

Colonel Millington

I passed out from Sandhurst towards the end of the Great War and I was sent to the front in time for the Battle of Amiens. I was a Lieutenant in the Royal Hampshire regiment and I was the CO of the Second Platoon Company C. Not more than scrap of boy, but I had twenty men under my direct command. In August 1918 we were part of a force of seventy five thousand men, more than five hundred tanks and nearly two thousand planes. The offensive achieved huge gains on the first day, with our troops and tanks advancing eight miles and causing tens of thousands casualties. Although the enemy's resistance stiffened, the fighting was over after a few days and the battle convinced many in the German high command that victory in the war was unattainable. For my part, I got a medal, the first of many, and within a few years I'd made Captain. It was shortly after then that I met the woman who was to become my wife, Josephine.

It was at some military 'do' and she'd come with her father who was a Major General in the regiment. He was an ill-tempered fellow, who met his death on the golf course when after a poor shot, he slammed his 3-wood against a bench. The club snapped, and a piece was propelled back toward him and pierced his heart. But Josephine....I'll never forget the first time that I saw her. I was looking like the face of love itself - and every officer in the room loved her in their own

different ways. But to my dismay she was promised to another - and older man with position and status. It was a good match, on paper at least, but her heart wasn't in it. Women's choices back then were limited so if she were to break her engagement it had to be of someone of standing and although I come from a good family and held rank in the army, it was still nothing compared to the other chap's society position. But to my joy I discovered that my attraction to her was reciprocated. We met in secret, at the home of mutual friends and so forth and as time passed our love grew. In the end Josephine asked to be released from her engagement, but he refused. She returned the letters he sent unopened, his poems unread and he flew into a jealous rage. In the end I had to step in and make the gentleman see the error of his ways. Oh I may be old and grey now, but back then I was young and strong. He tried of course to discredit me and use his influence to affect my career. To get away from it all, I took a posting in India; the idea being that Josephine and I would move out there once we were married. Only she fell pregnant with Eve - and well, pregnancy and the heat are not a great mix. I was committed to a two year tour in Pankot so I had to go.

India was an incredible place - but not without its dangers. There was some funny business going on with some bizarre cult called the Thuggee terrorising the local villages. We thought we'd got rid of them over a century ago but apparently they

carried on with their barbarous acts in this small province. I was told that it was uncovered by some American, although I never met him. I received word that they were on the attack and I took a hundred of my best men to wipe them out. Those that we didn't kill ran for their lives and were never seen again. The maharajah was most grateful for the intervention; he presented me with a gift; a rare ruby called the heart of Shiva. I took it back to England with me on my next leave and showed it to Josephine - she was thrilled of course, especially when I told her that I planned to have it set into a necklace for her.

I never got the chance to do it.