

JACK HILDRETH ON THE NILE

KARL MAY

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JACK HILDRETH ON THE NILE

KARL MAY

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CHAPTER I. A RIGHTEOUS THEFT

LIFE is an interesting thing under all circumstances, and men are worth studying whether they be savage or civilized. There was something born in me, however, which prevented me from being a mere spectator of life; like the small boy in "Helen's Babies," I liked to "see the wheels go round," it is true, but it was not possible to keep from giving them a shove at the same time.

When I came back from the West I had no definite plan of life, and after six months of inaction I began to get restless. I had no desire to return to the West, for with Winnetou, my adopted Apache brother, dead, there was little attraction to me in the scenes we had roamed together.

Having once followed the star of empire in a westerly direction, I began to think of the East; I wanted, as Rudyard Kipling says, to hear "the desert talk."

I broached the subject to my uncle, whose heir I was to be, and whose name I bore, he being John Hildreth and I Jack Hildreth, and found he had no objection to my having a few more of what the Germans call "wander years."

Uncle John had a friend who, opportunely, had some business interests in Cairo, which he wanted looked after by a person in whom he could confide, so, armed with this reason for setting forth, I started for Egypt, with the understanding that, after I had done the errand on which I had been sent, I was to be free to go whither I willed.

"The Triumphant," "EL Kahireh," the "Gate of the East" — these are titles the Egyptian gives the principal city of his land. Though the first of these is no longer appropriate, the last two, in perfect justice, belong to Cairo; it certainly is the gate of the East. It has been overrun with Europeans, however, and the French especially have set their mark upon it. Shepherd's Hotel, the New Hotel, the Hotel d'Orient, the Hotel du Nil, the Hotel des Ambassadeurs, and countless other inns, cafes, and restaurants provide the traveler with everything he is used to at home, but at a cost which would require an English milord to meet a personage one is likely to be mistaken for if he comes decently clad, and with an English accent.

On my arrival there was no delay in attending to the business entrusted to me, which took all my time for three days. After that I was free to do whatever attracted me, and my first step was to sally forth to see what I could discover in respectable lodgings at a reasonable price.

The streets were full of a queer crowd. On the corner was a group of donkey boys, splitting the air with their cries. The Egyptian donkey is the unwearying, faithful servant of his master, who rewards him with scanty food and many blows and kicks. Laden with the heaviest rider, the little beast travels many hours, and even capers on his thankless way. Behind him runs his driver, beating him, occasionally adding a kick to the blows, or stoning him, and hastening his speed with deafening shouts. These drivers are keen judges of men; they know at a glance whether they are looking at a Frenchman, Englishman, Italian, or German. They know a word or a sentence of the language of each one, and seem to have a scrap of knowledge of the history or geography of every land. "Here is a beautiful Bismarck," cries one, on recognizing a German; the Bismarck, of course, being his donkey. "Here is a fine General Grant," cries another to an American, while the Englishman is saluted with the invitation to try a "good Beefsteak," or ride a "renowned Palmerston"; and the Frenchman is assured that here is "le grand Napoleon, le meilleur animal de toute France."

A little way from the donkey boys two Arab jugglers sat in the middle of the street exhibiting their skill. A few feet further a "muhad'dit" or story teller, had drawn around him a circle of curiosity seekers, who were listening for the thousandth time to the same old tales. Close by, a little Negro danced to the sound of a kind of flute, while closely veiled women, mounted on donkeys, rode slowly past. Then came a band of tall, swinging camels, each with a straw rope on his tail, fastening him to the next one. Behind them panted the drivers and porters with heavy burdens on their heads, singing with dull voices some reiterated words to keep themselves in step. Then followed a water seller, bearing a large earthen vessel, from which he was prepared to quench one's thirst for a slight recompense. The other side of the street illustrated the lack of privacy with which the most intimate concerns were conducted. The fronts of the houses were open, and the public eye could gaze upon each interior. In one I saw a worthy citizen squatting on his mat, holding a struggling child between his knees, whose tangled hair he was overhauling for those incumbrances with which the Egyptians since the time of Pharaohs have

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been rich. From another house something was thrown into the street, which proved to be a poor cat, just dead — very likely of starvation — and whose body was tossed into the street regardless of sanitary considerations. A little further on, a gray-haired man sat with his back against a post, his eyes closed, as the beads of his prayer chain slipped through his fingers, his lips moving in prayer. He saw and heard nothing around him; he had quitted earth and wandered in spirit in the fields of paradise, promised by Mohamed to true believers.

Suddenly a cry arose: "May your morning be white." It was a milkman, thus advertising his wares. "Delicious flavor, dripping with juice," cried another, who sold melons. "They sprang from the tears of the Prophet, O fragrance of all fragrance," echoed the voice of the rose merchant, while the "scharbetti," or peddler of rose-water, cried "Length of life, death to death; it purifies the blood."

Opposite a cafe stood a little Negro girl, perhaps eight years old, with a basket hung around her neck, who cried at intervals, in a discouraged tone: "Figs, figs, sweeter than my eyes!" Whoever had taught the child to say this was a good business man, for her dark eyes had a far-off, dreamy look which really was sweet. She was a pretty child, in spite of her black skin. The frightened, pleading tone, the outstretched, imploring hand, were certain to induce passers-by to spend a few para for figs.

I could scarcely turn my eyes from the little creature; her voice sounded terror-stricken, and her cry of "Figs, figs," fell on my ear like an appeal for help, and I determined to give her a good backsheesh. I noticed that I was not the only one who felt drawn to the child; the little black waiter boy in the cafe had thrice slipped out while I stood there to buy a fig. Was it because he loved sweets. or from childish sympathy? When he approached the little girl her face lighted up with a loving look, as it did if he looked out the door and their eyes met. Turning to see if he were still in sight, I saw him crouching down in a corner, half turned away from the street, and yes, he was crying; I saw him repeatedly rub the back of his hand across his eyes to dry the tears. The little girl discovered him in his corner, and, seeing that he was crying, both of her hands instantly flew up to her eyes. Evidently there was some connection between these two pretty ebony children. What made me do so I could not say, but I went over to the boy in the corner. As he saw me standing by him he jumped up, and, with a little bow, started to go away. I held him fast, however, and asked him, in a tone I tried to make encouraging:

"Why are you crying? Can't you tell me?"

He looked me in the face, winked away his tears, and replied: "Because no one buys from Djangeh."

"Do you mean the little fig merchant over there?"

"Yes."

"You buy from her; I saw you do so several times."

He seemed to think I accused him of gluttony, for he said, hastily: "I didn't eat the figs; I'll give them back to her when the master has gone by. I only bought them so she could have some money, for if she doesn't bring in five piasters at night she will be beaten, and have nothing to eat, and be tied in a circle by her hands and feet to a post. I must bring in eight piasters; the cafe keeper gives me three each day; I have had four to-day as backsheesh, and I only need one more. Some one is sure to give me that, so I gave twenty para to Djangeh for figs."

"To whom do you have to bring these piasters?" I asked.

"To our master."

"He is Djangeh's master also?"

"Yes; she is my sister."

"And what is your master's name?"

"He is a wicked man, called Abd el Barak."

"Has he hired you from your father?"

"No; our father and mother live far away. He bought us of the men who attacked our village, burned our houses, and took us prisoners, with many others, to sell us."

"So you are slaves, you poor little creatures!" I cried. "What was your native country called?"

"I don't know; it had no name; there was a river called Bahr el Abiad. Our people were called Dongiol," answered the boy.

"Well, don't cry any more to-day; nothing shall happen you. Here are ten piasters, which you may share with Djangeh; she shall have her supper, and not be abused."

As I laid the money in his hand tears of joy sprang in his eyes, his lips moved as if to thank me, but he could

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not speak, and I turned away, followed by his grateful eyes.

I went into the cafe and sat down to think over this sad little story. The Viceroy had forbidden slave-trading, and yet here was proof that, as I had been told, it was still secretly carried on. Poor, faithful, loving little chap! He had not forgotten his country and people, and how beautiful and touching was his love for his sister! And this Abd el Barak, which means "dispenser of blessings"; how ill his name accorded with his actions!

As I was reflecting on these things and considering how I could rescue the children, a man appeared from the side street who could never pass unnoticed. He was in the prime of life, of a commanding figure, tall and strongly built, evidently possessing great muscular power. He had heavy jaws, compressed lips, and his color indicated African blood in his veins. In spite of the indications that he had sprung from the Sudan, he wore green slippers and turban to show he was a successor of the Prophet. In each hand he held a prayer chain, and around his neck hung a case with the "Hama%ol" — that is, a Koran written in the sa-cred city of Mecca, and bought during a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet. Holding himself very erect, he made his way along the street, his whole manner saying, plainly: "Here am I; who is like to me? Fall down in the dust before me." From the first glance, this man was antagonistic to me, though I did not guess how just my dislike was, nor what grounds he was to give me for detesting him. The bystanders saluted the newcomer with profound salaams, laying their hands on their hearts, lips and brow, all of which he acknowledged with the slightest bend of the head, and passed through a door near-by, signaling the little slave boy and girl to follow. I saw an expression of terror on the boy's face as his trembling sister joined him, and the eyes of both were full of tears.

Could this man be Abd el Barak? Of course it was, and I hastened after the children with a presentiment that they would need me. As I reached the door a frightened wail rang in my ear; I sprang over the sill. Behind the door lay a small court, in which the man was standing. He held Djangeh up by the hair with both hands, and she dared not utter a sound beyond a moan, which she could not repress. Before them knelt the boy, pleading: "Let her go; oh, let her go, and I will pay for her."

The wretch shook Djangeh from side to side as she hung by her hair, and said to the boy, with a ferocious grin: "So you have more money than you give? I thought so. Give it over, and if you —" He stopped, for he saw me. Letting the poor child sink downward, he demanded: "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Let that child free, instantly!" I answered.

He gnashed his teeth like a wild beast, but I paid no attention to this; rather, to make sure I was obeyed, dealt him a blow on the chest which made his fingers open, and Djangeh fell to the ground, where she lay, not daring to move. Abd el Barak stepped back a few paces, bent over, doubled his fists, and would have thrown himself upon me, but I cried: "Stop! Will a successor of the Prophet get into a scrimmage?"

He paused and straightened himself, but what a face I saw! It defied description. The blood had left it, and its brown tint had changed to a dirty gray. His lips were open, disclosing two rows of long, yellow teeth; his eyes flashed fire, and his breath came in gasps.

"Dog!" he snarled. "Thou hast attacked a Sheik, a successor of the Prophet. Dost thou know me?"

"No," I answered, quietly, keeping my eyes on his.

"I am the Sheik Hadschi Abd el Barak, Mokka-dem of the sacred Kadis."

This was an interesting piece of news. He was the chief of the members of the pious brotherhood which administered so-called justice in Egypt! However, without seeming much affected by these tidings, I replied: "Very likely you are, but why do you not act like a son of the Prophet and the head of such a pious confraternity?"

"What knowest thou of my actions? Has thou not seen just now how all heads bowed before me? Humble thyself also, thou dog! Thou hast struck me, and I will tell thee how to make amends for such an injury."

"I kneel to no man; I am not a Moslem, but a Christian."

He positively swelled before me. "A Christian, a giaour, a thieving dog!" he roared. "And thou hast dared annoy the Sheik Abd el Barak! It were better for thee thy mother had strangled thee at birth, for I will seize thy throat —"

"Oh, don't chatter," I interrupted him. "Every one of your threats is laughable. You are no greater than I, and have not the slightest power over me. I am answerable to my consul, and he doesn't care about your titles. Repeat your insults and I'll knock you down, and appeal to the law to find out whether the acts of a man who buys slave children, beats and starves them, and ties them to posts if they fail to bring him the money he wants are pleasing to God."

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He fell back at these words, crying: "Who, who told thee this? It was this boy, this jackal! Woe be to him when he comes home to-night."

"You'll do him no harm; I'll take care of that," I said.

"Thou wilt take care of it? Wouldst thou give me commands, thou a dog of a Christian, whom Allah will burn forever in —"

He got no further, for I had been guilty of wrong to myself and all Christians with whom he would deal later if I allowed his words to pass unpunished. I drew off and gave him such a blow that he fell flat, and lay on the pavement senseless.

"Quick, quick," cried the Negro boy, trembling between joy and fright. "He's dead! Don't go out into the street again, but through the little gate at the back of the court, where you will find a deserted house, and over its wall you can get to another street. But hasten, hasten."

"He is not dead, only unconscious, and I have no fear," I said. "But I will take the road you say. Come with me; Abd el Barak shall never beat you again."

I took the boy's hand in my left one, the girl's in my right, and went out through the little gate. We climbed over the wall, and came out on the back street, the children following me silently, too dazed with the thought that they had been rescued from their oppressor to be sure whether they walked on air or earth. But their black eyes looked at me adoringly, and I saw they would follow me unhesitatingly to the ends of the earth.

Now, the question was: What shall I do with them?

Two stolen Negro slave children were puzzling luggage for a young American traveler. I had made but one acquaintance in Cairo, beyond the business connection of my uncle's friend. This man was called Murad Nassyr, and to him I resolved to go for advice and help.

CHAPTER II. EVIL SPIRITS, THOUGH NO GHOSTS

CLOSELY followed by my two poor little companions, I went straight to the house of Murad Nassyr, where I had been before. The door was opened to me by his long, thin steward Selim, who appeared surprised at the sight of my companions. His master was not at home, so I dispatched him to the coffee house Murad Nassyr most frequented, and went to the inner court to await his coming.

In less than half an hour Murad Nassyr pushed aside the curtain across the entrance, but stopped short when he saw the children.

"What does this mean?" he cried. "Have these Negroes come here with you? Why do you wish to see me?"

"It is a long story, Murad Nassyr," I replied. "If you will allow me I will tell you it."

