

VARIOUS

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November 2, 1880

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BITS OF ADVICE

BY AUNT MARJORIE PRECEPT

When you receive an invitation from a friend to make a visit at a specified time, it is polite to answer it as promptly as possible, and to say distinctly whether or not you can accept the offered pleasure. Your friend may have others whom it is desirable to ask after you have been entertained. Be sure you state by what boat or train you will go, and your hour of leaving home, so that there will be no uncertainty about meeting you. When nothing is mentioned as to the duration of your visit, it is usual to assume that a week will be its sufficient period. Do not stay longer than that time, unless you are urged to do so. The most agreeable guest is the one who is regretted when he or she goes away. Always anticipate a good time, and be prepared to contribute your share

to it. Be pleased with what is done for you, and express your pleasure. Do not be obtrusive in offering help to your host, but if an opportunity arises for you to give assistance, do not be afraid to embrace it. There are little helpful things which come in our way at home and abroad if we have eyes to see them. Charlie, dear boy, was at Tom's house not long ago, and happening to glance from the window, he noticed Tom's mother struggling to open the gate with her hands full of parcels. He ran out at once, and relieved her of some of her bundles, held the gate open as she passed in, and closed it behind her. Helen, who is her mother's right hand when at home, is in request in her friends' houses, for somehow she scatters sunshine wherever she goes, she is so bright, so animated and cheery. She plays beautifully, and she never has to be coaxed to sit down at the piano, but does it willingly, and plays for dancing – a thing which most girls regard as tiresome – with spirit and good-nature whenever there is need of her skill.

When visiting we ought to conform to the family ways. It is ill-bred to give trouble or cause annoyance. Harry's father and mother dislike extremely to have people late for meals. When the Lesters were staying there they seldom heard the breakfast bell, and never came home from an outing until dinner was almost finished. Harry said he could not help it, but reproof nevertheless came upon him. Boys should not go tearing wildly through a friend's house, nor, for that matter, through their own. Grown-up ladies and gentlemen have nerves which should be considered.

Of course well-behaved young people will put away their outside wraps when in a strange house, and not leave overshoes in full sight in the passage, nor shawls, cloaks, hats, and gloves lying loosely around the parlors. Young girls should be careful in their use of the pretty things that adorn their chambers. Do not rumple that dainty lace pillow-sham, nor strew your clothing over every chair and sofa, to the irritation of the mistress. Do not follow your friend and host everywhere, but at the busy times of the day amuse yourselves with books or work, and remember to thank them, on leaving, for what they have done for you.

INDIAN TALES

TWO METHODS OF OBTAINING HORSES

Of all the long list of officers who served the East India Company there were few men whose careers were more remarkable than that of General John Jacob.

Others have raised regiments, conquered provinces, and afterward administered justice therein; but John Jacob was the first man who created a nourishing town in a desert wilderness, and formed first one and then three splendid regiments out of the most sanguinary and lawless cut-throats on the face of the earth. In the athletic exercises so dear to the Beloochees he excelled them all. Among a people who may be said to be almost born on horseback, there was no rider like the commandant of the Sind Horse.

His men were taken from all the most warlike races of Northwestern India. The Beloochee, the Pathan, the Mooltanee, and the semi-savage tribesmen of the hills, had alike to learn obedience when they came under his command, and his efforts to make them soldiers in the highest sense of the word never relaxed.

In the year 1854 the country was full of complaints of horse-

stealing on a scale that had not been heard of for many years. No steed of value was safe, and the thief or thieves must have been tolerably good judges of horse-flesh, as none but the finest were taken, and these of course belonged principally to the wealthiest inhabitants. One strange thing was that the horses were stolen in such an extraordinary manner as to leave no foot-marks behind them. Not one of the animals could be traced as ever having been offered for sale in the country. Stables are rare in Upper Sind, and it is customary to secure a horse by picketing him with head and heel ropes, the syce, or groom, usually sleeping in the open air with the animal. The curious part of the matter was that each and every syce who had had a horse stolen from under his care told exactly the same story – that it had been taken away by Sheitan himself in person, after they, the syces, had been put to sleep by his diabolical arts.

