

"He sat enthroned on one of the cannon."

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WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 219.)

ROGER understood Jules' actions, although his words were unintelligible; and as he followed his guide round some high bushes, and then down a steep embankment, he realised that the French boy's cowardice had only been a trick, and that his sharp wits, together with Toto's prompt arrival upon the scene, had saved the day.

There was a little wood at the bottom of the embankment, and the boys hid themselves until all danger of pursuit was at an end. Toto joined them in a few minutes, none the worse for his adventure; and then, having eaten a good meal of biscuits and chocolates, Boughton's map was spread out on a smooth patch of grass and carefully studied.

Roger, while Jules was engaged in his encounter with the soldier, had noticed the name on the lamp in the station, and this name he soon discovered on the map. 'Here we are,' he pointed it out to Jules, and then traced a road which ran northwards until it turned aside and followed the course of a blue-marked river.

'The Meuse!' After that it was an easy matter to find St. Denis, and the boy felt that all his difficulties were at an end when he had measured distances with a blade of grass, and proved that only twenty miles separated him from his goal.

Twenty miles! It was nothing. He had walked twenty miles a day when he was in Scotland last summer. It would be easy to reach St. Denis to-night, and then to-morrow he and Val could set out on their return journey.

Jules now took possession of the map, and after some minutes' earnest scrutiny planted a sun-burnt fore-finger on the name of a famous frontier fortress that was situated not very far from St. Denis itself. 'My brother is there,' he explained, 'and I go to join him. I am fourteen years old, a man almost, and when they find that they cannot send me home they will let me be a soldier, too, and fight for France with our Anton.'

Roger nodded, although he only understood a few words of his friend's speech, and having found on the map the point where their ways must part, the two boys set off in high spirits across country.

It was noon by this time on a brilliant summer day, but there seemed to be no signs of war or coming danger as the wayfarers trudged on their way through woods, past orchards where the apples were ripening, fields where already the corn stood high and golden as if waiting for the reapers, and farms which looked as if they were deserted or asleep.

To any one who knew the country well, perhaps the utter peacefulness and the absence of sound and movement would in themselves have been evil omens, for these were signs that the men had already been called away to take their places in the great army. Roger and Jules, however, noticed nothing amiss, and the two boys laughed merrily together and made friends over their disjointed attempts at conversation, and over the late wild raspberries and early blackberries which they gathered in hedges and thickets.

They stopped once for an hour to buy and eat bread, milk, and slabs of strong-flavoured cheese, at a lonely

inn whose sole inhabitant seemed to be a very deaf old woman, and then they went on again, walking steadily through the hot afternoon, until their gay spirits began to flag a little, and even Toto lost something of his impudent self-assurance.

They halted again to rest on a wooded hill outside a large village, and had just flung themselves full-length on the grass, when Jules suddenly started and sat upright, listening intently, with one hand lifted and an expression of eager excitement on his face. 'La Marseillaise,' he whispered, and Roger, listening too, heard the sound of music far away in the distance, but coming every moment nearer and nearer.

It was a military band—there was the roll of drums and the peal of trumpets, ringing out clearly in the hot, still air, and it was playing what the English boy thought was the most wonderful tune that he had ever heard—a tune that made him want to laugh and to cry, to march, to sing, to fight—perhaps even to die—all at the same time.

Jules leaned forward, shading his eyes, and then he pointed to where a thick curtain of dust hung above a straight road and drifted over the fields on either side. Through the eddying cloud could be caught glimpses of red and of blue, of the sleek brown coats of horses, and of flashing steel and brass.

'Les soldats! Les soldats!' Roger understood the shouted words, and without hesitation the two boys sprang to their feet and raced down the steep winding path that led to the village, reaching it just as the troops were beginning to pour into the market-place.

Jules pushed his way sturdily through the crowd of eager onlookers, and scrambled on to the stone brim of the drinking-fountain that stood in the centre of the square; and Roger, all fears of discovery and capture forgotten in his excitement, followed and clambered into a post of vantage at his friend's side.

