrifying din that had reached their chums, at the dwelling in the forest.

Shoutings, yellings, and tremendous crashing, sounds—from close at hand on the road itself!

"Ooo, what ze diggings!" shrilled Naomer, giving a panicky caper, whilst Polly yelled the sudden conviction:

"It's coming this way!"

Jack, the only one in the car, seemed to be petrified at the wheel, with his head twisted round to give him a view over the back of the car. Dick Cherrol shouted to him:

"Out, Jack—jump out, man!"

"But what—"

"Elephant!" Dick bellowed.

Then Jack simply flung himself out of the car. He recovered from a wild sprawl, and took example from Dick and the girls, who were backing into the undergrowth on either side of the road, so as to be out of the way!

Nor were the boys and girls acting with needless haste. They had felt there must be imminent danger to life itself, when the terrible hubbub was so close at hand, and now, sure enough, the cause of it all appeared.

An elephant of great age and size came lumbering round a bend in the forest-road, showing madness in the wild tossings of his trunk and in his aimless onrush.

Swaying as he ran, the great creature caught some of the roadside trees glancing blows that resulted in a loud crashing and cracking of timber.

As for all the attendant shouts and yells, they came from a horde of natives, charging after the maddened beast.

Not that the juniors had eyes or ears, at this moment, for that pursuing crowd. They had placed themselves as safely out of the way as the dense jungle permitted, and now they had eyes only for the elephant, coming as he was straight for that car.

He reached it and, so to speak, took it in his stride. Running amok as he was, he crashed right upon the car, and to all the commotion was added a fearful battering crash of metal.

For a moment or two, during which the car was smashed to a shapeless mass, the elephant was in a checked state, stamping and lunging as madly as ever.

Then he heaved his great bulk clear of the wreckage, and stormed on again.

But even then, mercifully unharmed although they all were, not one of them could move. The rough roadway was now choked with the pursuing mob, whose frenzied cries and yells were well calculated, of course, to keep the elephant still madly on the run.

At last the tail end of the crowd had surged past, and with all the clamour dying away in the direction of the palace, Morcove and the two boys could breathe again.

"Whew!"

"Yes, bekas, I eggpected to be squashed flat!"

"Gosh, boys," said Jack, mopping a moist forehead. "And I hope to goodness the others are all right! If they'd got back to the road?"

But it was all right about Dave and the three girls. In a few minutes the two parties of juniors were reunited, and they decided to hurry back to the palace, to allow any alarm on their own account.

Those who had paid that secret visit to the forest-dwelling explained to the others that they had come away in a hurry directly the uproar started, not knowing what to make of it. Now, like their chums, they understood that it was the same elephant of the morning that had stampeded, drawing all the timber-workers after it in a vain pursuit.

All the way back to the palace, riotous sounds were in the air, and as soon as the juniors had the laid-out grounds in front of them again they realised that there, amongst all the rajah's stately flower-gardens the elephant had committed tremendous havoc, as a grand finish-up.

The natives were mobbed together in an excitable state as ever, all talking and gesticulating, although it was evident that someone in the centre of the crowd was trying to get them to calm down.

"Here's the dad, Polly!"

"Oh, good!"

Mr. Linton was running to meet them, alone, now that he had espied them all, emerging from the forest roadway. Their cheery wavings allayed any anxiety he had been experiencing, and he was sharing in their amusement by the time he got within speaking distance.

"Casualties, one car, sir!" said Jack playfully saluting. "Great pity. There we were, just going to fetch her along, and the end of the world came."

"You youngsters have all been back to that car?" Mr. Linton exclaimed admonishingly; and then—he read something in their looks, and the effect upon him was magical!

"Better than doing nothing, I hope, gov'nor?" Jack whispered. "We saw it as a chance, and it came off. She's got medicines now, and besides, a lot may come of the talk that some of the girls had with—"

The rest went unsaid. Suddenly the crowd of natives had become startlingly quiet, and it could be seen that they were forming themselves into two squads, like soldiers on a parade-ground. But what had claimed the close attention of Jack and the rest was the rajah's own presence.

There he stood, between one squad of natives and the other, directing something to be done to one poor wretch who, apparently, was held responsible for the elephant's fit of rage.

"Ah," frowned Mr. Linton, as he gazed, "you boys and girls had better go on and get indoors. You don't want to see this sort of thing."

Even then, however, the punishment—a flogging with short bamboo sticks—was being started. The

rajah was staying to see it carried out. There he stood, flaunting his dignity before the mustered natives, who were under orders to witness the flogging and so take warning.