The master of the house made up his mind to accept its invasion in so far as listening to my explanation, for, coming over, he seated himself beside me. I related to him as briefly as I could the story of my purloining the little slaves, to whom their master had no more right than I. He heard me with many groans of alarm and horror, and no signs of sympathy for the little victims. When I finished he broke forth into Turkish exclamations, and, becoming articulate, demanded if I did not fear so great a man as Abd el Barak. "You saw how respectfully he was treated," he said. "He has influence which may be very dangerous to us."

"I don't care how others treat him," I said. "The main thing, to my mind, is the way I treated him, and no one could call that respectful. You have no reason to fear him, for you have done nothing to him."

"But you are my guest at this moment, and I am responsible for your acts," replied poor Murad Nassyr.

I rose up, as if to go, saying: "I can easily remove that difficulty by leaving. I am looking for a lodging, and only came for your advice."

"No, no; you will stay here. I should never consent to your leaving my house under the circumstances," he said.

"That is a generous speech, Murad Nassyr," I said, taking his hand. "To be frank with you, I hoped you would offer to shelter me and these children. You said to me the other day that you would like me to come to stay with you — that I could do you a great service. Now, I need a refuge for these unfortunate little creatures until I can place them in safety; give me this, and I will try to do you the service you desire. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," replied Murad Nassyr, after a moment's thought, and calling Selim, who struck me as being suspiciously prompt to reply to his summons, he committed the children to his charge, instructing him to give them food and sweetmeats.

When they had withdrawn, Murad Nassyr turned to me. "You are a Christian," he began; "and I know so little of your religion that I am ignorant of its teachings. Do you believe in heaven and hell?"

"Certainly."

"Do you think departed souls can return to earth as ghosts? Answer on your conscience.

"As spirits, I believe they can, but not as ghosts in my sense of the word ghost," I replied, surprised.

"You are mistaken; there are ghosts," he replied, positively.

"If you think so I will not argue the point, though I am not of your opinion."

"You will be of my opinion. By morning you will believe there are ghosts, for this house is haunted." He looked at me steadily as he spoke, expecting to see me shrink, but I remained unmoved, only saying, laughingly: "There may be what is considered a ghost in the house; I don't doubt your sincerity, but you have mistaken something, perhaps a shadow, for an apparition. Tell me about it."

"Shadows are dark; this ghost is white," he said, shaking his head. "It goes through closed doors, rattles chains, howls and shrieks like the wind, barks like a dog, brays like a donkey or camel."

"Have you seen it yourself?"

"Certainly, and so have my sister and her servants, the steward, and my two Negroes. It appears at a certain time, around midnight, remains an hour every time, and comes each day."

"Have you any idea whose ghost it is?"

"Yes; the ghost of the former owner of the house."

"Really! Haven't you a clear title deed?"

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"I pray you, don't jest, Effendi," cried Murad Nassyr, earnestly. "I can't stay here if the house continues haunted. It is the cheapest rent in Cairo, for every one knows the house is haunted, and they can't get a tenant."

"On the whole, I should say the ghostly past owner was playing a low-down trick, thus spoiling the property for his successor; who owns it now?"

"His widow; she has the use of it till she dies; then the brotherhood of the Kadis can take it, or if she refuses to keep it, as she must if things go on in this way."

"The Kadis!" I exclaimed. "My friend Abd el Barak has other scamps among his associates! Don't you see that some one is sent by them to play the ghost here that the house may be abandoned, and fall into their hands? Let me have the room where the ghost is usually seen, and I'll venture to say you'll have no more trouble with him after to-night."

"You seem to have no fear!" cried Murad Nassyr, admiringly. "The favor I longed to ask of you was that you would watch with us one night, though I feared you would not see him, for, being a Christian, he might account you unclean."

"I'll make him so unclean that he shall be a laughingstock to all Islam. Do you sleep in the dark?"

"No; we all burn lights for fear of the ghost."

"Yet nevertheless he comes?"

"Nevertheless he comes," assented Murad Nassyr, with a shudder. "He comes through bolted doors, and wanders before our eyes up and down the lighted rooms; oh, it is horrible!"

"And where does Selim sleep, the brave steward, who declares he is the hero of his tribe and the world?"

"Behind the outside door, where his bed is made, and he has seen the ghost often."

"Well, it grows dark even now. If you will permit me, I will visit my small charges, and then prepare for the vigil," I said.

I found the children comfortably bestowed, and happy in their first good supper and freedom from abuse in the two years since they had been enslaved. I was grateful to the ghost I purposed capturing, for I knew well that Murad Nassyr would never have risked sheltering them from Abd el Barak had he not desired my help even more than he acknowledged. I, too, supped abundantly with my host, who then conducted me to the scene of my next adventure, pressed my hand as he said good night, and left me. I heard the door of his apartment clang behind him, and the bolt drawn; I was alone to await my next visitor, who was supposed to come from another world.

I had provided myself with strong ropes, from one of which I made a lasso such as Sam Hawkins had so well taught me to use on the plains. With these, and my knife and pistol close at hand, I lay down on the couch placed for me, and drew up the blanket so that only my face showed.

I had not long to wait. I heard a rustle by the door leading to Murad Nassyr's apartment, which opened, and the ghost entered. By the light I saw a thin, pointed instrument in his hand, which he inserted in the hole to push back the bolt. I held my lids down, feigning sleep, but watched everything through my lashes. I felt ashamed for Murad Nassyr; this apparition had nothing ghostly about it. The fellow was wrapped in a white burnoose that fell to the ground, the hood drawn over his head, and a white cloth covered his face, in which two holes had been cut for the eyes. This was not a spirit, a ghost, but a man, and remarkably like the figure of Abd el Barak. He came over to my side and stood watching me for a few moments to assure himself I was really sleeping, though how I could be supposed to be I did not understand, for some companion ghosts were in the next room imitating the howling of dogs, and making a hubbub fit to waken the Seven Sleepers. Very softly my ghost bent over me, his right hand crept out of the burnoose, and I saw the flash of a knife blade. I did not spring up, for such a movement would have brought me directly in contact with the knife, but I threw myself at his feet, and tripped him up. The knife flew from his hand, and he fell flat across the couch. The next moment I was over him, choking him with the left hand, while with the right I dealt him a blow back of the ear. He made a feeble effort at resistance and then became unconscious, whereupon I bound his arms and legs fast, and placed a nice, comfortable little gag between his jaws, that in case he regained consciousness he should not call for help. After that I pulled off the cloth covering his face, and saw, as I expected, the cruel countenance of Abd el Barak.

Without stopping to meditate on the fate that had delivered the children's oppressor into my hands while engaged in actions for which he would be punishable by law, I went in pursuit of his comrades. Taking my revolver, I crawled on my hands and knees, close to the dark wall, into the next room. There were two charming fellows here, who, to make themselves like the beasts they were imitating, were going about on all fours. Keeping

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myself as near the floor as I could, I crept up to them, my garments being too dark for me to be easily distinguished from the rugs. When I was within six or seven paces of the one nearest me, I sprang up and knocked him down with one good blow. He uttered a tremendous shriek, but lay still. The other, warned by this cry, arose. He saw me and started to run away, I after him, toward the basin of a fountain. A stone of the coping of this basin had gotten loose; I did not see it and tripped over it, thus delaying my flight just enough to let the fellow get sufficient start so that when I got into the garden I saw him escaping over the wall. I caught him by the foot and pulled him back. He came with such force that I fell under him; he drew his knife, but I was too quick for him, and made a swift turn, which brought the thrust between my arm and side. Then I gave him a blow on the nose, and tried to hold him by his knife hand. The pain of his cracked nose redoubled his strength; he wrenched himself free, made a dash for the wall, mounted it, dropped on the other side, and I heard him running away for dear life.

Well, it was a pity he had got off, but I was lucky to have escaped his knife. Consoling myself with this thought, I returned to the house. I found Ghost Number Two lying where my blow had stretched him. I disarmed him, and went to the main entrance of the house, where the brave Selim lay. As he heard me coming he began the Moslem pilgrim's prayer: "O Allah, protect me from the thrice stoned devil, deliver me from all evil spirits, and cover the depths of hell from mine eyes."

"Stop whimpering," I said, "and get up. It is I."

"You? And who are you?" came a voice from beneath the blanket in which he had muffled himself. "I know who you are. Go from me, for I am beloved of the Prophet, and you have no power over me."

"Nonsense! Don't you know my voice? I am the stranger Effendi, who is your guest."

"No, you are not. You have assumed his voice to deceive. But the hands of the holy caliphs are outspread to protect me, and in paradise a million lips move in prayer for my delivery. O Allah, Allah, Allah, let my sins be so small before Thee that Thou canst not see them, and help me to overcome the evil spirit whose claws tear at my back."

The man who had boasted himself the greatest hero in the universe was fairly quivering with terror, till I pulled him out of his blanket, and he saw it was indeed I, in my own flesh, when he changed his tone. "Effendi!" he cried, "what a risk you ran! Fortunately, I recognized your voice instantly. Had I mistaken you for the ghost, your soul would have gone out of your body like smoke, for I am terrible in my wrath."

"It's a lucky thing you feel thus," I answered, "for you can help me with the ghost I have captured in my room."

"Effendi, you are jesting. Who could capture a ghost?"

"I am not jesting; he lies yonder; we'll bring him in here."

"Deliver us, O Lord, and bless us with Thy blessing!" he cried, stretching out his hands as if to ward off danger. "No order from the khedive, no law and no command could make me go into that place where the evil spirit lies."

"It isn't a ghost; it's a man."

"Then tell me his name, the name of his father, and his father's father, and where his tribe abides, or I cannot believe him a man."

"This is sheer nonsense; I knocked him down, and bound him, and in the next room lies a second man in the same condition," I said impatiently.

"Then you are lost; they have let themselves appear conquered, only to destroy you, body and soul, and throw the pieces to the wind."

"Go back to your bed and hide under the blanket. But never say again you are the most famous hero of your tribe."

So saying I left him in disgust to return to my prisoners, while he, as I learned later, went to call his master and tell him how he, Selim, single-handed and alone, had fought and conquered the two men who were playing ghosts.

I went over to Ghost Number Two and felt his head; it was swollen, but not broken; his heart beat evenly. I laid my hand on him none too gently, saying: "He who plays the dead should be dead. Take care I do not put an end to you. You have escaped this time, but ghosts receive very little mercy at my hands."

Selim opportunely thrust his head around the door at this moment, and I beckoned him to me. "You must stay with my other prisoner while I speak with Murad Nassyr," I said. "I hope I can trust him to you?"

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"With full confidence, Effendi," he replied, vauntingly.

"You may rest assured that he is safe. A glance from my eagle eye will be enough to fill him with terror. But let me get my weapons."

"That is not necessary, for he is bound."

"I know that well, Effendi, but weapons double a man's value, and give his orders the force they require."

Plainly he was afraid to be left alone with these helpless men, so I consented to his dragging in his entire arsenal, and went to find Murad Nassyr. We agreed in our opinion of the best course to take, and returned together to Abd el Barak, sending Selim away, that he might not know what was done with the prisoner. I went over to Abd el Barak and unfastened his bonds. Then showing him my revolver, I said: "I'll make you a ghost in truth if you move without my permission. Listen to me."

He gave me a glance full of the bitterest hatred, folded his arms and said: "I hear you."

"First of all, you shall renounce all right to the Negro children I rescued."

"I renounce it," he said, with a movement of the hand as if it were of no interest to him.

"You will do so in writing, that there shall be no question about it."

"Very well, I will."

"You shall also give me a letter of credit recommending me to the protection of all the brethren of your society, the Kadis."

"I will write it." He answered as promptly as before; so promptly that I mistrusted him.

"And, finally, you shall confess in writing the part you have played here, and acknowledge how you were captured. We will draw this up, and you shall sign it."

"By the life of the Prophet, I never will," he cried.

"Swear not by Mohamed; you cannot keep your oath."

"I will keep it. What would you do with this paper?"

"If you do nothing to injure us, we will show it to no one, but if you should prove treacherous, we will know how to use it. It shall be published abroad, and your piety shall be known in its true aspect."

I had played my highest trump and waited its effect on Abd el Barak. He asked permission to rise, and paced the floor for several minutes. At last he paused before me, and asked: "If I do this thing shall we leave here unharmed?"

"Yes."

"And the writing never be shown till you know I have done you an injury?"

"Never."

"By my soul, and the souls of my fathers, you are a man to be feared! The day of your birth was an evil day for me. Write, and I will sign."

Seating myself at a table, I drew up the confession, and then beckoned Abd el Barak to come and sign it. He signed, and handed it back to me with a heavy sigh. "So then we are through. Unbind this man and let us go"

We freed Ghost Number Two, and conducted them to the door, where Selim stood ready to draw the bolt. As Abd el Barak set his foot over the threshold he turned back to us, and, addressing me, said in a derisive tone: "God protect you, God deliver you; I hope to see you again in a short time."

Then with his companion ghost he disappeared.

CHAPTER III. A BOATLOAD OF SCAMPS

THE children were now definitely in my hands, and the first steps I had to take was to arrange for their well-being. The only course possible to me, since I meant to push on into Egypt, was to leave the boy and girl in the hands of the kind Sisters of Charity, who, happily, are to be found everywhere. It was not without many tears that the unfortunate little creatures parted from me, whom they regarded as a sort of visible providence, their only friend. But I left them in hands better able than I was to care for them and make them happy, and turned to the preparations for my departure from Cairo, perfectly satisfied that their welfare was assured.

Murad Nassyr engaged passage for me on a "dahabijeh" going up the Nile, called the "Semek," or fish, because of its speed.

"Selim," I said to the long steward, as I made my preparations for sailing; "Selim, while you were left alone with Abd el Barak last night, did you tell him that I should sail on the 'Semek' to-day?"

"No, I did not say a word," he replied.

"Be honest; more depends on it than you think."