It was a brave show, truly, and an inspiring one that was witnessed there in the brilliant sunshine of that August afternoon, for the market-place was thronged from end to end with a great concourse of people: old men, women, boys, girls, and little children, many of them dressed in holiday attire, and all wearing knots of tri-coloured ribbon fastened to coat, blouse, or cap.

The children had bunches of cottage flowers in their hands, or waved tiny flags, and the women also carried flowers, together with baskets of fruit and cakes, which they had brought as offerings to the brave men who were on their way to the Front.

The mayor of the village—it was, indeed, almost a small town—stood on the steps of a building, above the entrance of which hung a great red, white, and blue banner, and near by were other officials, the priest, and some old soldiers, veterans of the war of 1870, one of whom had an empty coat-sleeve pinned across his breast.

Flags, flowers, music, and bright sunshine; it seemed, at first sight, almost as if some merry festival were afoot, but the men all wore anxious faces, there were tears in the women's eyes, and a white placard—the notice of the general mobilisation, which summoned the sons of France to their country's defence in this time of danger—was fixed to the wall of the little hotel-de-ville, beneath the drooping tri-colour.

And then on they came, the troops, a great procession of men, horses, and guns, and all alike were covered

with dust and decked with gay summer flowers. The band was still playing, and mingled with the sound of the martial music came the clatter of hoofs on the round, slippery cobble-stones, and the ringing clatter of metal harness and accoutrements. The soldiers waved their hands and shouted greeting to the welcoming crowds and laughed gaily, their eyes and white teeth gleaming through the dust and grime that streaked their resolute, sunburnt faces.

A halt of a few minutes was made, and then the spectators surged forward, eager to grasp the hands of the heroes, to press gifts upon them, and to hang their fresh flowers—roses, stocks, poppies, and sweet-smelling mignonette—round the necks of the horses and on the grim cannons, above the withering garlands of other villages. The mayor spoke his formal words of welcome, little children were held up to be kissed, and pretty, dark-eyed girls pinned flowers into the soldiers' tunics. The women were sobbing openly now, but they did their best to hide their grief and to smile bravely through the tears.

Some of the officers dismounted and stood talking to the mayor, while the men mingled with the village folk, laughing and chatting; but very soon the brief halt came to an end and preparations for departure were made. When everything was ready, the band once more struck up the 'Marseillaise,' and then the crowd, men and women alike, caught up the notes and sung the words of the refrain.

It was the first time in his life that English Roger had witnessed such a scene; it was the first time that he had heard the great war-hymn of France, and now, carried away by enthusiasm, he took off his cap and waved it above his head.

'Hip, hip, hurrah!' The clear young voice rang out in an unmistakable English cheer, and instantly the attention of the soldiers was attracted. They thronged round the boy, talking, laughing, gesticulating, and shaking his hand again and again. Roger, for his part, was completely bewildered and not a little dismayed by this sudden and quite unexpected plunge into popularity, for he knew nothing of the suspense that had held France in its grip during the anxious days when she awaited the decision of her ally, nor of the unbounded relief that took its place when the news that England would be true to her promises was flashed through the length and breadth of the land. To-day every Englishman was a friend and a hero in France, and even Roger came in for a share of his nation's honour and glory.

'Vive l'Angleterre!' 'Vive l'Entente Cordiale!' the cries were taken up by a hundred voices, and, as the batteries started on their way once more, the boy was seized in the brawny arms of a stalwart gunner and swung up on to one of the cannon, where he sat enthroned, blushing and smiling among the flags and flowers with which it was decked.

It cannot be said that our hero enjoyed his strange experience as he rode in triumph out of the crowded market-place; but his shyness and confusion reached a climax when, at the outskirts of the village, he was hoisted down from his perch and given a hearty kiss by a white-moustached, medal-bedecked officer who leaned over the side of a military motor-car to bid him farewell.

'Now, what on earth did the old idiot want to do that for?' Roger said to himself, as he stood alone in the middle of the road, watching the dust-cloud

that rose behind the departing batteries, and he was still ruefully rubbing a shamed, crimson cheek, when Jules, who, happily, had not witnessed his disgrace, ran up, panting and breathless, to rejoin him.

