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Jake's Treasure

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This is a preposterous tale where the enjoyment comes from watching Hanbury-Tenison try to make it convincing, and from the occasional piece of local colour and wildlife description, presumably drawn from the author's own experience as explorer and conservationist. The hero, Jake, a child of indeterminate age and boundless recklessness, has already, in another story, escaped from capture in the wilds of the Amazon. That was last summer's hols. This year, he's trekking across India with a small elephant and an Indian friend, to return a jewel which his grandfather had snatched from the forehead of an idol in a remote village to prevent it being taken by the invading Japanese. The villagers are duly grateful and are quickly recruited by Jake to take on illegal loggers who are stripping the local forest. As this young white man, in the country but a few weeks, surveys his band of full grown brown warriors he feels, 'a bit like a medieval monarch rallying his troops on the eve of a great battle, Jake walked among them in the moonlight to see if they were ready for the fight ahead.' Shades of Rider Haggard or what? This might have been unexceptional as recent as sixty years ago, when there was still a British Empire (just): and I am sure the author's intentions are good. But if we are reviving the bumper boy's adventure story in foreign places, we ought to be careful not to exhume all the white man's burden tosh with it.

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