He laid both hands on his heart and said, with the greatest appearance of frankness: "Effendi; do not insult my pious soul by thinking I would lie to you. Why should I have chattered? I was born the son of silence, and only such words as are pleasing to Allah and the holy caliphs proceed from my lips. I swear I have not said a word of your going."

"Good," I said, though I felt doubtful still. "When does the 'dahabijeh' start?"

"At three; you know that is the hour of departure for all faithful Moslems."

"And where does she lie? Is there a coffee house near by from which she can be seen?"

"Yes, there is a coffee house near her landing, from which the deck can be easily overlooked. I will show it to you."

"No, that was not what I was thinking of. I hope you have told me the truth, and remember, it is hard for a liar to get confidence a second time."

"Right, most right," he said, bowing so low that the brim of his turban swept the floor as he left the room.

Murad Nassyr conducted me to the "dahabijeh" with much ceremony. He thought there would be no more trouble with Abdel Barak, because I held his written confession; but remembering the derision in his voice as he left us, I felt sure there would be some attempt on his part at revenge. We parted with mutual expressions of goodwill, while Selim actually kissed my hand, which, considering that I was an unbeliever and he an Arab Moslem, showed I must have made a profound impression on him.

As I stepped on deck a voice at my elbow said: "Effendi, allow me to bring on board your things lying there where the porter dropped them."

I turned and saw a man standing with a deferential air close at my elbow. His little eyes gleamed sharp under his bushy brows, his thin lips were drawn in at the corners as if to control contemptuous laughter, and his nose — ah, that nose! It was green, yellow, red, and blue, and swollen dreadfully. What could he have done to get such a nose? Involuntarily, I thought of Ghost Number Three, with whose nose my fist had come in such violent contact in the garden. At the same time I heard the sailors singing "Ah ia sidi Abd el Kader," the favorite air of the Moslems belonging to the Kadis, and I wondered if the captain were a member of this brotherhood. Suppose Selim had told Abd el Barak I was to sail that day, and he had sent Ghost Number Three on board?

"What is your name?" I asked the man, suddenly.

He hesitated, then replied, as if using the first words that occurred to him: "I am called Ben Schorak."

"What is your tribe? How long have you been on this ship?"

"I am an Arab, of the tribe of Maazeh, and have been on board over a year."

"Good! Fetch my things, and if I am pleased with you, you shall have generous backsheesh."

Then I walked over to the captain and asked him if he had a man whom he could spare for my personal service. The captain pointed to where my swollen-nosed friend was busy with my luggage, and replied unsuspectingly: "I have already appointed a man to your use. He is working for you now."

"What is his name?"

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"Barik."

"A Bedouin?"

"No, he comes from Minieh."

"Is he trustworthy? How long have you had him?"

"Four months."

This was enough; I was sure it was Ghost Number Three, and he had not had the foresight to have concocted his answers with the captain, so their stories would agree. I wondered whether he had been sent on board to murder me, or steal Abd el Barak's acknowledgment of guilt. Most probably the latter, since as I was known to have sailed on the "Semek," my murder might be attended by unpleasant consequences; I would keep a sharp lookout and try hard to defend myself against whatever was to follow.

We got under way immediately, and made good speed up the river in the strong north wind, until the sunset, and the "moghib," or evening prayer, was said. Then the captain lowered part of the sails, and we crawled onward but slowly, and I saw that the "dahabijeh" was headed toward the left bank. I went to the captain to ask an explanation of this movement, and was told we were to anchor for the night at Gizeh.

"What is that for, when we have just begun our voyage?"

"You ought to know that no ship continues up the river after dark," the captain replied.

"After dark, yes; but it is not nearly dark yet, and it is going to be such bright moonlight that we could easily go on."

"I am captain of this 'dahabijeh,' and will give such orders as I see fit," said the captain curtly, abandoning all the deference of manner he had shown previously, and turning abruptly away.

There evidently was some special reason for this determination on the part of the captain, and I felt sure it would prove part of a design against me.

We anchored at Gizeh, and the sailors were given permission to go ashore, and went gladly, leaving only three persons on board with me: the captain, the pilot, and my devoted servant with the many-tinted nose. This fine specimen came to me in my cabin to ask me if I wished for anything. I asked for water and a lamp, and when he brought them drew out my wallet, opened it, and ran over the papers in it to let the man see that it was full. This I did to hasten matters, and secure the thieves' attack on a point at which I was prepared, if, as I suspected, they meant to try to get Abd el Barak's confession away from me.

That I had guessed aright I felt convinced, for the man said, in a most cordial tone: "You are very wise, Effendi, to stay in the cabin. The night air on the river is dangerous to strangers. Do you think you will need me again?"

"No; I will eat a few dates, smoke a pipe, and then go to sleep."

"I will leave you then, and not disturb you. May your night be peaceful." He made an obeisance only less low than Selim's neck-breaking genuflection, and withdrew, dropping the matting which served as portiere to shut off the cabin from the deck.

As soon as I thought it prudent I blew out my lamp and followed him. The deck was not lighted, except by the stars, and concealing myself behind the bales of tobacco piled on it, I crawled on my hands and knees close to where the three men were sitting, and where I could hear every word spoken.

"What is he doing now, the giaour? May he be tortured for all eternity." It was the captain speaking, with rather less than the politeness one might desire.

"He is smoking in his cabin," answered Ghost Number Three. "He won't come out again; I told him the night air gave strangers fever."

"That was wise of you. May his tobacco choke him. May the hand that struck the Mokkadem and stole his slaves be withered and powerless forever. Why are you forbidden to kill the dog?"

"Because it would bring you into danger. Later, the work will be finished. Now, you need never know that the 'muza'bir' came on board."

A "muza'bir" is a juggler, and I listened sharply to hear what his errand to the "Semek" at night might be.

"It was not necessary to send him," said the captain. "If we had not been obliged to wait for the 'muza'bir' we could have gone farther, and you could have stolen the paper as well as he."

"Allah wallah, what do you think I am? The giaour is a powerful wretch. He conquered the Mokkadem, who is as strong as a lion, knocked down his servant, and you see that I shall bear the mark of his hand for many a

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week. I know not fear, my heart is as full of courage as a panther's, but I will not try to take a paper by night from the pocket of a man with such a death-dealing hand as his. The 'muza'bir' is the most famous pickpocket in Egypt. He will take the paper and disappear. When the giaour misses it he may do what he pleases; it won't be found on the 'dahabijeh.'"

"And you feel sure that Mokkadem will have him killed?"

"Surely; the deed he has done can only be punished by death," answered the ghost, positively. "He will be spared now for your sake, but later, perhaps when he gets to Siout, whither he is bound, he will be dealt with; I have orders to follow him all the way. See, the 'muza'bir' comes." As he spoke a man appeared over the side of the "dahabijeh," carrying a lantern. Scanning the three by its light, the newcomer said: "Massik Vilchair, good evening."

"Ahla wah sahla wah marhaba," responded the captain, wishing him in these words family and prosperity.

I wanted to see "the most famous pickpocket in Egypt" who had come to rob me, and cautiously stuck my head out around the tobacco bale. He had set the lantern where its light fell on his face. He was about the same age as the Mokkadem, the same color, and had the same Negro type of features; not so tall, but broader shouldered than his chief, and equally strong. He was clad in a long, dark shirt, belted, with a knife thrust in the belt; his feet were shod with straw sandals. This was the garb of a poor man, but thick heavy gold rings hung in his ears, and at least ten rings encircled with precious stones flashed on his fingers. His voice rang with self-esteem as he said: "You expected me?"

"Yes, lord, we were waiting thee," answered the captain.

"Where is the dog? Describe to me his cabin. I have no time to lose."

Ghost Number Three undertook this duty, and I left him performing it while I crawled back to my quarters; as I looked back before dropping the matting curtain I saw the thief extinguish his lantern. The first thing I did, however, was to light my lamp again, for I had no desire to go through the coming adventure in darkness. Then I took Abd el Barak's confession out of my wallet and hid it in my breast; the wallet, still bulging with papers, I put back in my breast-pocket. I lay down on my right side so that the light fell in my face, which was unpleasant, but I hoped it would at once convince the robber that I was asleep. I opened my coat, and let the left hand pocket containing the wallet show plainly and be easily taken, for the more I lessened the difficulty of the theft the more I lessened my own danger, for I knew I should be killed if there were any apparent likelihood of discovery. I thrust my two revolvers under my head, and kept my right hand on them under the pillow. Then I was all ready, and hoped I should not have to wait long.

This wish was fulfilled; as I lay watching the matting through my eyelids I saw it move, and one corner was slowly, very slowly, lifted, two, three, five, six inches. The fellow peeped in, then softly and cautiously put his head under the opening. I breathed evenly as one in quiet slumber. He coughed, not loudly enough to awaken one who really slept, but enough to arouse a man who was dozing. Still I did not move, and convinced that I was not feigning slumber the juggler crawled into the cabin a shoulder and a limb at a time. He had laid aside his garment and had oiled his body so that it would have been impossible to hold him in case of capture. Creeping up to my bedside he held the point of his knife at my breast, and began to draw the wallet from my pocket, but so slowly that I feared I should lose control of my nerves, and make a movement that would betray me. It took a quarter of an hour to accomplish the theft, but at last my wallet was in his hand, he withdrew the knife from my breast, and felt his prize with both hands. Satisfied that it was full of papers, he glided out of the cabin much more rapidly than he had entered, and without the slightest rustle, lifting the matting after he had passed under it to assure himself I had not moved.

I waited at most but a minute, then blew out my light, seized the revolver in my left hand and rushed on deck. The three scoundrels, the captain, my beloved ghost, and the thief were huddled around the lantern in the shadow of a tobacco bale examining my wallet. The pilot sat over by the helm and as I pushed back the matting he saw me and cried: "The Effendi, the Effendi!" The thief straightened up and saw me, and, with the cry, "Game's up this time," he threw my wallet away, and the papers scattered in every direction, while he himself disappeared over the side in the darkness. The ex-ghost and the captain gathered up my papers, put them back in the wallet, and the latter was safely tucked away under the captain's garment. I seized a torch, lighted it, and saw the form of the thief scrambling ashore.

The captain grasped my arm, crying: "Effendi, what has come over you? Allah protect us! Are you possessed

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of a spirit?"

"There seem to be spirits about, it is true. Here, for instance, is this man you detailed to serve me; he is a ghost," I said.

"I?" exclaimed the man.

"Yes, you — Ghost Number Three."

"Ghost Number Three! Effendi, you are wandering in your mind; you have the fever."

"You are forgetful; I'll help you remember. Ghost Number One I bound fast in my room; Ghost Number Two I knocked down, and bound also; Number Three I followed into the garden when he escaped after trying to stab me. If you don't understand yet I'll remind you that you told these men that you would bear the mark of my hand for many weeks."

He did not answer, but glanced at the others in silence. The captain, however, said reproachfully: "Effendi, I cannot imagine why you speak thus to this true, good man. I will —"

"You have already, if you mean you will steal my papers and my wallet," I interrupted. "Give them to me."

He drew himself up to his full height and said: "Effendi, I am a Moslem and you are a Christian. Do you realize what that means in this land? Further, I am the captain, and you are my passenger; do you know what that means on board?"

"And finally I am an honest man and you are a rascal," I said. "And do you know the consequences of that? We are not in the Sudan, but here in Gizeh, where a few words from our consul have a power you have reason to fear. The 'muza'bir' has escaped —"

Before I could say more the pilot broke out into lamentation. "O, Allah, ia faza, ia hijaraher, he knows everything. He knows all we have said. I go, I fly, I'll not stay here."

"Yes," I said, "I do know all; I was not so stupid as you thought me. Now, who has the best of it, you followers of the Kadis, or I, the Christian? I laugh at you. I knew the 'muza'bir' was coming, and I hid the paper you wanted. Here it is." I held the paper before their eyes, and continued: "You, captain, have stolen my wallet; give it back."

"I haven't it."

"You say that with the nose of Ghost Number Three before your eyes? Do you want to feel the weight of my hand? Hand it over, or I'll take it from you."

I moved toward him, and he threw the wallet out, and made an attempt to throw it overboard. I was too quick for him; with a quick wrench I had it in my hand. He hesitated a moment, then doubled his fist, and would have struck me, but I raised my foot, and with a well-aimed kick sent him rolling, to the accompaniment of the pilot's cries of "O Allah, O captain, O woe, O misfortune."

I went over to the prostrate commander, who had rolled to the side of the boat, and was about to order him to sit up, when I saw three persons standing on the shore, who hailed us at that moment, and called: "Is not that the 'dahabijeh' called the 'Semek'?"

"Yes," I replied.

"And are you a passenger?"

"Yes."

"We wish to come on board."

CHAPTER IV. THE REIS EFFENDINA ADMINISTERS JUSTICE

WHO or what the strangers were who wished to board the "dahabijeh" I did not know, but they could hardly make matters worse for me, and might better them. So when they expressed a desire to join us I threw out the gangplank, and bade them come. This brought the captain to his feet quicker than a glass of brandy could have done; he rushed over to me and said in a low, fierce tone: "What are you doing? Who has the right of permitting people to board this ship, you or I?"

"Both," I replied.

"No, I alone. And these men, whose voices I recognize —"

He stopped short, for the three came on deck that moment. When the pilot caught sight of them he slunk out of sight in the shadow, and disappeared, followed by the famous ghost. The captain would perhaps have been happier at a longer range; in any case the arrival made him very uncomfortable, but as there was no way of escaping he remained where he was, laying his hands crossed on his breast and then touching his forehead, lips and breast with the right one, and bowing to the very ground, showing by the ceremony of his greeting that these were no ordinary people.

The man who had hailed me was in the prime of life, strongly built, and, as far as I could see, richly clad. He wore full white trousers, with dark low shoes' a gold edged blue jacket with a red silk shawl as sash, in which he carried a saber and two gold and ivory inlaid pistols. A white silk mantle swung from his shoulders, and his turban was of the same material. His face was adorned with a beautiful, silky black beard, and his dark eyes rested on me with a sharp but kindly look. Without glancing at the captain, he said to me: "May Allah send you a peaceful night."