'Ah, Roger, my friend, what an honour—what a distinction! Let me congratulate thee!—let me embrace thee!' Jules advanced with wide-open arms, and would certainly have suited the action to the words if the English boy had not backed away from him with an expression of unmistakable rage and horror on his face.

Jules stared in amazement, and then Roger burst into a sudden peal of laughter. 'Gee whiz!' he said, using an exclamation that he had picked up from Yankee Sam. 'What a queer country France is, to be sure.'

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SIMNEL SUNDAY.

MOTHERING Sunday, as the fourth Sunday in Lent is sometimes called, gets its name from the fact that on that particular day servants used, in the old times, to make a practice of spending a holiday at home, generally taking with them some little presents for their parents.

These presents often took the form of cakes, and to this day Simnel Cakes are sold in most of the north-country towns during the week preceding the fourth Sunday in Lent. Very rich, spicy cakes these are: just as delicious, no doubt, as they were in the long-ago days when Robert Herrick wrote:

'I'll to thee a Simnel bring,
'Gainst thou go a-mothering!'

In some of the oldest towns the custom is very carefully kept, and I remember the peculiar richness of the Shrewsbury Simnels of twenty-five years ago; the Shrewsbury Simnel, by the way, was particularly large, and in appearance unlike any of the Simnel cakes sold in other towns; when bought, the outside crust of the cake is quite as hard as wood; indeed, it used to be said that a certain lady who received a Shrewsbury Simnel as a present, took it for use as a foot-stool, being under the impression that such was its use! In shape the Shrewsbury Simnel rather resembles a large ornamented pork-pie.

There are many legends as to the origin of the name of the Simnel Cake, and amongst them is the story that they were first baked by Lambert Simnel the Pretender; but the Shrewsbury Simnel has a story all of its own. It happened, so the story runs, that an old couple of the townfolk, Simon and Nelly by name, were anxious to prepare a feast for their children, who would be sure to visit them on Mothering Sunday. Being a careful pair, however, they made up their minds to use in the making of the cake some unleavened dough which happened to be in the house, as it was the Lent season, also the remains of their last Christmas pudding, some of which was still stored away.

So far, so good, the old couple set to work; but soon a dispute arose. Simon declared that the cake must be boiled, while Nelly wished to bake it. So violently did they quarrel over the matter, that at last Nelly rose from the stool on which she was sitting and flung it at Simon, when he, still more angrily, beat her firmly with the broom.

Happily, however, the thought of their children calmed the old people; they agreed to differ in opinion,



A PICTURE PUZZLE.

Robinson Crusoe: Find Man Friday.

and at Nelly's suggestion the cake was first boiled and then baked; the pot was put on the fire, and Simon fed the flames with the broomstick and the broken stool!

Such a strange cake—so the story runs—was the result of their cookery as had never been seen before; and a new name was needed for it, therefore; so it was called a Simnel—being the joint production of Simon and Nelly! And so popular it was with the children on arrival that the same recipe had to be followed every year.

A copy of this quaint story used to be sold with each Simnel in the Shrewsbury shops in my childhood, and it is amusing enough to be told again to the boys and girls of to-day.

ETHEL TALBOT.

COALS OF FIRE.

I'M so glad you're home for the holidays, Stan,' said little Flo Leigh, tucking her hand through her brother's arm. 'Such a horrid boy, called Tom Page, has come to live near us. He chases me, and once he took my books from me and threw them over a hedge.'

'Why does he do it?' asked Stanley.

'Because he says I knocked his sister down.' Then, seeing the surprise on her brother's face, she went on hurriedly: 'We ran into each other at a corner, and she fell and bumped her head. It really wasn't my fault any more than hers, and I said I was sorry; but

the next time I met him he shook me. He frightens all the little girls.'

'Cad!' ejaculated Stanley. 'If I catch him, I'll jolly well teach him not to touch you again.'

