### ···· THE RAJAH'S TREASURE. By H. Q. WELLS. Author of "The Time Machine." [Copyright, 1896, by the Bacheller Syndicate.] \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Himalayan slopes, and between the jungles and the higher country where or suspect—" the pines and the deodars are gathered together, ruled the rajah, of whose wonderful treasure I am telling. Hundreds of thousands of people heard of that treasure in its time between Peshawurand Calcutta. And the curious thing about it was that the Rajah kept it not buried inaccessibly, but in patent safe, sunk into the wall of a lit- red hair streaking his gray, and with a tle room beyond the hall of audience.

Very great was the treasure, people said, for the Rajah had prospered all his days. He had found Mindapore : village, and, behold! It was a city. Below his fort of unhewn stone the flatroofed huts of mud had multiplied; and now there sprang up houses and upstairs rooms, and the place which had once boasted no more than one bunish man, engendered a bazar in the midst of it, as a fat oyster secretes a pearl. And the Rajah had walled his

Moreover, the Holy Palace up the river prospered, and the road up the passes was made safe. Merchants and



HE KEPT HIS OWN THOUGHTS AND WENT HIS OWN WAY.

from the plain on missions to the people over beyond the deodars, and the streets of the town were even denser with poul- Himalayan mountains; it was an eletry and children, and little dogs dyed phant's burden. It was days drawing yellow, and with all the multitudinous

rich odors of human increase, The Rajah pushed his boundaries east and west, the Pax Britannica consenting, and made his fort ever larger and multitude of men dragged it up the hills. stronger, and built himself a palace at last, and a harem, and made gardens, so that he could live magnificently and dispense justice to all that owned his sway, And indisputably he did dispense justice-in the name of Allah! uphelding the teaching of his prophet, in a purely Oriental manner, of course. throughout all his land. Such were the splendid properties of the Rajah's rule.

The Rajah was a portly, yellow-faced man, with a long black beard, now steadily growing gray, thick lips and shifty eyes. He was plous, very plous in his daily routine, and swift and unwithstand him to his face, even in little key that hung about his neck, one could things, and not a woman in the harem open the lock; but without it none could dared by any device to try and wheedle | do so. him from his will. He kept his own | So the story half whispered its wonthoughts and went his own way with- derful self about the city. The Rajah out counsel from any man; he was a lonesome man, but seemed jealous of

Golam Shah, his vizier, was but a Singh, his master of horse, but a driller of soldiers. They were tools, he would tell them outright in his pride of power. staves in his hand that he could break at his will. He went rarely to the harem, taking no delight in the society of women or singers, or in nautches: and he was childless. And his cousin, the youth Azim Khan, loved and feared him, and only in the remotest recesses of his heart did he ever dare to wish the Rajah would presently die and make a way to the throne. And Azim grew in years and knowledge, and Golam Shah and Samud Singh sought his friendship with an eye to the milder days that would come. But the Rajah did not die. He grew a little plumper and a little more gray, and that was until the days came when the talk of the treasure spread through the

It would be hard to say when first the rumor spread about the bazars of the plain that the Rajah of Mindapore was making a hoard. None knew how it began or where. Perhaps from mer-chants of whom he had bought. It began long before the days of the safe. It was said that rubles had been bought and hidden away; and then not only rubies, but ornaments of gold, and ther pearls and diamonds from Golcondas and all manner of precious stones. Even the deputy commissioner at Allapore heard of it. At last the story reentered the palace of Mindapore itself, and Azim Khan, who was the Rajah's cousin and his heir, and nominally his commander in chief and Golam Shah, the chief minister, talked it over one with another in a tentative way.