"Hail to you," I replied briefly but courteously.

Turning sharply to the captain the newcomer said: "Do you know me?"

"The happiness of the sight of thy countenance has not fallen to my lot," was the truly Oriental reply.

"It will not prove a happiness. Were there not two men here?"

"My pilot and this passenger's servant, Sijadetak; my sailors are all ashore."

"Why did those two disappear? Where are they, gone down below to join the rats? Bid them come up, if they don't want to get the bastinado." As he said this he pointed to one of his men at whose girdle hung a powerful whip; he knew how to enforce obedience! The captain had called him Sijadetak, a word equivalent to "your lordship," and used only to men in high station. The captain, evidently much alarmed, went to the hatchway and called his men, who reappeared trembling and pale beneath their dark skins burned by the Egyptian sun.

In the meantime the newcomer had beckoned me aside, and sitting down with me on a bench by the helm asked me to tell him what I knew of the "dahabijeh's" crew, and how I had been treated during my short trip. "You need not hesitate to speak frankly," he said. "This man here is my pilot, and the one there with the whip is my favorite, my right hand, who does everything I require. Many a slave dealer and slave-owner has learned by that whip on his back that this hand of mine is quick, willing and strong. My motto is: 'Woe to him who does evil.'"

"Then you prosecute slave-dealers?" I cried, delighted. "Are you an officer?"

"H'm," he laughed. "I am and I am not. My name is Achmed Abd el Iusaf; I am a captain, called the Reis Effendina."

Now that title meant "the captain of our lord," and understanding it I exclaimed in wonder: "Reis Effendina! the captain of the Viceroy! Then you must have a special commission!"

"I have, and it is my duty to discover and pursue every malefactor against the law prohibiting slave-dealing. I have good reason for believing that this 'dahabijeh' is engaged in this traffic in human beings, and was on the look out for it to search it."

"I have no reason to suspect that, bad as matters have been for me on board," I said.

"I do not believe she is carrying slaves now," answered the Reis, "but I am sure she is arranged below deck for the transport of slaves, and is on her way to the Sudan for her cargo."

"Then that will explain her captain's connection with Abd el Barak," I said, and beginning with my first glimpse of the little fig merchant, I told the Reis Effendina all my adventures to the time of his coming on board.

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He heard me without a word or movement till I reached the point where I had spied upon and listened to the four men as they discussed my robbery and murder later.

"Pardon me a moment," he then said, and turning to his "right hand" he ordered him: "Hasten to the 'Falcon' and bring off ten men to take possession of this 'dahabijeh.' I'll make this gang meditate on the bliss of the seven heavens. And now, proceed, Effendi."

I continued my tale, and just as it was ended the "favorite," the "right hand," returned at the head of ten armed men, whom he stationed at different points on the boat, and then came to his master, saying: "Emir, as we came we saw a man hiding behind a tree, and watching the 'dahabijeh.'

I tried to seize him, but he fled. If Allah has given me as good eyes as I think I have I could swear that it was the same man we saw before you came on board."

"Ah, the pickpocket juggler! What a pity he escaped you. He knows now in whose hands the 'dahabijeh' has fallen. But I shall be in Cairo to-morrow and will have him captured."

"If you find him," I suggested.

"Oh, I'll find him! I will arouse the entire police force, and they know his customary haunts. And now, Effendi I know all you have to tell me, and I know further that you are a man whom I should have on 'Esch Schadin,' my ship, which bears the name of the 'Falcon,' because she flies like a hawk, and no vessel can approach her. Will you be my lieutenant?"

"I am very grateful, but it is impossible; I am only a young American, trying his wings, and cannot take up any definite position abroad."

"Then you shall at least be the 'Falcon's' honored guest up the Nile. And now come with me, while I deal with these scoundrels."

We went over by the mainmast, where the emir, as his "right hand" had called him, seated himself in what state circumstances permitted, beckoned his ten men to him, and they formed a circle around him, in the center of which the captain of the "dahabijeh," the tinted nosed ghost, and the pilot were led trembling.

"What is your name?" asked the emir of the ghost.

"Barak."

"Ah, the same as your worthy Mokka-dem! Yet you told this Effendi it was Ben Schorak! I warn you I will not be as patient as he. Did you play the ghost at Murad Nassyr's?"

"No."

"Good! We will help your memory."

At a signal from the emir four men laid the liar down and held him, while the "right hand" used his right hand, bringing the great whip down on the soles of his feet till the wretch cried, "Stop. I did play ghost."

"I thought you would remember," said the emir, with satisfaction. "Tell us who were your companions in the masquerade."

"The Mokka-dem and his servant."

"That will do; stand over yonder."

The men let go, and helped him up with a kick that sent him flying. Then the emir turned to the captain and said angrily: "As to you, you are no slave or servant, but a believing Moslem, and a commander of a 'dahabijeh'; there can be no excuse for you."

The favorite evidently knew what he was to do. Without waiting for a signal he asserted his dignity as whip bearer, and laid the bastinado over the rascal's shoulder twice with such emphasis that he cringed under the pain.

"Well done," said the emir, very content with the zeal of his assistant. "Slave, servant, commander, Moslem or heathen are all alike before Allah and my whip. And now, most worthy captain, speak the truth. How long has this Barak been on the ship?"

"Since this morning," he answered sullenly.

"Who brought him, and what was he here for?"

"The Mokka-dem. He was to serve the foreign Effendi."

"And kill him later?"

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"Of that I know nothing."

"So you, too, are forgetful, and must have the same medicine for your memory."

The captain was laid on the deck and whipped, but only twice, when he signified his readiness to answer.

"See how quickly the whip cures poor memory!" said the emir admiringly. "The crocodile's skin opens the pores of the body and softens the hardest heart! Now, did you know the wallet was to be stolen, and the Effendi murdered later?"

"Yes," was the reply, after hesitation that called forth one more stroke.

"I will not question you further, you disgust me," said the emir. "You are a cowardly dog, with courage to sin but not to meet the consequences. Stand over by the mast. And now the pilot."

The poor wretch had been shaking like an aspen at the sight of the others' punishment, and as he heard himself called fell on his knees clamoring: "O Allah, O heaven, O your highness! Don't beat me; I will confess everything, everything."

"Emir," I said to the Reis Effendina, "have compassion on him! He does not seem to be so bad. He had to obey his captain, and I heard nothing from him to condemn when I listened to their talk. He has been in a bad crowd; that is all."

"He is right, the Effendi is right! Allah will bless him for these words," stammered the frightened creature.

"Very well, I will do as he suggests, and only ask you one question: Is the Effendi's story of these events true?"

"Yes, it is all true, every word."

"That will do. Get up and go into the cabin, nor move nor speak to these other men."

The man gladly went away. The emir arose, and taking three of his men, including his "right hand," each carrying a lamp, went down into the hold, while the captain bit his lips, not only from the pain of his stripes, but because of the discovery about to be made.

In the meantime I sought the pilot. "Did you know this was a slave-ship?" I whispered to him.

"A slave-ship!" he stammered. "Who knows it?"

"The emir and his men."

"O me, O wretchedness, O ruin! Allah, Allah! My bones are melted and my soul trembles. I am overwhelmed in a sea of troubles. Who will take pity on me, and what hand will deliver me!"

"Hush. Don't make such a noise. You are sixty years old. Have you a family?"

"A son, and my wife in Gubatar."

"Then flee to them, and stay there till this matter has blown over. Here is money. There is a little boat in tow at the stern; take it and escape, and hasten. I will engage the attention of the emir's men till you are safe."

"Yes, yes, Effendi! Oh, what thanks can I —"

"Don't talk, but act. Allah protect your flight and deliver you from such companions again."

"Never again will I do wrong. Effendi, no Moslem would have pitied me, but you, a Christian —"

I heard no more, for I had already quitted him and begun talking to the sailors of the "Falcon," in which they evidently took such pride that they were engrossed in their subject, and I felt sure the pilot would get off unseen.

When the emir came back on deck his eyes blazed with anger; although he had expected to find the hold prepared for the reception of slaves, the actual sight of it made him furious. Going straight up to the captain he said: "You shall have the bastinado now in good earnest, and taste some of the suffering you have caused others. He who robs men and deals in slaves can expect only death and eternal punishment."

"I do not understand you, emir. It is not just to threaten me with suffering, for I walk in ways of justice, and my paths are the paths of the virtuous, whom Allah loves," replied the captain.

"Silence, dog," thundered the emir. "If you do not understand, I will take care that you at least feel my whip. Your wickedness is great, but your impudence exceeds it. Do you think I am blind? The Reis Effendina can guess accurately the destination of this ship, and the purpose it was to serve. You will restore five hundred piasters to this Effendi for the passage-money he gave you, and in slight compensation for the crime you attempted against him. Bring the money at once."

The captain dared not disobey, and I reluctantly received two hundred piasters more than I had given him for my journey to Siout. But the Reis Effendina insisted on this act of reparation, and I saw it was not a severe requirement, considering the man's intentions toward me. After this was done, however, he received a bastinading

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that made me pity him, though he was such a wretch, and then he was confined in irons to be taken back to Cairo. Certain of the "Falcon's" crew were detailed to take the "dahabijeh" back, and the Reis Effendina was obliged to go with them to see that his prisoners were brought to justice. He begged me to go as his guest on the "Falcon" to Siout, assuring me that it would wound him if I refused to do so, and I gladly accepted the kind offer, for I was anxious to press on to the Sudan, and was a good deal put out by the failure of my first attempt at getting there. My luggage was taken on board the "Falcon," and my new friend gave me over to the care of his lieutenant with many charges regarding my comfort. Then he left me, with such expressions of good-will and liking as I was sure were not inspired by Oriental exuberance of politeness and which I echoed sincerely.

The morning was nearly dawning when I was installed on the "Falcon," but I immediately turned in, for I was overcome with sleep after two nights without any. My pillow was fit for a pasha, and the soft-scented cover lids delicious. In ten minutes after I had gone to my cabin I was sleeping the sleep of security and weariness after my exciting adventures, and was only wakened at sunset of the next day by the voices of the sailors at evening prayer, as the "Falcon" glided up the Nile.

CHAPTER V. IN THE PALACE OF PASHA

A SAIL up the Nile! How full of interest are the very words! El Kahireh, Cairo, the "Gate of the East," lies behind the traveler, and before him stretches the Sudan — Beled es Sudan, the "Land of the Blacks," interesting even in those days before gallant Gordon had linked his name with it, and put an end to the infamous slave-trade. The Sudan was then the land of mystery; going there one made a journey into the unknown. To-day one can go by rail from Cairo, the locomotive leaving its black trail of smoke over the sacred river, like a profanation.

I prefer the deck of a ship to the stuffy railway car. Here one sits on his mat, or pillow, a pipe in his hand, and his fragrant coffee before him. The great Nile, more than two thousand feet wide, spreads out like a sea before him, apparently shoreless. The north wind fills the sails, the sailors squat about staring vacantly into space, or amusing themselves with childish games. The eyes of the traveler grow weary, they droop, and he dozes and dreams until he is aroused by the cry: "Come to prayer, ye faithful." Then all the sailors kneel, bending toward Mecca and crying: "I confess there is no God but God; I confess that Mohamed is his Prophet."

Then they resume their play or sleep, and the night closes in.

So the days passed peacefully for me, and at last we reached Siout, my destination. Two sailors carried my luggage ashore, the lieutenant accompanying to establish me in comfortable lodgings. When I asked him where I was to lodge he replied: "Where else than with the pasha? Such a man as you must be his guest only, and I was instructed by the emir to introduce you into the palace in his name."

"And you mean to say I shall be welcome?"

"Certainly; he will receive you as a friend." I had to be content with this answer, but I would rather have gone to an inn, where I could have paid my reckoning and been independent. We entered an inner court from which several doors opened. In one of them stood a thickset, shapeless Negro, looking toward us forbiddingly. As soon as he recognized the emir's lieutenant his expression changed; he bent his broad back, crossed his arms on his breast and said: "Forgive me for standing here. Had I suspected your noble presence I would have come out to receive you."

Rude treatment frequently seems to call forth respect, which fact the lieutenant appreciated, for he answered sharply: "See that you do not fail in your duty now that you know it is I. Conduct me to your lord, the pasha."

"Forgive me that I cannot do so; the exalted lawgiver has gone away for a week with many attendants."

I took the shapeless Negro for a servant, perhaps an attendant of the women, since he was clad in silk, but I discovered my mistake by the lieutenant saying: "Then I will explain to you my desire, which you, as his steward, will carry out. This gentleman is a learned and famous Effendi from the New World, from America, who will spend a few days in Siout. I meant to ask the pasha to receive him as his guest, but since he is away I will request you to take care of him as if he were one of your lord's kindred."

So the Negro occupied the important post of steward!

He surveyed me with an unfriendly look, but replied: "It shall be as you desire, sir. I will conduct the stranger to an apartment worthy of his rank."

"Good!" said the lieutenant. Then turning to me with his hand outstretched he added: "And now farewell. Here is an address in Khartum through which you can communicate with the Reis Effendina. May Allah bless you, and grant us a happy meeting in the future."

He departed, and the steward conducted me to a great room, its blue walls adorned with texts from the Koran in golden letters, which he signified was to be mine, and left me without a word.

For fully an hour I sat on a cushion and smoked before any one came near me. Then the steward returned; he stood looking down on me with positive dislike. "How long have you known the Reis Effendina?" he asked at last.

"Only a little while," I replied.

"Yet he sends you here to the palace of the pasha? Are you a Moslem?"

"No; I am a Christian."

"Allah, Allah! A Christian, and I have given you a room with its walls covered with golden texts from the

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Koran! What a sin I have committed! You must leave this apartment, and follow me to another where your presence will not outrage the sanctity of our faith."

