

“Higher Courts.”

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Illustrated by E. B. Vaughan.

Never the lotos closes, never the wild fowl wake,
But a soul goes forth on the east wind that died
for England's sake.

DUNGA KNEL was a place where a squadron of Hussars served the Queen Empress.

There was Montagu-Murray, a subaltern; silly, simple, sincere and awfully superior. No one knew how superior he was.

Montagu-Murray had a soul intact. That is to say, he had not begun to use it for the purposes of the world; had not begun to sin with it; in fact, did not know the world. And then his superiority, it simply weighed on him.

Montagu-Murray's uncle was a member of the Simla ring, and Montagu-Murray knew that it was only a matter of time and many wide bullets for himself to become L.G. with two aides-de-camp and at least four letters. But then the world knows so little of a man's private affairs that he was not even suspected of this.

He was quiet and reserved. Men said sulky; women, milk-and-watery, and he knew what they thought of him. But inwardly he felt on a higher level than their sarcasm, as the clear water stands above the sediment. As far as possible he lived outside the world, completely; he thought, outside of it; and his inward confidence in his undoubted superiority, which must tell in the long run, made him proof against remarks. The colonel's daughters—the whole world in fact—chuckled aloud at croquet parties, whether he pugged, or spooned, or played the best game that ever was. But he was proof.

He did not even ask them to marry him. He knew that at any moment he could soar higher than the whole station, and then he would be L.G. or Viceroy, and the most sought man in India if he only liked to divulge himself. He would go up, step by step, as quickly as his successive superiorities could be reported to Her Majesty, and the letters patent signed. He would start at C.B. or D.S.O., and jump and soar past everyone of his own age and generation until he sat as Viceroy, while the most fought man in India was a mere Brigadier-General. And his wife? She would be a—he doubted if she would not be a princess of the blood. At any rate the Colonel's daughters would regret their folly.

In the thought of these things Montagu-Murray lived; in the certainty that, by sheer superiority, he would one day simply crush seniority and rank out of existence, he was strong.

Now, once and for all, why cannot every man prove himself? The moment a remount has completed his education he leaves the dépôt, and may be this, that, or the other thing, according as he is able. Why then should a mere subaltern be shot at according to regulation for five years, and fevered at for three or four, before he may assert his right to live and be even a company officer? The man who is convinced of his superiority has a perfect right to say so, before the best tribunal he can face, but he descends to the level of his fellow man the moment consequences come to be dealt with. Even so Montagu-Murray.

The season was full of balls, Simla