Two men held the wretched victim of such rough and ready justice—if justice of any sort there was in it at all. Two other men wielded the bamboos, flailing away at the writhing creature. In a moment he was yelling.

The rajah lighted a cigarette, and still looked on—

Suddenly the tension amongst the British on-lookers was broken by involuntary murmurs of disgust. From Polly, whose self-restraint was never very great, came an explosive:

"I can't stand it! Dad, unless you do something, I shall— That's right, daddy!" she changed to a tone of relief; for Mr. Linton was suddenly moving out, as if to intervene.



The angry Rajah leapt savagely at Jack. Out shot Jack's fist and the man who had just given such a sickening display of cruelty went crashing to the ground. "Bravo, Jack!" Polly cried excitedly.

His doing so seemed to take electrical effect upon Jack, Dave, and Dick. All three boys stepped after him, and Morcove saw how their fists were clenched.

The rajah took the cigarette out of his mouth, to rap a few sharp orders to the men who were administering the thrashing. They laid on harder than ever with the bamboos—mercilessly.

Then Jack Linton's hands flew up to his lips, that he might give a significant lick to finger-tips. He was starting to run the rest of the way.

"Gosh, come on, boys!" his infuriated shout went up. "Hi, stop that, you brute!" he roared towards the rajah himself.

"Boys!" Mr. Linton tried to check them, for all three were making the angry dash to intervene. "Steady!"

But the deterring cry was swamped by a prolonged shriek from the man who was being beaten. Mr. Linton, himself boiling with indignation, could only run after the three lads as they

dashed together to where the flogging was being administered.

Another moment, and those three boys reached the scene of horror. From their little distance away, Morcove saw the clenched fists of Jack, Dave, and Dick working swift havoc.

One of the men with the bamboos went down like a shutter. The other, after staggering under a blow in the chest from Dick Cherril, recovered and came at that lad with an upraised cane.

Dick let fly again, caught the man bang on the chin, and sent him flat to the ground.

It was all happening in a flash. Morcove saw the boys whip about, together, and dash at the two men who held the writhing victim. There was uproar amongst the squads of onlooking natives. Yet Mr. Linton's voice could be heard by the spell-bound girls, as he roared to the rajah to do the decent thing and have the beaten man set free.

Then, instead of doing that, the rajah wildly hurled himself into the fray. The born savagery of the man was apparent in the fury with which he lashed at the boys with his dandyish walking stick.

"Boo!" Polly hooted, carried away by her feelings. "Brute! Oh," she shouted, next moment—"bravo, Jack, bravo!"

For her brother, wrenching the stick from the

rajah's hand, had snapped it in two and cast the pieces high into the air.

The rajah of Chodopore drew back and crouched, like an animal preparing to spring.

He came again at Jack with a great leap, and Jack retorted with a right-hander that took the fellow bang in the ribs, winding him.

And the Rajah of Chodopore, in all his finery, went crash to the ground, as badly beaten as any boxer who has been knocked over the ropes!

#### At Daggers Drawn

"SORRY, dad," Jack puffed. He was running a finger round a moist neck.

"I can't blame any of you boys," Mr. Linton had just time enough to say, and then the rajah

was on his feet again, brushing himself down.

"I keel you!" he hissed at all three boys. "I show you! I keel you in front of all my men!"

"Oh, come, rajah," Mr. Linton spoke, with sudden perfect composure. "This is very regrettable, but—"

"It is an insult! In front of all my people!" raged the native autocrat.

He half turned away, to jabber orders that would bring about an immediate retirement of the seething squads of natives.

Then, having given his orders, he saw the victim of the thrashing weakly standing up. He took a flying kick at the poor wretch, at the same time hissing the native equivalent of "Out of my sight!"

Too exhausted to walk erect, the man crawled away in great pain.

"Rajah," Mr. Linton then resumed, "as the father of one of these boys—"

"I will not listen!" was the raging interruption. "I will have their blood! The insult! And so it is, always! I hate you, I hate all you foreigners!"

He took out his jewelled dagger, looked at the bright blade, and put it back.

"Then why did you invite us, rajah?" deplored Mr. Linton, at the same time making ineffectual signs to the Morcove girls not to come nearer. But they had drawn near enough to hear what must now pass, and they remained.

The rajah, his dark-skinned face looking greenish now, glittered his eyes at Mr. Linton.

"I invite you," he said fiercely, "because you have come to Chodopore to visit the Temple of the Moon!"