To be sure, they described his personal appearance in many ways, according to the impression severally produced upon their excited imaginations, but in the main facts they were all agreed. They had been sleeping or watching, as the case might be, beside their horses, when a hideous figure suddenly and silently appeared to them, waved his right hand, muffled in a white cloth, in their faces; they lost their senses, and when they recovered, the horses were gone. In no case had the demon injured the men. Where more than one horse was picketed the fiend never appeared, which was considered to be the reason that the splendid chargers of the Sind Horse were not touched.

Superstition is very prevalent in Sind, as indeed it is throughout the East, and had any native skeptic ventured to hint that alert sentries, a vigilant patrol, and a stable guard with loaded carbines had anything to do with this immunity, he would, indeed, have been looked upon as a scoffer.

As to the British officers, of course, although heroes, they were infidels, and, however they might laugh at the idea of Satan roaming about the earth to deprive the sons of men of their horses, they could have no power to check the public opinion of the bazars.

There was, however, an old Ressaldar, or native captain of the Sind Horse, who was very much inclined to take the Feringhee view of the matter. Ressaldar Nubbee Bux was a veteran who had served in his corps almost from its foundation, and in his younger days had fought against the flag under which he had since served so long. He, with many other brave Beloochees, had been opposed to Sir Charles Napier at Meeanee, and had a vivid recollection of the time when the inhabitants of Sind actually believed that distinguished though eccentric General to be the fiend in human form. Since then Nubbee Bux had acquired rank, honor, and a good deal of worldly wisdom. He was naturally a shrewd, hard-headed man, and contact with intelligent Europeans had, if not entirely eradicated native superstitions from his mind, at least rendered him very dubious of any stories having for their basis supernatural agency. He had heard of genii, jinns, divs, afrites, and other evil spirits, but he had

never seen one; he had never known them in his own time to interfere in worldly matters, nor had he heard, even in ancient story, that they were in the habit of laying felonious hands on live stock, or earthly property of any description. That the Prince of Darkness himself should be so hard up for horses as to go about stealing them appeared to him incomprehensible. It struck him as a mystery he should like to unravel; and as he feared nothing nor nobody on the face of the earth, nor below it, save his commanding officer, he determined to try. Ascertaining the whereabouts of the last wonderful robbery, he obtained a fortnight's leave of absence, and repaired to the village, well armed, and mounted on a magnificent thoroughbred Arab horse. He did not enter it nor put up at the serai, but had a tent some little distance outside. There he was soon visited by the head men of the place, who lost no time in paying their respects, for a native officer of the Sind Horse is a great man in the country around Jacobabad.

After salutations the local magnates were full of the unaccountable robberies, and earnest in their warnings to the Ressaldar to take care of his noble steed. Had he not better come into the village? The Kotwal had a stable with lock and key at his service, and would put a watchman over the door all night. Nubbee Bux civilly but firmly declined these favors. He said that if it was fated Sheitan should have his horse, neither lock, key, nor watchman could prevent it; he should stay where he was, and his syce should sleep with the animal as usual. His visitors departed,

and the native officer, after a stroll about, took his supper outside the tent, smoked his hookah, and when it was dark dismissed his servants, and went to bed – or seemed to do so.

When the distant hum of the village was entirely hushed, and no sound but the usual howling of the jackals met his ear, he rose, pulled aside the canvas opening of the tent, and made a curious sort of barely audible noise like the "chup, chup" of the stag-beetle. His syce, who was lying beside the horse, swathed in a huge blanket, which covered his head as well as his feet, rose, and with noiseless footfall entered his master's tent. In three minutes he re-appeared, *or seemed to do so*, and again wrapping himself in his great blanket, lay down to sleep by the horse's side, *or seemed to do so*.

In about two hours from that time a hideous form appeared to rise from the earth. Its figure was human, but the dark brown flesh glistened as no human flesh ever glistened naturally, while the head was indeed fearsome to behold. It was surmounted by an enormous pair of horns, had two glaring eyes, and a mouth full of frightful teeth, from which protruded a tongue forked like a barbed arrow.

The weird figure stooped and advanced its right hand, wrapped in a white cloth, toward the head of the prostrate syce. Like a flash of lightning that prostrate form sprang up. Ressaldar Nubbee Bux (for he was his own syce on this occasion) dealt his assailant such a slash with his tulwar as would have cleft the head of any mortal man in halves, and which, as it was, stretched the

horse-thief senseless on the ground.