"He has something new," said Golam Shah, querulously; "he has something new, and he is keeping it all from me." Azim Kahn watched him cunningly. "I have told you what I have heard," he said. For my own part I know

nothing." "He goes to and fro musing and humtning to himself," said Golam, meditatively, "as one who thinks of a pleas-

Azim Kahn was inclined in an openminded way to chercher la femme,

"No," said Golam; "it is not that. He was never like that. He is near threescore, and besides, these three months or more it has been, and it still keeps on. His eyes are bright, his

Between Jehun and Bimabur, on the cheeks flush. And sometimes he hides,

"More rubies, they are saying," and Azim, Greamily, and repeated, as if for his own pleasure, "Rubies." For Azim was the helr.

"Especially is it since that English man came," said Golam, "three months ago. A big old man, not wrinkled as an old man should be, but red, and with tight skin and a big body sticking out before. So-a hippopotamus of a man, a great quivering mud bank of a man, who laughed mightily, so that the peo ple stopped and listened in the street. He came, he laughed, and presently we heard them laugh t ogether—"
"Well?" said Azim.

"He was a diamond merchant, per haps-or a dealer in rubies. Do Englishmen deal in such things. "Would I had seen him!" said Azim.

"He took gold away," said Golam, Both were silent for a space, and th purring noise of the wheel of the upper well, and the chatter of the voices abou it rising and falling, made a pleasant fakirs multiplied about the wells, men sound in the air. "Since the English-came and went, twice even white men man went." said Golam, "he has been different. He hides something from me something in his robe. Rubles! What else can it be?"

"He has not buried it?" said Azim. "He will. Then he will want to dig It up again and look at it." said Golam, for he was a man of experience. "I go softly. Sometimes I almost come upon him,

Then he starts-"He grows old and nervous," said Azim, and there was a pause.

"Before the English came," sald Colam, lanking at the rings upon his fingers, as he recurred to his constant preoccupation; "there were no Rajahs neryous and old."

"The English are for a time," said Azim, philosophically, watching a speck of a vulture in the air, over the walnut trees that hid the palace.

That, I say, was even before the coming of the safe. It came in a packing case. Such a case it was as had never been sen before in all the slope of the went to se it pass upon the railway. they knew were accumulating in the Afterwards elephants and then a great safe. And this great case being opened in the hali of audience revealed within itself that had ever come to the city. It had mancers in England, expressly to the order of the Rajah, that he might keep his treasures therein and sleep in peace. It was so hard that the hardest files powdered upon its corners, and so strong that cannon fire! point blank at it would have produced no effect upon it. And it locked with a magic lock. There was a word, and none knew the word but accountable in his actions. None dared the Rajah. With that word, and a little

caused this safe to be built into the wall of his palace in a little room beyond the hall of audience. He superintended the building up of it with jealous eyes. And servant, a carrier of orders; and Samud thereafter he would go thither by day, once at least every day, coming back with brighter eyes.

"He goes to count his treasure," said Golam Shah, standing beside the empty

And in those days it was that th Rajah began to change. He who had been cunning and subtle became choleric and outspoken. His judgment grew



DRAGGING THE GREAT CASE TO THE HALL OF AUDIENCE.

harsh, and a taint that seemed to al about him to be assuredly the taint of avarice crept into his acts. He seized the goods of Lal Dum, the metal worker, because, forsooth, he had stabbed his wife; and he put a new tax upor the people's cattle, and sweated the bribes of those who stood about him in the hall of audience. Also a touch of suspicion of those about him replaced his old fearlessness. He accused Golam Shah to his face of spying upon him, and uttered threats. Moreover, which inclined Golam Shah to hopefulness, he seemed to take a dislike to Azim Khan. Once indeed he made a kind of speech in the hall of audience Therein he declared many times over in a peculiarly husky voice, husky yet full of conviction, that Azim Khan was not worth a half anna, not a half anna to any human soul.

In those latter days of the Rajah's decline, moreover, when merchants

came, he would go aside with them secretly into the little room, and speak low, so that those in the hall of audience, howsoever they strained their ears, could hear nothing of his speech. These things Golam Shah and Azim Khan, and Samud Singh, who had joined their councils, treasured in their hearts.