"I will leave this room, but not to go into another. It is you who disgrace Islam, which teaches hospitality to guests. I will send a servant after my luggage, and here is backsheesh for the trouble I have given you." I rose, gave him an abundant "tip" and quitted the room without any attempt on his part to detain me. As I came into the court I heard wailing; a door on the left opened, and two servants came forth, bearing a young man bleeding from a wound in his forehead. Some other persons followed, and behind them a disheveled woman imploring for a surgeon. As the group approached me I asked what had happened. A well-dressed man of about sixty years replied: "His horse threw him against the wall, and now his life is fleeing through his brow. Run, run, and fetch a 'haggahm'; perhaps help is still possible."

He started to carry out his own desire, but I laid a detaining hand on his arm and said: "It may not be necessary to fetch a surgeon; I will examine him."

He seized both my hands, crying: "You are a surgeon? Come, come; hasten. If you save my son I will give you ten times what you ask." He pulled me along toward the door through which the bearers had disappeared, and I saw the youth lying on a divan, beside which the woman knelt wailing.

"Here is a surgeon," said the father, going over to her and taking both her hands. "Perhaps Allah will restore him."

I, too, knelt by the young man and examined his wound; it was not dangerous, though he was still unconscious. I had a little flask of sal volatile in my pocket, which I opened, and held to his nose. Its effect was instantaneous; the patient moved, sneezed and opened his eyes. Immediately the mother had him in her arms, weeping aloud for joy. But his father folded his hands saying: "Allah be thanked! Death has flown and life returns."

"Life returns, Allah il Allah," echoed all the others.

"How shall we repay you, Effendi?" cried the father. "Without you the soul of my son had never found its way back into his body."

"You are mistaken; your son would have wakened five minutes later, that is all."

"No, no; I know better. I have never seen you; are you a stranger?"

"I arrived here to-day and shall only stay a few days."

"Then stay with us, Effendi; be our guest."

"I cannot accept your offer. You do not know who or what I am. I am a Christian."

"That does not matter; you are my son's deliverer. The flask of life in your hands saved my son. I beg you stay with us. I will speak to the steward, who will give you the best room in the palace, and be grateful if you will help him, for he, too, is ill, suffering horribly in the stomach."

"I think you are mistaken, for he has just dismissed me from the house," I said.

"You! Impossible!"

"It is not only possible, but actually so. I was sent here to be the pasha's guest by the Reis Effendina, Achmed Abd el Iusaf."

"By him? Oh, the steward hates him, because he treats him rudely. Had any one else sent you the steward would have behaved quite differently. Forgive me if I am too insistent, but I beg you to honor my dwelling by your presence."

He said this in such a tone that I felt it would insult him to insist on going to an inn, and when his son wailed: "Effendi, stay here! My head is in agony, and you will help me if it gets worse," and the wife raised her clasped hands imploringly, I yielded.

"Very well, I will stay," I said, "if you are sure it will not incommode you to have a guest."

"Ah, no," replied the man. "I am not poor; I am the Emir Achor, the pasha's Master of Horse. Let me show you to your apartment, and you," he added to his servants, "hasten to the steward and fetch the Effendi's luggage."

When I was most comfortably established in my new quarters the Master of Horse said to me: "Effendi, we must tell the steward what a great physician you are. When he hears that you have an elixir of life in your pocket he will repent his rudeness to you, and beg you to help him. Our own physician had told him he was in danger of his life, and it may be that Allah has sent you as the only one who can save him."

"Very well, bid him come here." I had not long to wait after giving this permission before the shapeless figure

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of the steward rolled in, and I really pitied him when I saw his downcast face.

"Effendi, forgive me," he said. "Had I guessed that such a —"

"Say no more," I interrupted him. "I have nothing to forgive. The Reis Effendina's manner to you in the past and his lieutenant's yesterday was the cause of the mistake."

"You are very good. May I sit down?"

"I beg you do so."

He took his place opposite me, and as I looked at him closely he said: "You mistake, Effendi, if you think I am well. Flesh is not health."

"No, indeed," I said. "The physicians of the west know the fatter a man is often the nearer death he is. Tell me your symptoms."

"I have dreadful suffering here," he said, laying his hand on his stomach. "I feel as though I had no body, and chiefly before meal-time, so that I have to eat at once."

"Oh, that is very bad, very bad indeed," I said gravely.

"Is it a fatal trouble?" he asked, turning pale, I am sure, only he was too black to show it.

"Surely fatal, unless help is found," I replied.

"And what is the name of the disease?" whimpered the frightened fellow.

"In English we call it hunger, or gigantic appetite; it does not matter about the Turkish word."

"And can you save me? I am the pasha's steward, and have gold in abundance. Cure me, and I will give you a fortune."

"What did your own physician order?"

"Fasting. He said my stomach was weak."

"The deuce! I say just the contrary. We doctors call your disease a rhinoceros stomach, or an alligator stomach. Eat, I say, eat much, only before each meal you must bow nine times toward Mecca, so profoundly that your head touches the floor."

"I can't."

"You must; try it."

He rose obediently, and made the attempt; a wonderful sight to see. Failing he went on all fours, lost his balance and rolled over, but rising quickly he went at it again, and finally succeeded in bringing his forehead to the rug. It was a question whether his dull contortions or profound gravity was funnier. "I can, I can," he panted, pulling himself up, "but I must do it alone, or else the servants will lose regard for my dignity. What else, Effendi?"

"You are rich; make an act of thanksgiving every day by giving two piasters to fifty of the wretched blind children who set by the wayside begging in this town."

"I will do it, for I am sure you are a great physician. And you say I may eat, eat! O Mohamed, O great caliphs! This is a physician to whom all my heart goes out. May I go now and eat, Effendi?"

"Certainly, but do not forget the genuflections nor the almsgiving."

"You are a Christian, but I hope the gates of paradise may open for you," said the big black starvling, departing.

The Master of Horse had listened and watched this scene soberly, but as the sufferer disappeared he laughed softly, and said: "Effendi, you are not only a skilful physician, but a good man, for you have provided for the poor and blind."

We said good night, and I had made two friends in the palace of the pasha.

The next morning I went out alone for a walk, and as I wandered along the crooked streets I came to the plastered grave of a sheik, from which a bridge ran over the canal. As I started to cross it I stopped short in amazement. I saw a very long and very slender white-clad figure, surmounted by an immense turban, coming toward me with a swinging, swaggering gait. Could I be seeing straight? It certainly looked like Murad Nassyr's spindlegged steward in Cairo. He saw me, and stopped also.

"Selim, is it really you?" I cried.

"Right, very right," he answered in his old way, in the same thin, querulous voice, making me one of his neck-breaking salaams. "And, Effendi, is it you? Allah be thanked, for I seek you."

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"Seek me! I thought you were with Murad Nassyr in Cairo," I said. "What has happened that he has come to Siout?"

"He is not here; I have come only to seek you, for my master did not wish you to be here alone."

"Does Murad Nassyr think I am afraid?"

"No, not that, but in any case it is better for me to be with you. I was the most renowned warrior of my tribe, and, as you know, considered the greatest hero in the universe —"

"Except in the case of ghosts," I suggested.

"Jest not, Effendi; no man can fight with knives and pistols against a spirit; prayer is the only weapon then."

"Even when you know it is a man and no ghost you prefer it," I remarked. "However, I fear you will weary in Siout, where you will have nothing to do."

"Nothing to do! Why, I shall protect you; I dare not leave you a moment, for Murad Nassyr has ordered me to guard you."

"Ah, that is true; I hadn't thought how busy you would be protecting me," I said. "Well, come with me, and I will see whether they will receive you also in the palace of the pasha where I am lodged."

"Of course they will, for unfortunately you are an unbeliever, while I am a faithful Moslem, and you do not know that Islam commands hospitality toward each other among its followers. They will be glad to have me with them, furthermore, when they learn my renown and courage."

"Which you will tell them. Possibly, but let us make sure. Let us go at once to the palace and inform the Master of Horse that you have arrived."

"Right, very right! I follow in the print of your feet. Let us go."

And richer by a servant, or a guardian, I was not sure which, I returned to the palace, followed by Selim, like Don Quixote with Sancho Panza, only my squire was far from round or jolly.

CHAPTER VI. THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF AN ECLIPSE

SELIM was received with the kindness he confidently expected, whether as the greatest warrior in the world or on general principles of hospitality we would not have agreed, nor did it matter. I was not overjoyed at the prospect of having this long personage always at my side, but there was no way of getting rid of him without offending Murad Nassyr, who had befriended me, so I resolved to put up with him, and get what amusement I could from his foibles.

We had just finished supping that night when a great hubbub arose outside in the court, and we rushed out, thinking some accident had befallen one of the household. There stood the grooms and other servants staring up at the sky and crying: "An eclipse, an eclipse!"

It was true; the moon was growing dark; the shadow of the earth was creeping higher and higher over the face of our satellite, then at its full. It was, as it always is, a most interesting spectacle, but the Turks were overcome with terror. The big steward covered before it, and behind him crouched my long Selim.

"Effendi," cried the former, as he caught sight of me, "do you see that the moon is disappearing? Tell me what that betokens."

"It betokens that the earth is passing between the sun and the moon, and we see its shadow on her face, which thus is darkened," I said.

"Between the sun and the moon? The earth's shadow? Have you seen it before?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Effendi, you are the fountain of wisdom, and the ocean of knowledge, but you know nothing of the sun, the moon and the stars, absolutely nothing. Do you know that it is the devil who darkens the moon?"

"Indeed! What does he do that for?"

"To announce to us misfortune. This is a sign of calamity for the entire world, and for me in particular."

"For you! And what have you to do with an eclipse of the moon?"

"Very, very much. Do you see this amulet on my neck? I wear that to protect me against eclipses."

"An eclipse is a perfectly natural event, but if it were not an amulet could not protect you."

"You say that because you are a Christian, and not a Moslem. What can a Christian know of the moon? Isn't the sign of Christianity a cross?"

"Certainly."

"But the sign of Islam is the crescent, the new moon, so we must understand the moon better than you. You see that clearly, do you not?"

"No," I said, feeling, as I answered this absurd argument with an equally foolish one, as if I were taking part in one of the discussions in "Alice in Wonderland"; "no, I see nothing of the kind, for your symbol is the crescent moon, and does not help you to understand the moon when at its full. Besides, even the new moon was not the origin of the symbol of Islam, but Mohamed's curved scimitar. When your Prophet led the first great battle in the month of Ramadan, in the second year of the hegira, he stuck his scimitar into a staff and had it carried as a standard. It led them to victory, and was adopted as the battle standard henceforth. From that time the curved scimitar changed into the crescent, has been the universal symbol of Islam."

The steward stared at me open-mouthed, and as I ceased speaking cried: "Effendi, Effendi, you know all the secrets of history, and the mysteries of all religions. But still I know that the eclipse betokens misfortune to me." Saying which he waddled away, for the shadow was passing from the face of the moon, and he had regained the use of his feet. So quite unmoved in his own opinion, like most of us, however much impressed by the learning of others, the big fellow went to rest in the melancholy certainty of coming ills, announced to him personally by a veil hung over the earth's satellite.

The next morning it was arranged that the Master of Horse was to show me the place where the famous crocodile mummies of Maabdah were buried, for the ancient Egyptians preserved not only human bodies, but those of such animals as they held sacred. Of these the crocodile is one, the inhabitant of the Nile, the sacred river, and I was anxious to see the place of its burial. The party was to consist of the Master of Horse, the big steward

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and Selim, who insisted on going to take care of me, although I assured him it was not necessary.

"Effendi," he said solemnly, "I am the greatest warrior and rider of my tribe, while you are a European, or as bad, whom I have never seen on a horse. If you break your neck, I am responsible, therefore I must keep by your side, and not take my eye off you."

Consequently, he went with us, and as my neck is not broken, I suppose it is owing to his presence. We rode in a southerly direction, for the Master of Horse wished first to show me "Tell es Sirr," which means the "Mount of Mystery," and which he believed to be the mouth of hell.

"How is it supposed to have been discovered that this place is the gate of hell?" I asked, when we drew up before the elevation which looked like a small hillock of sand, yet bore this awful name.

"I do not know," replied the Master of Horse. "It has been handed down from one to another. You are the Son of Wisdom, who has delivered my son by your flask of life, and who desires to study everything interesting, so I have called your attention to this place in the desert."

"I thank you, and will ride to the brow of the hill," I replied.

"No, Effendi, don't do that," he cried. "If Sheitan [Satan] is here he will thrust his claws out of the ground and pull you down. Many have disappeared on this place and never been seen again."

"Very likely, but Satan didn't pull them down. Doubtless there are holes about, which the sand covers. The wind blows from the west in the desert, and the sand is perpetually in motion toward the east."

"That is my own opinion, but we are followers of the Prophet, and guard ourselves from danger of the devil. If you will go up, please excuse us from accompanying you; we will wait below."

I agreed readily to this request, and went up alone. The hill was at most but fifty ells high, and there was absolutely nothing interesting about it. All around and under me was sand, nothing but sand to be seen in all directions. What could have given rise to the absurd legend that this was the mouth of hell? There were many burial-places around Siout; perhaps some here had been opened and had swallowed up investigators, and hence the legend.

I looked down at my comrades, near the foot of the hill. Selim and the steward had mounted and were trying feats of horsemanship, apparently proving which was the better rider. I was interested to see how the big man would come out. He let his horse run a few feet, and turned him, trying to make him rear. The animal was too heavily burdened to feel disposed to unnecessary exertion, and stamped angrily. I saw his forefeet sink. He pulled them up with a mighty leap of fright, the big Negro was thrown, and disappeared! I could see all this plainly, and now I heard the other two howling in terror.

I ran down, and when I came near enough the Master of Horse cried: "You see? I was right, Eflendi! This is the gate of hell, and the steward has gone down. It was yesterday's eclipse."

