

**KOHAT, KURAM, AND
KHOST; OR, EXPERIENCES
AND ADVENTURES IN THE
LATE AFGHAN WAR**

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Kohat, Kuram, and Khost; Or, Experiences and Adventures in the Late Afghan War by Richard Gillham-Thomsett

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RICHARD GILLHAM-THOMSETT

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**EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES IN THE LATE
AFGHAN WAR.**

BY

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CHAPTER I.

IN THE ANTE-ROOM.

I HAD just returned from our Hill Station (having finished my two months' leave) once more to dwell upon the sultry plains of a large cantonment in the Punjab, within a hundred miles of the frontier which separates the great Indian Empire from Afghanistan. Although the time I speak of was the autumn of the year, it was still excessively hot; and who at home knows—except those who have experienced it—the horrid feeling produced by being suddenly immersed into a depressing atmosphere, with the thermometer at 92° Fahrenheit in one's bedroom, from the comparatively cool air of a Himalayan Hill Station.

It was a forty mile trip from hill to plain,

which I rode as quickly as possible, having laid out my three ponies along the steep road. I arrived very dusty, hot, and tired, in my old bungalow, the walls of which appeared more dilapidated, discoloured (from the washings of the so-called "rains"), and more uncomfortable looking than ever. I hated that bungalow when I gazed upon it, hot-looking and mournful from want of occupation; and whether it was the change of temperature, or the dismal appearance of my habitation, I do not know, but I really felt inclined to prostrate my salaaming attendants as they one by one appeared on the scene to-welcome me home again, each with a smile of intense satisfaction on his countenance, as if he had been working very hard during my absence. It was the 7th September, 1878—I remember the day well—and having refreshed the inner man with the national beverage (brandy and soda), and indulged in my third tub that day,

I strolled over to the mess, where I found things going on just as I had left them two months before ; in fact, I could hardly believe that I had been away at all.

There reposed the same old sofa lounge, reading *Bell's Life* in bits and snatches, according to the opening and shutting of his weary optics. There were the original billiard players, who never improved five points in their play in as many years, but still were content to go on at it day by day with the utmost satisfaction and confidence in themselves. The whist quartette, too, were happy in their superior play, and capabilities in fathoming the profound depths of that mighty game. They had been indulging every day during the hot weather, and had the gratification of knowing that at the end of a year's enjoyment they one and all had neither gained nor lost, but "stood" exactly in the same position as at starting. This is a

fact quoted by whist players whom I have met, which bears out the science of the game ; and it is quite the correct thing, I believe, neither to win nor lose at the end of a long period of whist playing. As I write, I fancy I see them sitting at the little baize-covered table. Poor little Branson (Branny we called him) shrieking to his partner for playing the *only* card he ought not to have played, and thereby, of course, making a present of the game to his opponents.

Our regimental wag, De Browne, was one of the latter. He was a very funny fellow in the cold weather, and the heat of the room at the time I speak of did not even prevent him being the author of one of the most cold-blooded jokes he had ever been guilty of.

Branny suspected him of giving a hint to his (De Browne's) partner, who was an awful duffer at whist, and was accusing him of the

same, when De Browne pathetically rejoined in his drollest manner—

“I’m awfully sorry, old chap; I wasn’t telling my partner anything, and you really must let me off this once, thereby stretching a point, and in fact making it a regular ‘India rubber!’”

“Leave the room, you young rascal!” ejaculated our senior Captain, who had been previously asleep in a chair at the other end of the room, but was awakened by “that foul joke,” as he called it.

A little frivolity now ensued in the form of shying small articles of furniture across the room, and the party of whist-players broke up amicably. Of course, when I entered, I was greeted on all sides by such remarks as—

“What! come back again to this charming climate, to the plains of Sunny Ind, where the panting hart (not *her* heart, of course), the gasping and ever penitent toad, the

limpid trout, and the thirsty Sub, all combine in one glorious effort to try and imagine it's not a bit hot—oh, not at all !”

Another exclaimed—

“ You are as bad as the doctor who left the hills because the people were too healthy up there, and the undertakers were all on strike !”

The author of this remark was my bosom friend, my pal in sorrow and joy, Charlie Y—, as fine a fellow as you could well set eyes upon—one, too, with the keenest appreciation of a good joke, good music, and good wine. I mean to insinuate nothing like slander in the last-named, but if there were a critic on earth who could weigh to a nicety the fruitiness of a glass of port it was Charlie.

“ Hallo, old boy, is that you ?” I exclaimed. “ What's the news ?”

“ Oh, nothing,” replied he, “ except that