

gangs of marauders, no whit better than common robbers and bandits. They had nothing to lose, they were exposing themselves to no risks, and they could not be punished for their actions. What were they but the dross of a beaten army, poor, leaderless devils who had been seduced into an unsuccessful adventure, fleeing, they knew not where — tired, hungry and desperate?

Now these men had been roaming about in small parties during the day and the earlier hours of the night, out for plunder. Korla was sucked dry.

We went in again. We should have to keep guard for the rest of the night. HUMMEL and I undertook this duty. We sat up and wrote. The others got into their sleeping-bags in their clothes, with their pistols within reach. BERGMAN had his rifle beside him. It could hardly be called resting. Not a snore was heard. They were lying awake waiting for the next robber-band.

The watches of the night passed. The hours went horribly slowly. I wrote a passage that seemed very long; but when I looked at the clock again only a few minutes had passed. Ordinarily, time flies, and one cannot manage to get through all one has to do.

Meantime, all the dogs in the town were barking frantically. A regular dog-concert was going on without interruption. I asked the night-watchman if the dogs of Korla always made such a noise at night.

»No, for the last four days the dogs have barked and howled like mad all night long; but it's never been so bad as to-night. They're barking at thieves and robbers who are hanging about, and in some cases at people who usually sleep indoors, but are keeping guard now out in their yards. It's pretty quiet at night in Korla as a rule.»

When we had been sitting in the room for a little while HUMMEL went out. He returned presently, and begged me to come out and listen, saying:

»There are voices quite close by.»

We crept down to the gate. There we heard rough, hard voices speaking in dictatorial, quarrelsome tones. Other voices were heard farther away. The dogs were barking frantically. We fancied that by locating the barking we might trace the passage of a band of marauders. The barking grew more violent as it drew nearer our quarters. A rifle-shot was heard some distance off, and a cry. We listened with bated breath.

After a time we went in again and resumed our writing. It was one o'clock. We had killed three-quarters of an hour by our tour of observation. HUMMEL went out again, presently, to have a look at things. Some minutes later he came back and asked me to come and look at a curious light outside the street-gate.

Creeping back to the gate we saw through its chinks a light glide past from time to time; but we could not make out whether it came from an electric torch or a lantern. Something was going on just outside our gate, and the dogs in the neighbouring yards were barking themselves hoarse.