"Right, very right," agreed Selim. "Now he is in hell, and will suffer for eternity."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "He has fallen into a hole, which the horse broke open by stamping. If it isn't too deep we will pull him out."

"It is a hole that opens straight into the fires of hell. The steward is lost; we shall never see him again in body or spirit," said the Master of Horse, apparently very sure of his claim on paradise.

"I am not going to look for his ghost. Come over to the hole and see how deep it is."

"Allah protect me! I am a faithful son of the Prophet, and will keep away from the gate of hell."

"Right, very right," assented Selim in his snarling voice. "Allah protect me from the evil society of Sheitan."

"Silence!" I said, angrily. "You, the hero of your tribe, afraid of a hole in the ground! If there were fire under here you would see smoke; you are making yourself ridiculous."

My inspiration for the restoration of their courage was nearly successful, but Selim had a bright thought of his own, and said: "Back, back, Effendi; in a moment you, too, will be seized. This may be that part of hell in which souls of unbelievers freeze in eternal ice, which would account for there being no smoke. No, we will go home, and praise Allah that we are not gone down."

He went over to his horse, but I turned on him with revolver drawn, saying: "By your Prophet and all your caliphs I will shoot the man who dares mount. You shall try to save this man. Take the bridles and reins off the horses, fasten them together. I will ask you to do nothing but hold the line, which shall be fastened to my belt, while I go down the hole."

My two companions agreed to this slight effort in behalf of the unfortunate steward, and when all was ready,

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they held one end of the long leather strap formed by joining our bridles, while, with the other made fast to my waist, I crept to the edge of the hole. The sand filled it part way, and out of it rose the head and breast of the steward, his hands folded and eyes closed, but not dead, for I heard him groan. Leaning over I called to him; a groan was the only reply. I called again, and this time he answered in a trembling voice: "Here I am, Azrael." He took me for the angel of death!

"Open your eyes and look at me," I laughed.

"I can't; I am dead."

"Well, the dead can see. Look up high."

He did so and saw me. "Is it you, Effendi? Then I am not only dead, but in hell," he groaned.

"How do you know?"

"Because no Christian could be in heaven. Since you are here we must be lost."

This was not flattering, but none the less Sunny. Still, with his mind abandoned to despair, how could I get him to help himself? I resolved to have recourse to his predominant passion, and said: "You may think you're in hell, but I call it only a hole, and if you would try and climb out we would ride home and have dinner; I am hungry."

"I, too," he shouted, as if electrified, his whole face illumined. "I'm hungry if I'm not dead."

"Don't worry," I said, "you are alive. Can you climb?"

"No; do you think I am a cat?"

I did not, nor would it have been polite to have told him what animal he did resemble, sitting there with his fat face thrown back on his shoulders. It makes all the difference to which animal a man is likened!

"Then I'll come down," I said, and did so. I fastened the strap around the steward's body, and then he rose, spread his feet far apart, and I slid sitting into the spot where he had sat. The men above pulled, I "boosted," slowly and carefully lest the sand give way again, bracing hands and arms against the walls of the old grave into which he had fallen. I had to bear most of the weight of the heavy man, and it was no easy task, but at last it was done, the big fellow was on solid ground, the strap thrown down to me, and I was pulled and climbed up after him. I found him examining his body, to see if it were all there apparently, then he turned toward Mecca and repeated certain texts of the Koran in thanksgiving for delivery, and finally overwhelmed me with gratitude.

"Effendi," remarked Selim, "did you notice how I held the strap when others would have dropped it? You have to thank me that you saw the light of day again. I hope you are convinced that I am a strong protector, and full of courage."

"I certainly am convinced," I said, laughing.

We rode on again, too weary from our adventure to feel like investigating the burial-places for which we had set out, yet reluctant to abandon the object of our setting forth. We passed through the village and came to the foot of a steep hill from which the desert stretched toward the Red Sea. There, on the steps of the vaulted grave of a fakir knelt a man. As he heard us approach he turned his head toward us, and we saw that he had a fine, venerable face surmounted by a snow-white beard. We had taken a guide in the village to show us through the tomb, who, when he caught sight of this patriarch, bowed low, his hands crossed on his breast and said: "Allah bless thee, and send thee grace and life, O Mukaddas!" A term which nearly equivalent to our word saint.

The old man arose, glanced at us sharply and replied: "I thank thee, my son! May thy path lead to the eternal dwelling of the Prophet. Thou art going into the tomb?"

"Yes, I will show it to this stranger."

"Do so, and learn how worthless are all early things. Though man builds a dwelling that shall stand a thousand years for his body, yet it is destroyed, and earth comes to earth, dust to dust." Then, looking at me, he added. "What face is this? What thoughts dwell behind that forehead? I could foretell thy future, for the gift of prophecy is mine. Do you believe that Allah gives knowledge of the future to them who are near death?"

"God alone knows the future," I replied.

"He knows it, but sometimes He reveals it to His faithful. I will prove it. That you may believe I know the future I will speak of the past. You wear the garments and use the language of the Moslem, but you are a Christian." He paused, and I nodded assent. "There are many Christian lands, but I see one which spreads from ocean to ocean, where there is no king, for every man is king, and all are free. You rejoice in being a son of this land." Again he paused, and again I nodded. He continued: "I see a ship with many sails, her captain is a sword of

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justice, and you are his friend. He will make many men happy and win honor and glory; do you know such a man?" Thinking of the Reis Effendina I nodded. "I have told you the truth, and could also tell you the future. But you have doubted, so I will be silent, and only warn you to beware of a great misfortune, perhaps death. My soul's eye sees a son of revenge pursuing you to take your life. Once he almost succeeded, but Allah protected you. If you would escape him journey no further now. It is full moon; stay where you are until the next quarter. This is what I would tell you. Believe me, or believe me not, I care not, but according as you decide will you be fortunate or unfortunate. Allah inspire you." He turned and went back to prayer at the steps, while I followed the others into the tomb.

Instead of being impressed by this old man's words, I felt a very strong suspicion that his knowledge was not derived from any power of prophecy, but from earthly, not to say unworthy, sources. It seemed outrageous to doubt such a venerable-looking old patriarch, but I remembered the words of the dear old Jesuit president of my college, who used to say you could not tell a saint from a sinner coming down the street.

For the two hours which I spent in the great tomb of the Egyptians, wandering through the dust of those who had, perhaps, seen Moses, my mind was more filled with the thought of my little life than the great dead. I felt convinced that the warning he had given me was rather a veiled threat, and suspected him of dealings with Abd el Barak, and possibly the "muza'bir," whom the Reis Effendina might have failed to capture.

When we came out of the tomb the old man was still at the entrance. Coming up to me he said: "I have read in your face your nobility of soul; I know that I can trust you, and I see the danger threatening you; for these reasons you interest me. There is a secret known to me which I have never shared with any man. I will tell it to you, only making the condition that you will not reveal it before my death."

"And then is it to be revealed?"

"Yes, then, but not before. I know a tomb of the most ancient kings of Egypt, which no eye but mine has looked upon. I will take you there, and lead you into it, and you shall see the mummies of the twelfth dynasty sitting waiting for the Last Day, if you will go."

"Certainly I will; it would be a great favor," I replied. "When will you do this strangely kind act for me, a stranger?"

"To-morrow; if you will meet me at the northern gate of the town four hours after sunrise I will reveal to you the secret of the Pharaohs."

"I will be there, and thank you for your great kindness," I said.

"Heaven guard you, and avert the dangers threatening you," responded the patriarch.

I was fully resolved to seek this new adventure, though I suspected it concealed danger. But I hoped that it might lead to the capture of the "most renowned pickpocket in Egypt," whom I felt sure was in some way mixed up with this venerable fakir.

CHAPTER VII. IN THE TOMB OF THE PHARAOHS

As soon as I had breakfasted I went over to the steward's apartment, where Selim was lodged, to fetch my long, "protector," for he only I determined should go with me to the tomb which the fakir had promised to show me. I found the portly Negro none the worse for his experience of the day before, but very anxious as to my proposed expedition, in regard to which Selim had hinted vague dangers, adding he was under a solemn oath not to reveal its destination or purpose.

"Have no fear," I said. "Nothing will befall us."

"You think so, because you have no faith in the portent of the eclipse. Give it up, I beg you, Effendi," said the unwieldy creature with affectionate anxiety.

"Don't urge me, for I can't. I have given my word that I will go, and I must keep it."

"Then at least leave Selim here."

"What? I stay here!" cried that hero, before I could speak. "I, the protector and guardian of the Effendi, let him go alone? No, I cannot fail in my duty; I will accompany him through all the dangers on earth or sea. I will fight for him with dragons, serpents and scorpions. I am ready to annihilate lions and panthers."

"But just now you have only to hold your tongue," I interrupted. "There is no question of serpents, or lions, or panthers. Therefore, you must leave your gun here, and take only your knife."

"But we do not know yet where we are going! Maybe we shall go into the desert, near the den of a lion, and —"

"Nonsense! No lion will hurt you; he would not get a chance, for as soon as you saw him you would run away so fast he could not catch you," I laughed.

"Effendi, what an opinion you have of the truest of all your friends!" he said, reproachfully. "I am Selim, your protector, and would stand and fight for you if all the men and all the wild beasts in the world attacked you. You misunderstand me, therefore I pray that Allah will send us danger, great danger, in which I can prove what heroic things I would do for you." He stuck his knife in his belt as he spoke, took three torches and a strong rope and we started.

The fakir had sent a boy to fetch me, instead of letting me come alone to meet him, and this boy was waiting outside. He led us at a rapid pace over the ground, and when he came to a slight elevation beyond the village he paused, and pointing to a distant rock, said: "Yonder by that ancient grave the fakir waits thee in prayer."

I started to take out the backsheesh I meant to give him, but he spit at me, and, crying: "Keep your piaster. How could I soil my hands with the gold of an unbeliever" and ran away.

Considering the clamor for backsheesh from Christian travelers all over Egypt this was unexpected, but the boy was gone, and without stopping to consider his behavior, we hastened on to the tomb. The fakir heard us coming and turned toward us. Extending his hand he said: "Welcome, Effendi! Allah illumine thy steps to the goal of joy and blessedness. Thou hast kept thy word, and I will keep mine. Thou shalt see the ancient kings; sleeping with their wives, daughters and kindred about them. Follow me."

We proceeded directly out toward the desert, the fakir taking such long strides that I had to make an effort to keep up with him. We thus very quickly reached the hill where we had been yesterday, and the hole from which the steward had escaped. Falling behind a moment to Selim, whose long legs had failed to keep up the pace, I warned him not to speak of having been there before, and had only succeeded in doing so when the fakir turned to me, saying: "Here is the entrance to the tomb."

"Here!" I exclaimed. "Surely there are no rocky tombs here."

"Who has mentioned rocky tombs? This is the entrance to a subterranean passage to the tomb. The opening is concealed. Follow me."

We started up the hill, but I stopped him. There was a smooth track ahead of us, as if a cloth had been dragged up to hide footprints.

"Some one has been here before us," I said, "a garment has been dragged along to wipe out the footprints. That looks suspicious."

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"Does it?" laughed the fakir. "Not to me; for I came here to see if it was all right this morning early."

"But it looks to me as if several feet has passed this way."

"O Mohamed! Who could tell the difference between one man's steps, or many, in this sand?"

"I could, for I have lived with the red men, whose life depends on their ability to read in such things the number of their foes."

"There is no question here of foes. I went up and down twice, that is why you see the prints of two men's feet. Do you think I would betray my secret to any one?"

Feeling half ashamed of my unfounded suspicions I started up the hill. When we reached the top the patriarch paused, scanned the horizon carefully, then said: "There is no one in sight; we shall not be discovered," and stooping down began to dig away the sand, which was very light. I had thrown my suspicions to the winds, and was all eagerness for the adventure, and even Selim showed no signs of cowardice.

We helped the old man clear away the sand, and saw at the bottom of a hole perhaps three feet deep a flat stone, which we pried up. We then saw before us a passage, its sides bricked, and just wide enough to allow a man to crawl through.

"This is the entrance," said the fakir, once more scanning the horizon for a possible observer. "Who will crawl in first?"

"You, of course, since you know the way," I replied, and he immediately complied. After we had proceeded perhaps eighteen feet I felt the passage widen, and the fakir ordered us to light a torch. I complied, and found ourselves in a small chamber, in the corner of which was an opening which seemed to dive straight into the earth, high enough for a man to stand upright. "We must descend this shaft," said the fakir.

"Down there!" growled Selim. "Are there stairs?"

"No."

"Where were these mummies' wits? Couldn't they have provided us with stairs to visit them, or at least a ladder?" said this queer person. "Must I risk breaking all my arms and legs?"

"Not at all; one would think you were a centipede, Selim," I replied. "There is doubtless a way of getting down."

"There are square footholds in the sides of the shaft, where the feet are set," said the fakir. "They are not two feet apart and make a perfectly safe stairway."

"What sort of air is there down below?" I asked.

"Quite as good as here; there must be air holes which I have not discovered. Perhaps your keen eyes will find them." The fakir said this in his usual tone, yet with a slight emphasis, which I remembered later, and realized his irony.

"Who will go first?" he asked again.

If he had any idea of betraying us it could only be prevented by keeping between him and the opening, so again I replied he should precede, being our leader. So the fakir led the way, Selim followed, and I came last. The rope was fastened around the saintly patriarch, then halfway up its length was tied around Selim, and the other end I knotted around my hips. It was hard to hold a lighted torch, and use hands and feet in getting down, and as the fakir needed none, and Selim was afraid to risk carrying one, I was the only man who had a light. The fakir plunged down and was quickly out of sight. Selim felt his way timidly, and I heard him murmur the Moslem's prayer on all occasions: "There is no God save God, and Mohamed is His Prophet." Then I followed, using only the left hand and carrying the torch in my right. Not a word was spoken. I counted the steps; twenty holes down there was a gallery, which I tried to investigate, but my torch was too feeble to lighten the profound gloom.