As Nubbee Bux, bare blade in hand, bent over his foe, a strange sight met his view.

The blow had split a head-covering composed of buffalo-skin with the hair on, stretched over an iron mask, something like a diver's helmet, with eyes of transparent horn ingeniously illuminated by means of minute lamps concealed in the balls, the real eyes of the wearer having sight beneath. The false teeth and forked tongue were knocked out, and lay on the ground with the horns.

The Ressaldar summoned his syce, who had remained in the tent, and a light being brought, found that the prisoner who had fallen into his hands was a fine athletic young Beloochee, about twenty-two years of age. He was quickly bound, and by direction of his captor carried into the tent.

He was only stunned, and soon recovered to find himself helpless, and the first words that fell upon his ear were spoken in his own language, by a stern-looking man of some five-and-forty years, whose right hand coquetted with the hilt of a tulwar, while his left hand ominously handled a pistol.

They were few but expressive: "Rascal! can you give me any reason that I should not blow your brains out?"

The prisoner remained silent. Nubbee Bux continued: "If I took you to yonder village you would, as you know, be torn to pieces. If I give you up to justice you will certainly be hanged. If, however, you obey my orders implicitly, I may deal with you

myself. Tell me instantly how you managed all these robberies, and how you became possessed of that ugly mask you frightened all the poor fools with."

Then raising the pistol, he added, "I give you one minute to commence speaking, or I fire – and, mind, no lies, or it will be worse for you!"

The prisoner inclined his head, and said, in a firm voice, and with no sign of trepidation, "Sirdar, I will speak the truth."

"You had better," replied Nubbee Bux, grimly, toying with his weapons.

"My name is Jumāl. I come from Mittree, a small village about fifty miles from here, on the banks of the Indus. My father is a very poor man; but some two years ago he and I hid and sheltered an English deserter from one of the European regiments at Kurrachee. He was much inquired after by the police, but no one suspected us of harboring him. He had rupees, and gave some to my father; but had it not been so, the Sirdar is aware that the Beloochees, whatever else we may do, would never turn from our door a hunted fugitive in distress."

Nubbee Bux nodded.

"We finally got him away up the river to Mooltan, where he said he would be safe, as no one thereabouts knew him, and he had grown a long black beard since his desertion, which, together with his hair, my father dyed red for him. He was a clever fellow; he and I became friends, and he made the mask which you destroyed to-night, to assist me in horse-stealing, which I had

already practiced on a small scale. He also showed me the use of chloroform – an English medicine – and instructed me how to procure it from Kurrachee. I used to pour some of it on the cloth you saw on my hand, and used it to stupefy the syce after I had frightened him. I then let the horse smell it sufficiently to render him quiet. Before making my appearances I always dropped, a few yards off, a small sack containing four little bags of moist sand, one of which I tied round each foot of the horse, so that on leading him away his feet, thus incased, hardly made any track, and the little impression there was upon the dry loose sand far more resembled the footprint of a camel than that of a horse, and even this was generally obliterated by the first drifting of the sand in the morning breeze. The peculiar appearance of my skin is due to the profuse application of cocoa-nut oil and sulphur. When I had got the horse to a convenient distance I uncased his feet, and stowing the coverings and my disguise in the sack, I mounted and rode him straight across country, avoiding all roads, to a hiding-place we had in the thick jungle. There my father and some friends who were used to the business soon so altered his appearance by well-known means that his late owner would hardly have known him. I never stole but one horse at a time, and they were all sent up the river to Mooltan, thence to be sold at various places remote from this."

After this Jumāl, the young horse-thief, gave up his evil ways, and enlisted in the Sind Horse, becoming in a short time one of the most valued members of the company commanded by his

captor, old Nubbee Bux.

This is one method of obtaining horses. Among certain tribes of Indians in this country another method is practiced that is equally curious, but far more honest. It is the custom called by the Indians of the plains "smoking horses." If a tribe, or a band belonging to that tribe, decides to send out a war party, one of the first and most important things to be thought of is whether there are enough horses on hand to mount the warriors. If, as is often the case, the horses of the tribe have been stolen by other Indians, they decide to "smoke" enough horses for present needs, and to steal a supply from their enemies at the first opportunity.