"That is so, certainly. But—"

"The Temple is in my territory!"

"Exactly. And you need have had no fear that we would flout your authority, or create any trouble. Professor Donkin is well known to both the British and the Indian governments. Mr. Willoughby, who is of the party, has served India well in his time."

"Your Professor Donkin does not tell me why he must visit the Temple of the Moon! I ask him; but no! Again, insult!"

"Oh, I don't think so, rajah, really. As for these boys; you spent your schooldays in Europe. You must know very well—"

"Oh, I know you people! It is why I hate you!" the infuriated Indian raged on. "And now, do not think you stay at my palace, for you go—at once!"

Mr. Linton bowed.

"In the circumstances, rajah, I am sure that will be best."

"But do not think you go to the Temple of the Moon, for I forbid you now—you see?"

He laughed with a kind of childish malice.

"Or," he resumed, snapping his fingers excitedly, "I know what I will do! Yes, good! The boys shall stay here at my palace, and then I will let you others go to the Temple of the Moon!"

At this moment, Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby, Mrs. Cardew, Mrs. Linton, and the professor, came up. Their looks showed that they had witnessed the recent upset—probably from a window of the palace.

The rajah, with an evil, swaggering smile, singled out the professor.

"I am saying, Professor Donkin, I will let you go to the Temple of the Moon—all of you—"

The professor bowed.

"Except the boys!" the malicious proviso was repeated.

Amongst the Morcove girls there was much

agitated elbow-nudging. With beating hearts they wondered what the grown-ups would have to say now.

"The boys will apologise—"

"Oh, I do not want your apologies," shrugged the rajah, interrupting Mr. Linton.

"We saw the whole thing from the windows, rajah," said Professor Donkin mildly. "Er—I must be permitted to say this. It is not a thing that could have happened in your late father's time. Neither he nor your brother—"

"No! But I am different!"

"Then there it is," said Mr. Willoughby, with that serenity which Pam had inherited from him; "and the best thing, all of us, get away at once."

"But not the boys!" cried the rajah. "No!"

"There was a grave cause."

"Rajah," said Mr. Linton gently, "you must not expect us to leave these three boys in your hands."

"But I do! They must remain, to answer for the good behaviour of the girls!"

"That is making hostages of the boys, rajah."

"So! And a very good idea too," the youthful autocrat nodded, greatly pleased with it. "If you do not like it, you can do the other thing!"

And he walked away.

MR. WILLOUGHBY ended a dramatic silence.

"We shall not agree to it! I'll go after him and tell him so."

"But, sir!" burst out Jack. "Dad—all of you; we chaps don't mind, if it's all the same to you?"

"Anything, rather than have the whole expedition spoiled," Dick Cherril put in his word roundly. "Course, we oughtn't to have sailed into the blighter like that. But it got us roused."

"You boys might have apologised to the rajah, if he had let you!" smiled Mrs. Linton. "There's not the slightest need to apologise to us."

"No, bekas—what ze diggings, eef ze boys hadn't gone for zem, we would have!" shrilled Naomer.

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

This from Paula, notorious for her timidity, drew an all-round laugh at last. But Paula nodded firmly, implying that she had quite meant it!

Mr. Willoughby came back.

"There's a trick in it," he said sternly. "Professor, you don't want to pay a return visit to the palace, after making perhaps a great discovery at the Temple?"

"I do not!"

"But the rajah is trying for that," Pam's father spoke on, with a frown. "He insists upon keeping the three boys, as a guarantee that they'll not get up to mischief; but the game is, evidently, to make it necessary for us to call at the palace on our way back, to pick up the boys."

"We shan't do it," declared Mr. Linton. "You've made that as clear as I did, Willoughby?"

"Yes. And so we're to take the road again, at once. By the way, he says he can't offer us any protection now."

"We don't want his protection," Mr. Linton commented, calmly. "It's not worth having. He was an enemy at heart, long before my rascal of a Jack rolled him in the dust. The rajah's protection, at the best, would only have been so much spying and interference."

"Besides, we have our passports!" cried Polly gaily.

"What we haven't got now," grinned Jack, "is enough cars to hold the lot of us! Gosh, and how about petrol? We chaps borrowed a couple of

tins of juice from the cars that did get here, this morning!"

"Oh, we'll manage," laughed Betty. "There are always the bullock-carts!"

Nor was it long before they found that they had just got to manage—with the bullock-carts, and without a scrap of native labour.