The two walked along the country lane with the bulldog, Roy, frisking at their heels, thoroughly enjoying the bright, frosty winter day.

'Look here, Flo,' said Stanley, as they came to where the road divided, 'if you run to Miss Wilson's with mother's note, I will go to the library and come back here for you. Then we will turn off into the woods.'

Flo agreed, and they parted. Stanley was kept rather a long time, and hurried back, expecting to find his sister tired of waiting. As he came to the corner he saw her standing with her back against a wall looking very frightened, with a boy in front of her gripping her arms.

It did not require any one to tell him that this was Tom Page. In a second he had grasped him from behind, wrenched him from his hold, and flung him on his back in the road. The dog, ever ready to fight his master's battles, bared his teeth and growled.

'Hold Roy, Flo!' said Stanley, and then stood looking down at the prostrate figure. 'Now, you cad,' he said, 'get up and I'll give you the worst thrashing you've ever had in your life. I'll teach you to frighten little girls!' He doubled his fists and waited.

But Tom stayed where he was, remarking sullenly, 'I won't get up!'

Stanley looked nonplussed. It is impossible to thrash



“Get up, and I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life.”

a fellow who lies on his back—one cannot hit a man when he's down; so after gazing at him for a minute he turned away. ‘Come on, Flo. The chap's a coward and a bully.’

They had only gone a few yards when Tom sprang to his feet, shouting, ‘Wait till you go back to school!

It'll be my turn then!’ He picked up a stone as he spoke and flung it. Unfortunately, Stanley, glancing round, received it full on his forehead. With a yell of derisive laughter Tom turned and fled.

‘Oh, Stan!’ sobbed Flo, as a large lump arose and began rapidly to turn black, ‘is it very bad?’

After the first stinging pain was over, Stanley laughed reassuringly. 'Don't bother, Kiddie. Let's go to the stream and bathe it.'

Fortunately the water was not frozen, and Flo sopped her handkerchief and applied it to the bruise again and again.

'There, it's ever so much better now. Boys don't think anything of bruises,' he said, carelessly.

They continued their walk, flinging stones for Roy to chase and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Dusk soon began to fall, however, and as they came out of the wood Stanley asked, 'Shall we go home by the high road or by the lane?'

'I wonder where Tom is?' said Flo, nervously. 'Did you hear what he said, Stan?'

'Yes, I did; but don't bother, Flo. I shall be at home for five weeks. A lot of things may happen in that time. Suppose we go by the lane?'

They had walked some distance when they heard a voice on the field-path the other side of the hedge. Flo clutched her brother's arm.

'It's him!' she whispered.

'Hush!' replied Stanley. 'There's some one else, too. Listen!'

'Now, look here, young chap,' the second voice began. 'I know you have some money in your pocket, because I followed you from the shops. Hand it out, or else——!' A pause left the hearers to imagine what would happen if he were disobeyed.

'Oh, Stan, let's go! I'm frightened!' sobbed Flo under her breath.

'Wait! I can't leave the chap in trouble, even if he is a cad. We're all right. We have Roy, you know. Keep close to me.'

Peering through the hedge, he saw Tom miserably hand out a purse. He waited no longer, but, taking a firm grip of Roy's collar, pushed his way through a gap and confronted the man.

'Give that purse up!' he commanded.

The tramp turned with uplifted fist, but the sight of Roy's bared fangs and bristling hair stopped him.

'Give it up at once or I will let the dog loose!' repeated Stanley. By this time Roy, who had evidently taken a dislike to the stranger; was standing on his hind legs, growling viciously and straining to get free.

'Make haste! I can't hold him much longer!'

With a snarl of rage the man flung the purse down and took to his heels.

For a minute Stanley waited, then released the animal. 'To heel, Roy!' he said sharply, and without another word the three turned away.

In the lane he put his arm round his little sister's shoulders. 'Don't cry, Kiddie! I'm so sorry! But we couldn't leave the chap, could we?'

They hurried along in the gathering gloom, till suddenly they heard running steps and a voice shouting, 'Leigh, I want to speak to you!'

