

FOOT-LOOSE IN INDIA

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Adventures of a News Chaser from Khyber's  
grim gash of death to the Tiger Jungles of  
Bengal and the Burmese battle-ground of the  
Black Cobra

By

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## INTRODUCTION

ON June 22, 1929, Toronto police swooped down on a hobo "jungle" sprawled along the waterfront of that city and gathered in 108 bums and sundry vagabonds, who had been living there since early spring.

The bums turned out to be strong, healthy, well-fed, broke, but cheerful. Because these were boom days of bigger and better business this was news. Stock markets were reporting five million share days, prices were on the hop, more motor cars were being sold than ever before in the history of time. Wheat was \$1.20 a bushel. There was little unemployment. Why then should 108 homeless and friendless men be living in filth and poverty?

The managing editor of the *Toronto Star* was curious on this point. He wanted to find out about this hobo business and have it written about. He chose for the job Gordon Sinclair who for five years had been an anonymous but active news hound shooting around the country in search of copy; usually crime. Sinclair had just turned 29. His reputation, if any, was that of a truculent rather sloppily dressed young man usually in need

of a shave. It didn't require disguise for him to look like a bum.

"I want you to go out and live with these bums," the editor instructed. "Travel with them. Go where they go. See what they eat and where they get it. Find out if they're crooks or just shiftless loafers. Then come back here and write about it."

Sinclair mingled with three knights of the road, eventually hit the trail and travelled part way to New York City by box car. One of the bums opened his head with a club. When he returned he reported there was nothing to write. "Why; didn't anything happen?" "Well, we just went on the bum. The guys were trying to beat their way to England."

"Well, write about it," the editor insisted. "That's what we want to know." Sinclair sat down and wrote. Brief, curt sentences. A story of bums written so that even the box car hobo could understand it. Readers seemed pleased with this brief, snappy word picture. They liked the crisp dialogue. They wrote and said it would be a good idea if this hobo news getter actually did bum his way to England and find out a few things. While these suggestions were coming in Sinclair was flying over the Labrador coast with Louis Cousiniere of Quebec trying to exterminate a half million white porpoises who had invaded the St. Lawrence and were slaughtering the edible fish.

On his return he was sent to England where

he loafed up and down the British Isles for six weeks, eventually crossing from Scotland to Germany, where he was arrested. This started the Sinclair wanderings. In the following three years he covered 160,000 miles in 38 countries, wrote millions of words.

In the early part of 1930 he sailed to Germany, thence south through the fiery Balkans. Later that year to the waters of the Spanish Main; Cuba and thence by the Caribbean and Gulf to Honduras. North overland through Mexico to the Rio Grande.

In 1931 to Morocco, Algeria and Spain where he witnessed the overthrow of Alfonso and interviewed Spain's first president. In 1932 he sailed around the world.

This book, which limits itself to India, comes as part of that 1932 trip, and is the first published by its author. All the material contained herein was gathered at the expense and suggestion of the *Toronto Star*.

It records a five month journey through India, and should not be considered either a guidebook or textbook to that fabulous puzzling land.

TORONTO, CANADA, 1932.

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