PART II.

"It is true about the treasure," said Azim; "they talked of it around the well of the travelers; even the mer-chants from Tibet had heard the tale. and had come their way with jewels of price, and afterwards they went secretly, telling no one." And ever and again, it was said, came a negro mute from the plains with secret parcels for



HIS HAND WOULD TIGHTEN ON THE CURTAIN.

the Rajah. "Another stone," was the rumor that went the round of the city.
"The bee makes hoards," said Azim Khan, the Rajah's heir, sitting in the upper chamber of Golam Shah, "There-fore we will wait awhile." For Azim was more coward than traitor.

Golam Shah heard him with a touch of impatience, notwithstanding that the feebleness of Azim was Golam's chief hope in the happy future that was coming.

Such were the last days of the reign of the Rajah of Mindapore, in the days when the story of the making of his heard had spread abroad from Peshawur to Calcutta. "Here am I." said the wife of the deputy commissioner at Allapore, enlarging on the topic, wearing paste, while the wound is positively lumpy with buried treas-

"But isn't it bad that horrid old nan should have so much?" "He has-"

At last there were men in the Deccan ven who could tell you of particulars of the rubies and precious stones that the Rajah had gathered together. But so circumspect was the Rajah that Azim nearer and nearer tediously. At Al- Khan and Golam Shah had never even lapore the news preceded it, and crowds set eyes on the glittering heaps that

The Rajah ever went into the little room alone, and even then he locked the door of the little room-it had a a monstrous iron box, like no other box couple of locks-before he went to the safe and used the magic word. How been made, so the story went, by necro- all the ministers and officers and guards listened and looked at one another as the door of the room behind the curtain closed.

The Rajah changed indeed, in these days, not only in the particulars of his rule, but in his appearance, "He is growing old. How fast he grows old! The time is almost ripe," whispered Samud Singh. The Rajah's hand became tremulous, his step was now some what unsteady, and his memory curiously defective. He would come back out from the treasure-room, and his hand would tighten flercely on the curain, and he would stumble on the steps of the dais. "His eyesight fails," said Golam. "See!— His turban is askew. He is sleepy even in the forenoon, before the heat of the day. His judg-

ments are those of a child." It was a painful sight to see a man o suddenly old and enfeebled still ruling men. That alone would have given a properly constituted heir-apparent a evolutionary turn of mind. But the treasure was certainly the chief cause that set the idle, garrulous, pleasureoving Azim plotting against his cousin. A throne was a thing one might wait for, in his opinion-a throne and its ares; but the thought of those heaps of shining stones and intricate gold lewels was a different matter. Azim had had a year of college education, and was so far an enlightened man. He understood investments, and credit, and he folly of hoarding. Moreover, the thought of so much latent wealth set im thinking of the pleasure of life and his lost youth.

'He may go on yet a score of years,'

Azim became a greedy hearer of ru-

nors. It was through Azim and Golam, who was humiliated and pained by his master's want of confidence, that the leposy of discontent came into the state. The land tax, the salt tax, the cattle tax became burthens; the immemorial ustom of leaving the troops unpaid became a grievance, the commissioner at Allapore heard tales, and was surprised to find growing evidence of mismanagement in what he had long thought a passably well-governed naive state. Also the chief mollahs were sounded, and there was talk of gifts and the honor of the shrine. And the two eunuchs, and the women of the Rajah's harem became factors in the greatest movement in the state.