I passed the gallery, and had gone down four or five steps more when I heard a laugh, which echoed horribly in the narrow passage, sounding like a troop of demons. Then I heard the words: "So the Christian dog goes down to eternal silence. Languish in the bowels of the earth, and awaken in everlasting fire!" I looked up and saw two faces, so illumined by the torch that I recognized them: It was the old fakir and the "muza'bir!" We had been entrapped; we were to starve to death!

"Selim, come up, quick," I cried, beginning myself the ascent, but Selim did not obey me, and the rope held me back.

"Do you know me?" cried the juggler. "You wanted me imprisoned, and now you are captured, and no one

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will deliver you."

"No one," agreed the pious fakir. "You began to mistrust me, and yet were stupid enough to follow me. I belong to the holy Kadis, and to avenge the Mokka-dem I have waited for you in Maabdah. Now die like a dog, giaour."

I did not answer, for deeds, not words would save us. I took out my knife and cut the rope that bound me to Selim. Then I drew my revolver, but, unfortunately, our foes could see my movements by the light of my torch, and suddenly both faces disappeared, while the voice of the "muza'bir" called: "Shoot, you dog, and see if you can hit us."

In the darkness I could hear the sound as if heavy stones rubbed against each other. Taking my revolver in my teeth I hastened upward, and found the gallery completely closed by a great rock, against which I heard another shoved to brace it. We were prisoners!

Selim, who could not see what had been going on, had heard the voices, and now called up: "Effendi, to whom were you speaking there? Why did you shoot? Has anything happened?"

"Yes, unfortunately, something has happened. We are taken prisoners."

"Taken prisoners! By whom?"

"By that holy old fakir."

"How can that be? He is below me."

"No, he has untied the rope and come up by some other way; he has closed up the passage with a stone, and we can't get out; I can't move the stone."

"Allah il Allah!" he cried, in a horror-stricken tone. "Let me come and help you."

"No, only one person can stand here; I'll try again, only come nearer, so if I succeed it will not fall on you with such force."

I mounted another step, and tried to dislodge the stone with my shoulders, but in vain; and I had to give up the attempt because the bricks under my feet began to weaken.

"O Allah, O mercy, O compassion, we are lost!" groaned Selim. "We shall perish in this hole, and no man will know where our flesh lies, or our bones have fallen."

"Now, don't wail. We are not helpless," I said. "There may be a way out below; we must go down and look for it."

"And get deeper into misery? No, let us go up."

"Give me the end of the rope I cut; I will tie myself to you again, and we will go down, down I say, at once. Go yourself slowly, and I will follow."

Selim descended carefully, and counting his steps; as he reached the thirtieth he cried: "Effendi, I feel solid ground beneath my feet."

"Wait; I will come."

He was right; we stood on a square of earth, and in the middle was a flat stone. "See," I cried, "there is a stone precisely like the one above."

"What does it matter?" wailed the hero. "We are lost, and shall never look on the light of day again. Life is so beautiful; who could have believed that it would have ended so quickly, so dreadfully?" And sitting down, he wept loud and bitterly. I thought it best to let him have it out with himself, so to speak, and did not attempt to console him. Instead, I knelt, and dug away the sand around the stone; it was light and dry. I lifted the stone, and saw again brick walls around a narrow passage precisely like the one at the entrance.

Selim's loud sobbing died away, and I heard a sigh, weak, yet unmistakable.

"Did you sigh, Selim?" I asked.

"No; you only thought you heard me."

"Not at all; it was perfectly distinct — there!" Again I heard the heavy sigh. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes, Effendi, I heard it plainly."

"It comes from this sand," I cried.

"Sand has no voice."

"Indeed it has, but not like this. I have heard the desert singing and sighing in the night as the winds swept

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over it, but this is not like that tone. It comes from this passage!" I added, in amazement, as the sound was again repeated.

"Right, very right," assented Selim, rushing into a corner.

"What on earth are you hiding from? There are human beings here," I cried.

"Human beings! No; they are spirits of the lost."

"Hush, you coward! Stay here and whimper, if you choose; I am going to save myself. Besides, there may be some one else imprisoned here, and nearly dead. If we delay it may be too late. I am going down; stay here if you like."

"No, no, no; I won't stay in this awful place alone; I will go with you," he cried, and we began the descent of the second passage.

After going down ten steps we came to solid ground, and, on lighting the torch, saw a walled chamber, and against its side leaned a form, which raised its arms and cried: "Have mercy! Let me out, and I will not betray you. I have already promised you this."

"Don't be afraid," I said. "We are not come to torture you."

"Not to torture me? Are you not Abd el Barak's men, who has sentenced me to die?"

"No; Abd el Barak is my deadly enemy, and has caused us to be captured here. You are starving; how long have you been here?"

"Four days; I have licked the drops from the wet wall, so I am not thirsty, but I long for food."

The steward had provided us with dried meat, bread, and dates, which we shared with the young man, Selim as gladly as I; for, though a coward, he was kindly. The food revived the poor fellow, and he asked our name.

"First tell us who you are, and why you are here," I said.

"I am called Ben Nil, the son of the Nile, for my father is a pilot, and I was born on the river. I was imprisoned here in punishment for refusing to kill a man whom the Kadis wished put away."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"A stranger, a Christian from America," answered the youth. "He had done my grandfather a great service, and I would not kill him."

"I am he," I said, to his unspeakable surprise. "You are suffering for my sake, and I will do my best to save you."

"Effendi, you need help now as much as I, but my grandfather was the pilot of the slave-ship whom you helped get free that night when the Reis Effendina captured her. I have only paid a little of our debt in refusing to take your life," he said.

"Keep up heart, Ben Nil," I replied. "I feel sure we all shall see the sun again."

CHAPTER VIII. OUT OF THE TOMB AND AWAY FROM SIOUT

WE were certainly in a bad strait, yet I was sincere in telling my companions that I felt hopeful of delivery. Every moment made matters worse, for the air down below was frightful, and there was no doubt that we must climb up again, where I hoped to find a hidden passage out.

"O Effendi, if you only were right," wailed Selim. "All my hope is dead; we shall starve in misery. Oh, why has Allah ordained this kismet for me?"

Even the weak and exhausted Ben Nil could not stand this. "Why do you whimper?" he said. "You tell me you are called the greatest warrior of your tribe; if you are, it must consist of old women. How shall I get up, Effendi? I am too weak to climb."

"We will drag and carry you," I said. I tied the rope around his body, and Selim fastened the other end around himself, and went up first. I followed, with Ben Nil resting on my shoulders, so that I could shove him while Selim pulled, as we had done in getting the steward out of the hole, and thus we slowly ascended. How lucky it was that we had brought torches, and had given none to the fakir; two were used up, but we had four left.

Arrived in the first chamber, where I had brushed away the sand from the stone, I went over to it and began examining the wall. It was but a few moments before I found a brick that looked loose; I removed it, and found the others around it easily displaced, Selim by this time helping me, while Ben Nil held the light.

"Allah is great," cried Selim; "it is a passage! Effendi, how did you know it was here?"

"I guessed it, because this air is so fresh and sweet, and for that reason I believe it leads out of doors, not into another passage. Do you remember the hole the steward fell into?"

"Allah, wallah, tallah! Do you mean that —"

"I mean that we are coming out into that same hole, if my calculations are right. Keep on digging away the sand and bricks." We went at it with renewed vigor, and at last the passage lay open before us. I crawled in with my torch to follow it up, and at last I reached the end, which I found filled up with sand.

As I turned to go back to summon Selim and Ben Nil I heard a well-known voice behind me, saying: "Allah be thanked, I have found you again. I could not stay longer in that darkness "

"You were afraid?" I asked.

"No, I was not afraid, but little Ben Nil was," replied Selim.

"And because he was afraid you left him alone! You have a queer way of showing your courage. Here, hold the torch; I am going to dig."

The sand was very light; I scattered it on every side, and soon felt the fresh wind on my face. A moment more, and daylight streamed in, the sand collapsed, and revealed a hole, into which I crawled. The sun was directly over my head, and I found myself, as I expected, in the hole into which the steward had fallen. Selim came after me and cried in jubilant tones: "Allah il Allah! Heaven be praised, and all the caliphs be —"

"Oh, shut up with your caliphs, you donkey," I cried out of all patience. "Do you want to betray us?"

"Betray us? To whom?" he asked, with the most stupid face I ever saw.

"To those who entrapped us."

"But they will know we got out."

"Yes, but not till the time comes. If they are in there still we will catch them."

"You are right, Effendi. We will catch them, and I will crush and destroy them, I the most renowned "

"Oh, for goodness sake, do stop your nonsense! I am going back after Ben Nil. You stay here, and don't do anything ridiculous. Keep perfectly still."

I crawled back and found Ben Nil sitting quietly just where I left him. "What news, Effendi?" he asked.

"The best; we are free."

He rose, uttered a prayer of thanksgiving aloud, and then stretched out his hands to me and said: "Effendi, I will never forget this hour. If ever I can thank you and fail in gratitude, may Allah forget me when I stand at the gates of paradise. You need not help me now; I can crawl after you; lead the way."

He spoke truly. His strength seemed to return to him, and we reached the open. Selim was not in sight. But we heard him, shouting: "You dogs, you sons of dogs, and descendants of dogs! Run, run, and if you turn back I will

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crush you in the fingers of my right hand. I am the mightiest of warriors, and the greatest of heroes."

"Selim," I shouted, "come here! What are you yelling at?"

"Shall I not tell these curs what I think of them?" he asked, returning to the edge of the hole.

"What curs?"

"The fakir and the juggler."

That I did not throttle the idiot on the spot I think ought to stand high on the credit side of my accounts.

"Where were they?" I asked.

"I climbed out of the hole, and they stood on the throw of the hill. My wrath mastered me. I yelled at them in fury, and they ran with the swiftness of the gazelle; you can still see them running."

"Catch the rope; pull me up," I said.

Yes; he spoke the truth; there they were, too far off to be captured, and still running. I nearly choked as I saw them, and I turned on Selim angrily: "You old, incurable donkey! If you had held your tongue they would both have fallen into our hands!"

"They will yet," said Selim, as complacent as ever. "We will catch them in Siout."

"They won't go back there. However, we must return. We will carry Ben Nil between us, and our progress must be slow."

We made the long distance back to the palace at a weary pace, but we reached it at last. I was so enraged at the escape of that pious old hypocrite, the fakir, and the "muza'bir" that I could hardly appreciate my own happy delivery. I made up my mind to capture them if they were above ground, and for this reason to leave Siout by the second day.

Ben Nil sought me in the morning. "May your day be blessed, and all your ways be peaceful, O my lord and deliverer," he said, dropping off his shoes in the doorway and bowing low. "Is it true that you are going to Khartum?"

"Yes."

"Effendi, do you need a servant?" he cried. "Take me with you! I am poor, but I will not ask for wages. If you will give me food it will be enough."

"Yes, I will take you; I like you, and, as you are a sailor, I may be able to get you a good position."

"I shall be glad of one, and you shall not find me unworthy."

The young man made an extraordinarily good impression on me; he spoke frankly and respectfully, and his expression was honest; knowing, as he did, every foot of the river, he could easily be of great service to me. But scarcely had I arranged to take him with me when Selim came to the door, and looked at me appealingly.

"Effendi," he said, "will you send me back to Murad Nassyr, as the steward says you mean to do?"

"Yes, for I am going into the Sudan."

"I cannot return; it goes to my heart to part with you. You are a wise man, and know the hidden secrets of all things, but you need a servant; let me be he, for I will not return to Cairo."

"But your fierce courage will get me into trouble; besides, I already have a servant."

"Ben Nil? What use is that young man? He has fought no battles, and won no victories. Effendi, my heart cleaves to you; take me with you!"

There were actually tears in the eyes of this extraordinary being, and though I had been tried almost past endurance by his stupidity and boasting, I had not the heart to refuse him. So I promised to let him go with me, and sent him on his way rejoicing with a joy I could hardly share; yet he was an honest, kind-hearted, and, as this proved, an affectionate old gas-bag!

All my little preparations were made by night, and I was to start, early in the morning. Just after evening prayer, as the Master of Horse, the big steward and I were smoking our farewell pipe, a small train of camels came swinging down the narrow street, and as they drew near to the palace we saw that the rider of the foremost animal was the lieutenant of the Reis Effendina.

I was glad again to see this young officer, who had done all he could to make my trip to Siout on the "Falcon" pleasant. He greeted me most cordially, and immediately asked for a room in which he could see me alone. Having been shown to one, and made sure no one could overhear us, he said: "Effendi, the Reis Effendina has

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certain information that a caravan of slave-women is now on its way across the desert. The tribe of Fessarah Arabs were keeping a festival not many weeks ago. All the men had gone to Oschebel Modjaf, and the women were left at home. When the men returned the old women and children lay dead among the ruins of their homes, and the young women and girls had been carried away to slavery."

"Horrible!" I exclaimed. "I have heard that the Fessarah women are famous for their beauty. Has no trace of them been found?"

"No; yet the Reis Effendina is convinced that the caravan which he knows is now crossing the desert is theirs. He had commissioned me to capture it, and send the women back to their homes. But he bade me seek you out and beg you to help me in this task, feeling sure it will thus succeed. If you consent, you are to hold superior rank to mine, and I will obey you in all things. On my own part, I beg you not to refuse, Effendi, for I would gladly avail myself of the pleasure of your companionship, and the benefit of your wisdom, courage, and strength."

This was a wonderful invitation from the officer of the Viceroy to a young Christian traveler, and far too tempting to my love of adventure to be refused. After brief consideration, I held out my hand and said as I rose: "I accept with pleasure, and due appreciation of the compliment.

We will rescue these women, and I am ready to ride with you at any moment."

"Good! The Reis Effendina has sent you the finest camel in his possession," said the lieutenant, rising also. "We will start with the sun in the morning."