In order to "smoke horses" a runner is dispatched to the nearest friendly tribe with the message that on a certain day they will be visited by a number of young men, forming a war party from his tribe, who require horses.

On the appointed day the young warriors appear stripped to the waist, march silently to the village of their friends, seat themselves in a circle, light their pipes, and begin to smoke, at the same time making their wishes known in a sort of droning chant.

Presently there is seen far out on the plain a band of horsemen, riding gayly caparisoned steeds fully equipped for war. These horsemen dash up to the village, and wheel about the band of beggars sitting on the ground, in circles that constantly grow smaller, until at last they are as close as they can get to the smokers without riding over them. Then each rider selects the man to whom he intends to present his pony, and as he circles

around, singing and yelling, he lashes the bare back of his victim with his heavy rawhide whip, repeating the stroke each time he passes, until the blood is seen to trickle down. During this performance the smokers take no notice of what is going on, but sit immovable, calmly smoking and singing. If one of them flinched under the cruel blows, he would not get his horse, but would be sent home on foot and in disgrace.

At last, when the horsemen think their friends have been made to pay enough in suffering for their ponies, each dismounts, places the bridle of his pony in the hand of the smoker whom he has selected, and at the same time handing him the whip, says, "Here, beggar, is a pony for you to ride, for which I have left my mark."

After all the ponies have been presented, the "beggars" are invited to a grand feast, during which they are treated with every consideration by their hosts, who also load them with food sufficient to last them on their homeward journey.

At last the "beggars" depart with full stomachs and smarting backs, but happy in the possession of their ponies and in anticipation of the time when their friends shall be in distress, and shall come to "smoke horses" with them.

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WHO WAS PAUL GRAYSON?

BY JOHN HABBERTON,
Author of "Helen's Babies."

Chapter VIII

DARED

For a day or two after the terrible collapse of the Indian theory Paul Grayson kept himself aloof from the other boys to such an extent that he made them feel very uncomfortable. Benny, in particular, was made most miserable by such treatment from Paul, for Benny was not happy unless he could talk a great deal, and as he could not even be near the other boys without being reproached for his untruthful Indian story, the coolness of Paul reduced him to the necessity of doing all his talking at home, where he really could not spend time enough to tell all that was on his mind.

Besides, there were several darling topics on which Benny's mother and sister, although they loved the boy dearly, never

would exhibit any interest. Benny had lately learned, after months of wearisome practice in Sam Wardwell's barn, that peculiar gymnastic somersault known and highly esteemed among boys of a certain age as "skinning the cat," and he was dying to have some one see him do it, and praise him for his skill. But when he proposed to do it in the house, from the top of one of the door frames, his mother called him inhuman, and his sister said he was disgusting, the instant they heard the name of the trick; and although Benny finally made them understand that cats had really nothing to do with the trick, and that if he should ever want the skin taken off a real cat he would not do the work himself, not even for the best fishing-rod in town, he was still as far from succeeding as ever, for when he afterward explained just what the trick consisted in, his mother told him that he was her only boy, and while she liked to see him amuse himself, she never would consent to stand still, and look at him while he was attempting to break his blessed little neck.

And how unsatisfactory his sister was when consulted about fish bait! In marbles she had been known to exhibit some interest, but a boy could not always talk about marbles. When Benny explained how different kinds of live bait kicked while on the hook, and asked her to think of some new kind of bug or insect that he could try on the big trout that had learned to escape trouble by letting alone the insects already used to hide hooks with, she told him that she didn't know anything about it, and, what was more, she didn't care to, and she didn't think her brother

was a very nice boy to care for such dirty things himself.

The change in the relations of the boys with Paul did not escape Mr. Morton's eyes; and when he questioned his newest pupil, and learned the cause, he made an excuse to send Paul home for something, and then told the boys that to pry into the affairs of other people was most unmannerly, and that he thought Paul had been too good a fellow to deserve such treatment at the hands of his companions. The boys admitted to themselves that they thought so too; and when next they were out-of-doors together most of them agreed with each other that there should be no more questioning of Paul Grayson about himself. Still, Sam Wardwell correctly expressed the sentiment of the entire school when he said he hoped that Paul would soon think to tell without being asked, because it was certain that there was something wonderful about him; boys were not usually as cool, strong, good-natured, fearless, and sensible as he.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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