Should a ruler hoard riches," said Shere Ali, in the guardroom, "and leave his soldiers unpaid?" That was the

beginning of the end. It was the thought of the treasure yon over the soldiers, even as it did the mollahs and the cunuchs. Why had the Rajah not buried it in some unthinkable place, as his father had done before him, and killed the diggers with his hand? Surely India is not what it was, "He has boarded," said Samud with a chuckle-for the old Rajah had once pulled his beard-"only to pay for his own undoing." And in order to insure confidence, Golam Shah went beond the truth perhaps, and gave, a sketchy account of the treasures to this man and that, even as a casual eye wit-

ress might do. Then, suddenly and swiftly, the palace revolution was accomplished. When the lonely old Rajah was killed, a shot was to be fired from the harem lattice, ougles were to be blown, and the sepoys were to turn out in the square efore the palace, and fire a volley in the air. The murder was done in the dark save for a little red lamp that urnt in the corner. Azim knelt on the ody and held up the wet beard, and cut the throat wide and deep to make sure. It was so easy! Why had he waited so long? And then, with his hands covered with warm blood, he sprang up eagerly-Rajah at last! and followed Golam and Samud and the cunuchs

owards the hall of audience. As they did so, the crack of a rifle ounded far away, and after a pause came the first awakening noises of the One of the equuchs had an fron bar and Samud carried a revolver in his | quarters and awaiting instructions, the hand. He fired into the locks of the safe as safe as ever; assistant conspirtreasure room and wrecked them, and ators grumbling louder and louder; and

they all rushed in together, none standing aside for Azim. It was dark, and the second eunuch went reluctant to get a torch, in fear lest his fellow murderrs should open the safe in his absence

Bue he need have had no fear. The cardinal event of that night is the triamphant vindication of the advertised merits of Cobbs' unrivaled safes. The tumult that occurred between the Mindapore sepoys and the people need not concern us. The people loved not the new Rajah-let that suffice. The conspirators got the key from round the dead Rajah's neck, and tried a multitude of the magic words of the English that Samud Singh knew, such as "Gorb-

In the morning, the sale in the treasure-room remained intact and defiant. the woodwork about it was smashed to splinters, and great chunks of stone knocked out of the wall, dents abundantly scattered over its impregnable door, and a dust of files below. And the shifty Golam had to explain the matter to the soldiers and mollahs as best he could. This was an extremely difficult thing to do, because in no kind of business is prompt cash so necessary as in the revolutionary line.

The state of affairs for the next few days in Mindapore was exceedingly strained. One fact stands out prominentive that Azim Khan was hopelessly feeble. The soldiers would not at first believe in the exemplary integrity of the safe, and a deputation insisted in the most occidental manner in verifying the new Rajah's statements. Moreover, the populace clamored, and then by a naked man running, came the alarming intelligence that the new deputy commissioner at Allapore was verify the account of the revolution Golam Shah and Samud Singh had sent him in the name of Azim.

The new commissioner was a raw young man, partly obscured by a pith helmet, and chock full of zeal and the desire for distinction; and he had heard of the treasure. He was going, he said, to sift the matter thoroughly. On the arrival of this distressing inelligence there was a hasty and informal council of state (at which Azim was not present), a counter revolution was arranged, and all that Azim ever learnt of it was the sound of a footfall behind him, and the cold touch of revolver barrel on the neck.

When the commissioner arrived, that lexterous statesman. Golam Shah, and that honest soldier. Samud Singh, were ready to receive him, and they had two corpses, several witnesses, and a neat little story. In addition they had shot an unpopular officer of the Mindapore



RAJAH AT LAST.

how Azim had plotted against the Rajah and raised a military revolt, and Rajah, even as Golam Shah and Samud Singh loved him, had quelled the re colt, and how peace was restored again. And Golam explained how Azim had fought for life even in the hall of audience, and how he. Golam had been wounded in the struggle, and how Samud had shot Azim with his own hand.

And the deputy commissioner, being weak in his dialect, had swallowed it all. All round the deputy commissioner, in the minds of the people, the palace, and the city, hung the true story of the case, as it seemed to Golam Shah. like an avalanche ready to fall; and yet he did not learn it for fours days. And Golam and Samud went to and fro, whispering and pacifying, promising to get at the treasure as soon as the deputy commissioner could be got out of the way. And as they went to and fro so also the report went to and fro-that Golam and Samud had opened the safe and hidden the treasure, and closed and locked it again; and bright eyes watched them curiously and hungrily even as they watched the Rajah in the days that were gone.