Stanley turned and faced his enemy, with the dog in between. Tom reddened slowly as he saw the large discoloured bruise.

'I'm sorry I hit you, Leigh,' he began.

'That's nothing!' said Stanley, sharply.

'I'm sorry I frightened your little sister, too,' went on the miserable voice. 'I won't do it again. I deserve a thrashing.'

Stanley tried to hide a smile as he looked at the

dejected figure, and thought that on the whole Tom had had rather a hot time of it that afternoon.

'We will let you off this time,' he said at length, offering his hand. 'You'd better walk with us till we get to the high road; it will be safer.'

Tom grasped it eagerly. 'Thanks awfully!' he said. 'You've been a brick to me.'

C. E. THONGER.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

WHAT happened next to Miss Goldilocks?—

She soon got over her terrible shocks

At the sight of the Bears in that house in the Wood,
And made friends with them all as a wise girl should!

What happened next to the Sleeping Beauty?—

When she'd married the Prince then she made it her
duty

To send for a spinning-wheel and to begin

To teach all the villager-children to spin!

What happened next to poor Cinderella?—

Her handsome Prince was a charming fellow,
And they lived in a Palace all made of pearls,
And were ever so kind to all poor little girls!

What happened next to all of the others—

The sad little sisters, and cruel step-mothers?—

Why, they made up their quarrels with kisses and
laughter,

And all lived quite happy for evermore after!

ETHEL TALBOT.

CHINNA.

By MRS. HOBART-HAMPDEN,

Author of 'The Secret Valley,' etc., etc.

(Continued from page 223.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was very dark inside the hut, and Brian stayed for a moment with one knee on the window-sill, and called 'Chinna!' very softly, partly in the hope that Chinna might have succeeded by this time in dislodging the gag from his mouth, partly to let the little man know it was his friends who had come. There was no answer save a thud from the floor, which seemed to prove that Chinna was still alive, and Brian turned to let himself drop backwards into the room. Then, suddenly, he swung round, and subsided instead between Nancy and Frederick, for the door of the hut was opening slowly, and faces, half fearful, wholly angry, very malicious, were peering through the opening.

Brian still held on to the window-sill, and, by standing on tiptoe, he found he could look into the hut. Nancy could see in also over Brian's shoulder, and they watched very anxiously for what should happen next. Frederick could only listen, which was uncomfortable but rather less frightening, because the faces of the people in the hut were so fierce and threatening that it was by no means consoling to be able to watch them.

The door was wide open by this time, and, over the heads of those who crowded through and round it, glared the red flames of the bonfire in the street. And there was thus sufficient light to show the figure of Chinna lying huddled and bound upon the floor in the furthest corner.

There was a curious silence in the hut at first, as if those who had entered were afraid to speak. Their leaders were the grey-bearded elders, who were probably quite well-meaning people, who believed they were about to do their duty in punishing a dangerous sorcerer. But Nancy and Brian could think of them only as Chinna's enemies, and Brian yearned to loose an arrow at the group. 'I'd like to make them jump, anyway,' he thought, revengefully. And he felt yet more indignant as one of the men came forward and kicked Chinna deliberately.

'Arise, wizard,' the villager commanded. 'The time of thy trial has come. Stand up, then, in the presence of thine accusers.'

But poor Chinna could not raise himself, so tightly were his feet bound together, and at last two of the men propped him up against the house wall. They touched him as if they thought he was made of gunpowder, and might explode at any moment. And, finally, they loosened the ends of the gag, and pulled the bit of stuff out of his mouth. And instantly Chinna called, defiantly, 'I have done you no wrong. If ye torture me harm will surely befall you, since I am altogether innocent of evil. Those who are my friends will come to my aid.'

The people in the hut looked somewhat uneasily at each other as Chinna spoke, and then their spokesman answered in a voice he plainly tried to make as scornful as possible, 'The priest of our temple bids us punish you. And he has promised that we shall take no hurt therefrom.'