The two cars that were intact were so low in petrol, it was worse than useless to make even a start with them. The rajah was not to be asked to spare a drop of spirit. Now that he had openly turned against the Britishers, they had him to thank, it was evident, that all the native bearers and teamsters had deserted.

They probably hated him, but they went in fear of him.

So, in the baking heat of late afternoon, Morcove itself worked, in all literalness, "like niggers," along with the grown-ups and the boys.

Hastily re-packed luggage was dumped back on to the carts, which already held tenting and stores. The dony, patient oxen were somehow put in traces by amateurish hands.

Dusty and fagged, yet jovial to the last, the expedition at last moved off, raising a cheer as soon as it was clear of the palace grounds.

At a snail's pace the carts creaked and groaned

along the rough road, with frequent stops for all manner of reasons. Sometimes, it was simply because the oxen felt inclined to take a spell—o! At other times, it was due to bits of precariously placed baggage falling off—whallop.

Twice at least a grand dressing-trunk of Paula's tumbled off its cart.

But the laughter then was nothing like the laughter that went up when Paula herself fell off!

"Jello, jello!" Jack jokingly shouted to his team of oxen, from time to time, as he plodded beside it, whilst Naomer, who was being given a lift on that cart, favoured her idea of plain English, shrilling:

"Goo hun, gee-up—queek, get ze jerk on, old things!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Darkness came upon them only a few miles from the palace, when they had off-loaded some of the tents and stores, to make a camp for the night.

With tropical swiftness the night rushed down from a cloudless sky that became, in a minute or so, a-sparkle with thousands of stars.

By the light of dim lanterns the girls got their hastily rigged-up tents arranged for the night. Mosquito curtains were forthcoming.

(Concluded on next page)



## OUT OF DOORS NOW

**I**N the stifling days of high Summer there is a rare charm in moorland country, where breezes are always stirring and little streams gurgle between fern-hidden boulders.

Soon, too, the heather will be clothing the hills in purple, and the Nature lover who chooses to take one of the rocky paths that wander up the hill will be well rewarded with a thrilling panorama, more beautiful at this time than at any other.

High up in the heathery hills, lying partly in the shadow of a frowning peak, is a lovely lake, its surface always rippled by a breeze that fills the dale. In the neighbourhood of this remote mountain tarn is much interesting wild life.

A pair of ravens haunt the crag above, and their harsh cries—almost like the fierce barking of a dog—warn any human intruders that they are under observation, and that their presence here is strongly objected to!

The most common birds on the moors hereabouts are the curlews, whose wild double cry is familiar to all who haunt the hills. A handsome bird is the curlew, with its long, strangely curved, bill and lanky legs. The young curlews are dear little fellows, covered with speckled down and with tremendously long legs. They will lie crouched in the heather for hours at a stretch if there is any

hint of danger, and their colouring harmonises so well with the vegetation that it is very difficult to see them.

Very occasionally, deer come down to the lake to drink, but they are so shy that it is impossible to approach them. If the breeze carries to their nostrils the faintest hint of human intruders, they are off like the wind.

There are plenty of birds in the vicinity of the lake. Two herons come here to fish, standing motionless among the reeds and cotton grass at the water's edge, waiting for some unwary fish to come within striking distance. On the approach of an intruder, they take wing very heavily, flapping their broad wings as if it were a tremendous effort, and trailing their lanky legs behind them.

In striking contrast to the herons are the dapper little snipe which you can always recognise by their peculiar flight. As soon as they rise, they fly in zig-zag fashion very rapidly. The snipe is sometimes called the "heather beat," because in the Spring it performs a strange aerial manoeuvre which produces a weird humming sound, audible for a long distance.

There is the dipper, the smart little bird which haunts the boulders beside the stream that escapes from one end of the lake. Know the dipper by its stumpy appearance, and by its white collar. It has a strange habit of constantly bobbing up and down; hence its name.

Its nest is a beautiful affair, usually built, strangely enough, in such a position that the parent birds get a "ducking" every time they visit it. Behind a waterfall is a favourite site for the nest.

Then there are ring ouzels, resembling blackbirds, but with striking white collars. There are the coverts of handsome grouse which whirl away over the moor at a great speed, golden plover and many other interesting birds.

The sun soon passes behind the high hills, and the lake becomes dark in the shadow; the purple of the heather merges into a mist of darker shades as the light goes. Stars show in a cloudless sky; the curlews' lonely cry and the bleating of sheep alone are heard as night closes on the hills.