## PART III.

"This city is no longer for you and me," said Golam Shah, in a moment of clear insight. "They are mad about this treasure. Golconda would not sat-

isfy them." The deputy commissioner, when he heard their story, did indeed make knowing inquiries (as knowing as the knowingness of the English goes) in order not to show himself too credulous, but he elicited nothing. He had heard tales of treasure, had the commissioner and of a great box? So had lolam and Samud, but where it was they could not tell. They, too, had heard tales of treasure-many tales indeed. Perhaps there was treasure.



AND GOLAM AND SAMUD WERE CAUGHT.

scientific turn of mind he would have observed that a strong smell of gunpowder still hung about the audience chamber, more than was explained by he narrative told him; and had he explored the adjacent apartment he would presently have discovered the small treasure room with its smashed locks and the ceiling now dependent ruins, and amid the ruins the safe bulging perilously from the partly collapsed walls, but still unconquered and with its treasures unexplored. Also it is a fact that Golam Shah's bandaged hand was not the consequence of heroism in lown the long, faintly moonlit passage, battle, but of certain private blasting operations too amateurishly prose cuted.

So you have the situation: Deputy commissioner installed in the palace, sending incorrect information to headhe eunuchs smashed the door in. Then | Golam and Samud getting more d -

perate lest this voice should reach the

Then came the night when the commissioner heard a filing and a tapping. and being a brave man, he ros went forthwith, alone and very quietly across the hall of audience, revolver in hand, in search of the sound. Acros the hall a light came from an open door that had been hidden in the day by a curtain. Stopping silently in the darkness of the outer apartment, he looked into the treasure-room. And there stood Golam with his arm in a sling, holding a lantern, while Samud fumbled with pieces of wire and some little keys. They were without boots, but otherwise they were dressed ready for a journey

The deputy commissioner was, for a government official, an exceedingly quick-witted man. He slipped back in the darkness again, and within five minutes Golam and Samud, still fumbling heard footsteps hurrying across the hal Out went their lanterns, with a groan because of a bandaged arm, but it was too late. In another moment Lieut. Earl, in pyjamas and boots, but with a brace of revolvers and a couple of rifle behind him, stood in the doorway of the treasure-room, and Colam and Samud were caught. Samud clicked his revolver and then threw it down, for it was three to one. Golam being not only a bandaged man, but fundamentally a man of peace.

When the intelligence of this treach ery filtered from the palace into the town, there was an outbreak of popular feeling, and a dozen officious person set out to tell the deputy commissioner the true connection between Golam Samud and the death of the Rajah. The coming headlong and with soldiers to first to penetrate to the deputy commissioner's presence was an angry fakir from the colony that dwelt about the Holy palace. And after a patient hearing the deputy commissioner extracted the thread of the narrative from the fabric of curses in which the holy man presented it.

"This is most singular," said the deputy commissioner to the lleutenant standing in the treasure-room (which looked as though the palace had been bombarded), and regarding the battered but still inviolable safe. seem to have the key of the whole position.

"Key," said the lieutenant. "It's the key they haven't got. "Curious mingling of the new and the

old," said the deputy commissioner. "Patent safe-and a hoard." "Send to Allapore and wire Chobbs

suppose?" said the lieutenant. The deputy commissioner signified

that was his intention, and they see guards before and behind and all about the treasure-room until the proper in structions about the lock should come So it was that the Pax Britannica solemnly took possession of the Rajah's hoard, and men in Simla heard the news and envied that deputy commis sioner his adventure with all their hearts. For his promptitude and decision was a matter of praise, and they said that Mindapore would certainly be annexed and added to the district over which he ruled. Only a fat old man named MacTurk, living in Allapore, a big man with a noisy, quiver ing laugh, and a secret trade with certain native potentates, did not hear the news, excepting the news of the murder of the Rajah and the departure of the deputy commissioner, for several days. He heard nothing of the disposition of the treasure—an unfortunate thing, since, among other things, he had sold the Rajah his safe and may even have known the word by which the lock was opened.