'Then he has made a promise he cannot keep,' said Chinna, stoutly. 'The priest is jealous. He wishes to rid himself of me that he may have the more offerings.'

This argument seemed to make something of an impression on the audience, and the crowd gaped, open-mouthed, as Chinna went on: 'Also your priest has command only of the spirits of the house and of the field. Who but I can help you against the things of the wild? Who shall fight the striped ones for you, moreover, if I be not there to do it?'

'Then, if thou art so powerful, why dost thou not fight against the sickness and defeat it?' asked a sullen voice from the background, and a man pushed his way to the front. He was dressed in the saffron-coloured garments of a Hindu priest, and was plainly the rival of which mention had been made. 'There is no talk of striped ones now. Fight the sickness,' he repeated, 'thou who didst send it hither.'

The words seemed to set a match to the anger of the crowd and, at once, it flared up, murder-high. There was an ugly rush towards Chinna, and hands were outstretched to seize him, but the priest waved these would-be captors back, and stood in front of his victim. 'Let those who accuse this man stand forth, one by one,' he said, 'that all may be done in due order.' And, one by one, they came. The man who had met Chinna on the island, and who spoke of how frightened the wizard had seemed when he heard of the sickness in the village; how reluctant to come and charm it away. The men

who had witnessed his anger when the reward had been withheld. The owner of the kid, to whom the little beast had returned bleating in the night. Each in turn, they added their testimony, until the case looked black against the little hunter. Not one among the crowd but believed him wholly guilty. Not one but shouted eager approval when the priest cried fiercely: 'Bring the instruments of torture. We have heard enough. His guilt is clear in the eyes of all men.'

'Quick, Brian, quick. We must get through the window now,' Nancy whispered, carried away by excitement.

But, before the children could move, Chinna's voice rang out again bravely, and by its sheer courage held his enemies at bay: 'Have ye so soon forgotten all that I have done for you? Did I not risk my life to save you from the striped one? Hitherto has the sickness been too strong for me, indeed, but now I have remembered a spell which shall surely make me master.'

He seemed so certain of his own power that once more he regained something of his old control over the fickle crowd. Even the priest listened attentively, for, though he much wished to get rid of Chinna, yet he was still more afraid of the sickness, and thought that he, himself, might die of it. And, though torture might make the wizard work this new spell in any case, and it would be most amusing to apply it, still, this was plainly a stubborn little sorcerer who might not yield to torture even. And, thinking thus, the priest said sulkily: 'Weave thy spell, then, evil one. This chance, and this chance only, shall be given thee.'

'I must weave my spell alone,' said Chinna. 'That which shall appear to me no eyes but mine must see. The voice which shall speak to me no ears but mine must hear. Go ye all without, and, when I am ready, I will call. But first loosen my hands and my feet, for bound, I cannot work the spell properly.'

But to this the priest would not consent. Indeed, it appeared to make him suspicious again, and he glanced at the little window and measured its size with his eye, and calculated that there was room for Chinna to squeeze through. And he answered, frowning: 'Bound thou shalt work thy spell, or not at all. Bid thy spirits loosen thy bonds for thee. If they be as powerful as thou wouldest have us believe, so small a task will not be beyond their strength.'

He turned to the crowd now, and waved them through the doorway towards the street outside.