The deputy commissioner had the atrical tastes. These he gratified un der the excuse that display was neces-sary above all things in dealing with He imprisoned his four malefactors theatrically, and when the instructions came from Chobbs he had had the safe lugged into the hall of audience, in order to open it with more effect. About him stood his clerk and the three white officers in command of the troops that were with him, and an engineer and several native noncommissioned officers, and a guard-s fine display of uniforms. Also there were palace officials, mollahs and sprinkling of representative men from Mindapore, whom the deputy commissioner kept about himself in a kind of court, ostensibly to prevent their get-ting into mischief. The commissioner sat on the dais, while the enginee worked at the safe on the crimson

steps. In the central space was stretched large white cloth. It reminded the deputy commissioner of a picture he had seen of Alexander at Damascus re ceiving the treasures of Darius.

"It is gold," said one bystander to another. "There was a sound of chinking as they brought the safe in My brother was among those who The engineer clicked the lock, Every

eye in the hall of audience grew brighter and keener, save only that that deputy commissioner sat upon the dais looking as much like the Pax Britan-

nica as possible.
"By heaven!" said the engineer, and slammed the safe again. A murmur of exclamation ran around the hall.

Everyone was asking everyone else what they had seen. "An asp!" said some one.

The deputy commissioner lost his imperturability. "What is it?" he said, springing to his feet. The engineer leant across the safe and whispered two words, something indistinct and with blasphemous adjective in front. "What?" said the deputy commission-

er, sharply. "Glass!" said the engineer, in a bitter whisper, "Broken bottles, 'Un-"Let me see!" said the deputy com-

missioner, losing all his dignity. "Scotch, if I'm not mistaken," said the engineer, sniffing curiously, "Curse it!" said the deputy commis sioner, and looked up to meet a multitude of ironical eyes. "Er-" "The assembly is dismissed," said the deputy commissioner.

"What a fool he must have looked!" wheezed MacTurk, who did not like the deputy commissioner. "What a fool he must have looked!"

"Simple enough," said MacTurk, 'when you know how it came about." "But how did it come about?" asked he station master.

"Secret drinking," said MacTurk, Bourbon whisky. I taught him how to take it myself. But he didn't dare let on that he was doing it, poor old Mindapore's one of the most fanatically Mahometan states in the hill, you see. And he always was a secretive kind of chap, and given to doing things by himself. So he got that safe to hide it in, and keep the bottles. Broke 'em up to pack, I s'pose, when it got too full. Lord! I might ha' known. When people spoke of his treasure-I never thought of putting that and the safe and the Bourbon together! But how plain it is! And what a sell for Parkinson. Pounded glass! The accumulation of years! Lord!-I'd 'a given a couple of stone of my weight to see him open that safe!"

(The End.)

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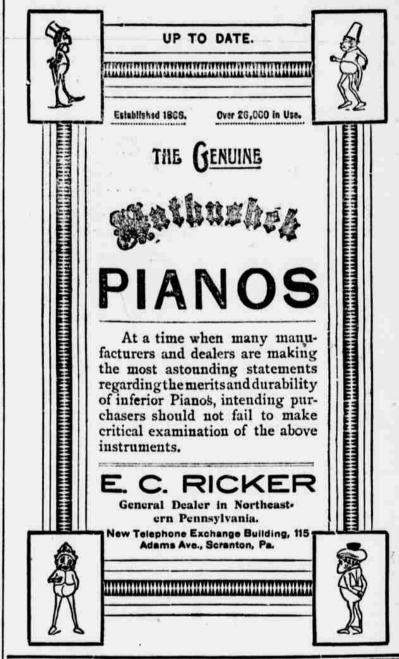
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