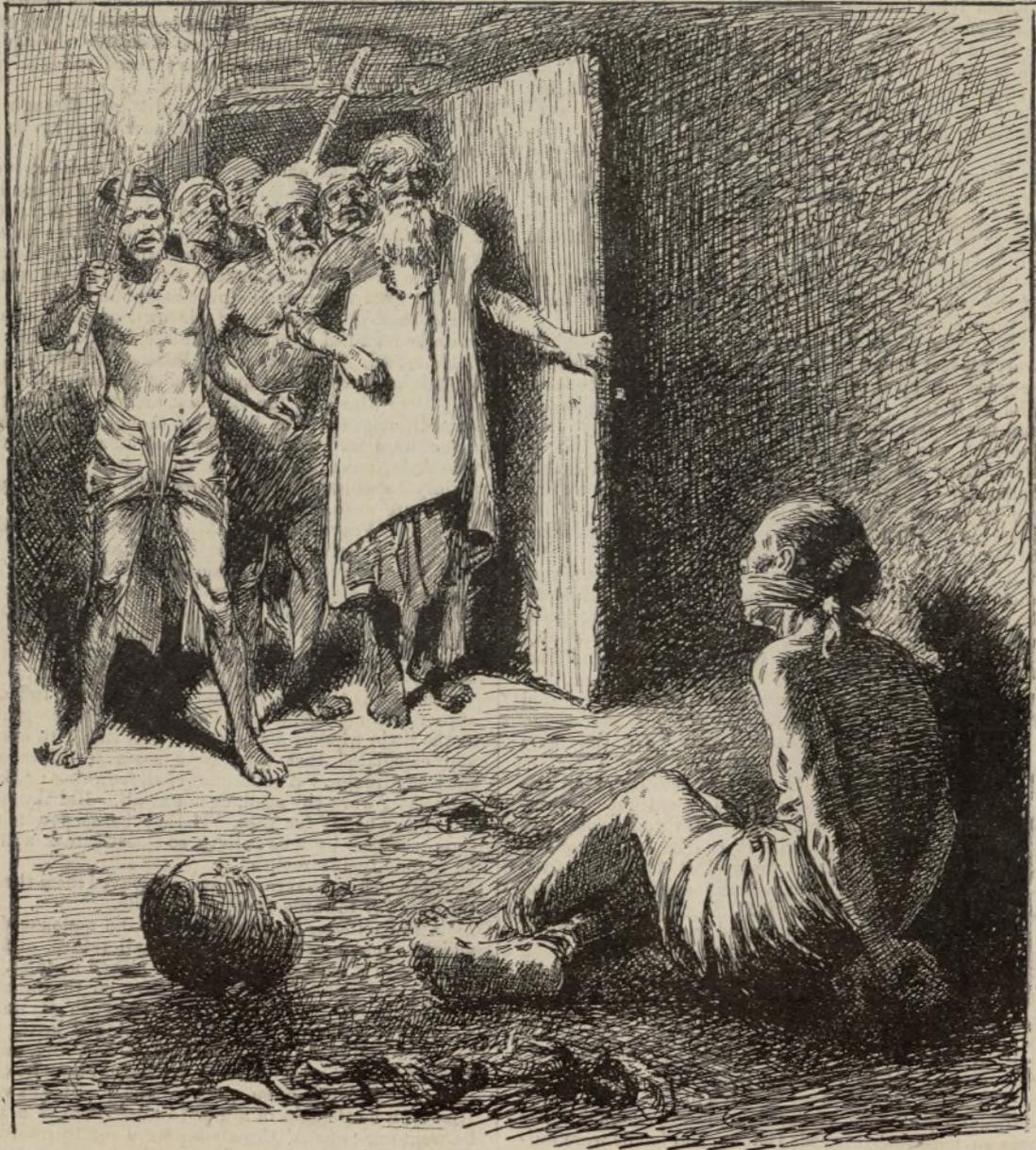
'A few minutes are thine, wizard,' he announced, 'in which to make ready. Then we shall return, and wee betide thee if once again thou hast played us false.'

'But the sickness will not depart on the moment,' Chinna urged. 'Thou knowest that such is not its custom. Give me, then, till the morning at least.'

'Thou shalt have the time that I have said, and no more. If this spell be more powerful than any other, then can it work more quickly,' the priest answered. And then he thought of a new test. 'There is a man,' he went on, 'one of those who were set to guard thy door, and who is newly smitten with the sickness. We will go fetch him hither, and thou shalt cure him in our presence.'

And the crowd echoed: 'Yes, yes! That is well said. We bring the man. Make ready, sorcerer.' And, in another moment, the hut was empty. The door had closed again, and all was dark.

(Continued on page 234.)



“There was sufficient light to show the figure of Chinna lying bound on the floor.”