And thus ended the first of my adventures in Egypt, the land of mystery, and saying farewell to the town for a time, I turned my face toward the outstretched desert.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE TRACK OF THE SLAVE CARAVAN

IF it is true that "some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," I must belong to the latter class, for it was luck, and not merit, that had led me, a young American traveler in search of adventure in the East, to be selected by the Reis Effendina, the captain of the Viceroy of Egypt, for the command of an expedition to capture a caravan of slave dealers who had destroyed a village of Fessarah Arabs and taken captive their women.

The lieutenant, who according to the written instructions of the Reis, was to be my second in command, left the town a little in advance of me, and waited at an appointed place for me to join him. He was surprised when he saw me coming, accompanied by two servants, and hailed me as soon as I was within speaking distance, saying: "I began to think you had not been able to find the place, I have waited so long. Is this youth Ben Nil, of whom you have spoken?"

"Yes."

"And the other is Selim, the hero of heroes?"

"Yes, I am he," Selim replied before I could speak, "and when you have learned to know me you will wonder at me."

"I wonder at you already, that you should speak when I addressed your master. I trust these fellows will prove worthy of bestriding such noble camels. You are first; I am the second; it is for you to do what pleases you, and I only hope this will prove no mistake. Let us fill our water skins and start."

These words were addressed to me; we took the skins which hung at each saddle-bow, dismounted and filled them at the spring where we had met, remounted, and rode away.

We turned toward the caravan route, which ran first southwesterly and then directly south, following the dry bed of a brook, which contained water only during the rains. The landscape was bare and bleak; on every side rose stern crags, and the camels' feet fell on stony, unfruitful soil. On the second day of our journey we reached the sand desert which is called "bahr bela mah," the sea without water, a term used often in the Sahara and by the Red Sea to designate the desert.

At last we came to the spot where the lieutenant had left his soldiers awaiting his return, and we camped by the baggage which lay on the ground, the soldiers at a respectful distance from their superior officers. Many of them had seen me on the Reis' ship, and welcomed me as a man whose presence might be useful to them. Ben Nil at once went over and joined them, but Selim would have liked to play the gentleman and remain with me and the lieutenant, but the latter gave him such an unmistakable sign of dismissal that the long-legged hero was forced to go. He hailed the soldiers as he approached, saying: "So you are the 'Asaker'" (the plural of the word "Askeri," meaning soldiers) "of the Reis Effendina, who are to be allowed to fight under us? I hope that you will be satisfactory to me. Do you know me?"

"No," answered one of the men, regarding him with wondering curiosity, uncertain whether he was an equal or his superior.

"Then you surely are a stranger in this land, where every child prattles of my heroism. My glorious name is so long that it would reach from here to Kahireh, so I bid you call me simply Selim. I am the greatest warrior of an the tribes and peoples of the East, and my adventures are related everywhere, and are written in thousands of books. My mighty hand is a rock in whose shadow you may rest secure all your length of days."

Thus having spoken Selim drew himself up, folding his arms over his breast in an indescribably funny attitude of dignity. The soldiers did not know what to make of this address; they looked over at me and saw me laughing, while Ben Nil shrugged his shoulders and murmured: "Tim el kebir," which is equivalent to "gas-bag," or boaster. So enlightened by these two clues, a young man, whom I discovered later was the wag of the band, rose, made a deep genuflection, and said in a tone of mock reverence: "We are blessed, O Selim of all Selims, in the light of thy countenance. We believe, for thou hast said it, that thou art the essence of all wisdom, and we put our trust in thee, with full confidence that thou wilt not withdraw this light from us."

"I will not," replied Selim, with no suspicion that he was the victim of a jest. "I am ready to protect you with

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all my talents at any moment."

We had watched this comedy with no slight amusement, but now we turned our attention to the object we had come out to attain, and which would surely prove a tragedy — the liberation of the Fessarah women and the capture of their captors. We all — that is to say, the lieutenant and I, and the "Onbaschi," or corporal of the "Asaker," whom we had admitted to our council — thought that the route of the guilty caravan would lie towards some hidden brooks, of which there are a few in the desert, concealed with the utmost care by those to whom the secret is known, for, since not even a camp can go a week without water, it followed that these people must know of some such hidden streams toward which they would direct their course. We decided to ride in the direction in which the "Onbaschi," an old dweller in the desert, thought it most probable that these springs would lie, and trust to the keen scent of our camels to discover them. The lieutenant and I, with Ben Nil and Selim, because we feared to take our eye off the latter lest his stupidity should bring our plans to grief, were to ride in search of these brooks, and reconnoiter generally, while the "Onbaschi" was to lead the "Asaker" to a certain stream called Bir Murat and wait for us to join them.

Having given the "Onbaschi" full instructions, so that there could be no possible misunderstanding, we four rode away. The country was still hilly, but devoid of tree or shrub; no living thing was to be seen except the slow-wheeling vultures scanning the desert in search of some poor pack camel, which might have sunk exhausted beneath its load and been left by the heartless Arabs to die in the slow tortures of thirst and starvation, while the vultures sat around waiting for its last feeble breath to be drawn. Many such a pitiful scene have I witnessed, and given the patient, suffering creature the merciful shot that its cruel master had been too indifferent to give when his faithful four-footed servant had found its burden too heavy, and its strength had failed. But we passed no such dumb tragedy on this ride, nor did we see the bleaching bones that showed such a one had been enacted, which proved that we were off the general caravan route.

There was no danger of mistaking our way; a glance at the watch and at the sun indicated it without consulting the compass, and by night the stars, especially the glorious Southern Cross, guided us.

On we went and still onward, the camels swinging along on their sturdy legs with no sign of weariness, but their riders had not equal endurance. Selim complained until I lost all patience with him, especially as the women whom we were trying to rescue were of the tribe to which he belonged, and for whom, consequently, he should have been more ready than we to suffer something, for none of us was finding the ride an easy one. At last, toward night, a hill rose before us and my camel paused for a moment, snuffing the air. Then he turned to the right and ran at full speed, while I let the bridle hang loosely, not interfering with the beast's liberty to follow his instinct, for I knew that he scented water. The other three camels came after with equal speed; the sand flew beneath their flying feet. We passed between the hills and entered a little valley. Here my camel halted, pawing at the sand with his forefeet. I sprang down without attempting to make him kneel, and pulled him away. He resisted, screaming, struggling, and biting at me with all his might, but I forced him back and fastened his legs so tightly that he could not move. Heart-broken over his disappointment, he threw himself on his side and lay as motionless as if he were dead. We went through the same struggle with the other camels, and then knelt to dig away the sand. It was not a difficult task, and eight strong arms hastened it. Three feet down it was damp, a foot more and it was wet, then we came upon a sort of trough made of gazelle skins sewn together, and when we lifted this up we saw clear water an ell deeper down, with a wooden framework around it to support the leather cover.

"Allah be praised!" cried Selim, unfastening his girdle to tie his gourd on the end and fill it. "Here is fresh water. We will drink after the heat of the days and be refreshed."

"Stop!" I cried. "Give every one his due; the discoverer shall drink first."

"The discoverer? That is yourself?"

"No; my camel. He has thirsted for four days, and shall receive his reward."

"But a man comes before a beast!"

"Not in all cases; here is one where the rule is reversed. My camel comes before me; I have had water from the skin, but he has had none, although he had to carry me through the burning sun."

"Well, you Christians are queer people, and we, the true believers, have to bear with you!"

Paying no further attention to his opinion, I took the fastenings off my camel; he sprang up and drank eagerly

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from the leather trough which I had filled, until the last drop was gone, as did each of the camels in turn. We, too, drank our fill of the cold spring, and man and beast, we were wonderfully refreshed.

During the night, when I was keeping watch while the others slept, I made up my mind to the next step, which was to ride on further alone and see if any trace of the caravan was to be found towards the south, since up to this point none had been discovered. It was not impossible that it might have turned aside and gone towards the stream where the "Asaker" were to await us, in which case they would even then be in danger.

As the east began to redden I wakened the others, who fell upon their knees to say the "Fagr," which word means the dawn, and is the name of the prayer appointed for the Mohammedans to say at that hour. After this we breakfasted off meal mixed with the sweet spring water which had gathered during the night to the height at which we had found the spring. It was a breakfast which an American tramp would have scorned, yet it tasted delicious in the Egyptian desert. At eight o'clock I started on my lonely ride, leaving my companions with the understanding that if I were not back at a certain time they were to join the "Asaker" at Bir Murat.

I rode, as in the preceding days, directly southward. Soon the hills disappeared in the north and I was alone in the "bahr bela mah," the sea without water. If the solitude of the desert is oppressive when one has companions, it is far more so when one is alone. It falls upon one like a nightmare. You feel how inexpressibly tiny you are, a helpless worm amid the awful forces of Nature. It seemed to me as though the desert rose up and the heavens were sinking, and that I should be crushed between them. Since there was no life to be seen I must at least hear some, so I began to whistle, like a boy afraid of the dark. My camel pricked up its ears and redoubled its speed. The effect of whistling on a camel is really curious; however weary the heavy-laden "ship of the desert" may be, as soon as its driver sets the little whistle which he carries for this purpose to his lips new strength seems to enter the tired beast, while a camel that is not tired takes it for an invitation to greater speed. Hour after hour I rode, and my splendid camel, well chosen by the Reis for his pace and endurance, had carried me so far by sunset that I was convinced there was no need for me to seek the caravan deeper in the south; it had surely taken the route on which we had calculated. I could not return by night with the same rapidity with which I had ridden during the day, but I whistled to keep up the camel's spirits (as well as my own) until my lips ached, and it was not yet noon when I spied the hills once more before me.

Wondering whether anything had happened during my absence I rode on faster, till suddenly I reined up to a dead stop; something had indeed happened! A wide trail led from the left, disappearing behind the hills, whence it reappeared and led toward the northeast. The trail indicated five riders; had my companions ridden away to join the "Asakers" when they saw them coming, or had they been surprised? The trail returning from the hills was that of eight camels, but I could not see any indication that three had been made before the other five. With an anxious heart I rode on, and close by the spring I saw the sand heaped up as if over a grave. Dismounting, I dug away the sand and saw two human feet. I could not wait to clear away any more sand; I seized the feet and pulled, pulled till the whole body lay revealed. God be thanked, it was neither the lieutenant, Ben Nil, nor Selim! It was a bearded, sunburned stranger, with a half Arab, half Negro face. He had been stripped of his clothing, and a knife-thrust had gone straight through his heart!

Dropping the feet, which I still held in the horror of my discovery, I ran to the top of the height to see if there was any one or anything that would give me a clue to the tragedy that had been enacted during my absence. I saw only the figure of a man coming slowly and fearfully toward me, and in a moment I recognized the heroic Selim.

"Selim, Selim!" I cried. "Come here quickly; I am here!"

"Allah be praised and thanked, for now I hope you will help me rescue Ben Nil and the lieutenant. But if you will not, then will I undertake the task alone."

"Stop your boasting! You have been playing the coward again, or you would not be here without them." I interrupted angrily. "Tell me what has happened."

"Five men fell upon us."

"Fell upon you? Was there no one on the watch?"

"Yes, I had that honorable post —"

"You! You were on guard, yet did not see them coming?"

"Effendi, I could not see them then. It was the hour of the morning prayer, and I was kneeling yonder, with my

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face turned toward Mecca, toward the east, and these men came from the west; how could I see them?"

"You need not lie; the trail shows me that they came after the morning prayer, and had you knelt where you say you did they would have seen you, and you would not have escaped them. You saw them, and ran away to hide!"

"Effendi! How can —"

"Now, no more of that! Do you know anything about your comrades' fate?"

"It was horrible! The lieutenant lay on the ground when I saw him, fighting against two men, and three others had attacked Ben Nil. Ben Nil stabbed one, but the other two overcame him. You should praise my presence of mind, Effendi, for I kept myself out of sight that I might preserve myself to rescue them."

"You certainly are wonderfully cool and collected! I believe you ran away like a jackal!"

"Of course, I got off as quickly as I could for their sake, and presently I saw the band ride off with our friends prisoners, bound on our camels. And they led off mine," added this incurable coward, ruefully.

"That is the only comforting thing you have told me!" I cried, furious when I considered that this creature had allowed our comrades to be surprised, and then had secured his own safety by hiding. "I am going to hasten after them, and you shall taste the fruit of your cowardice by following on foot."

So saying, I ran back to my camel and mounted in hot haste.

"Effendi, Effendi!" shrieked Selim, running after me. "You won't leave me! Can't you let me ride behind you?"

"I could, but I am going to ride into a fight, with heavy odds against me, and if you come you stand a good chance of being killed."

Selim paused. "I wouldn't hesitate to take that risk," he finally said, "but I fear if your camel were so heavily laden you could not overtake our foes, so you shall go on alone, and I will follow."

"Good!" I laughed. "You are really incorrigible! You can't go astray; the trail is plain enough for a blind man to follow it. Keep your gun ready, for there are lions and panthers about."

So saying I rode off, and heard him running behind me shouting: "Lions and panthers! Allah kerihm! God have mercy on me! Effendi, take me with you, take me with you!"

CHAPTER X. ONCE MORE THE FAKIR

IN spite of the long ride I had just taken, my splendid beast ran like the wind as I urged him onward. In a shorter time than I had dared hope I saw before me, as I ascended a small hill, those whom I pursued, and looking through the glass I made out that two men rode ahead, two behind leading the pack camels, while the prisoners were in the middle. Putting up my revolvers and knife and taking my gun in hand, I rode down upon the band. One of the advance riders chanced to look around and discovered me, and at the same moment I saw that they were armed with long Bedouin rifles, which were only dangerous at short range. The man who had espied me drew up and signaled me to approach; we were now possibly a hundred feet apart.

"Come you rather to me," I called. and to attain my end dismounted and took a few steps toward him. The unwritten rules of desert etiquette compelled him to do likewise, and I waited till he had come quite up with me. He looked at me searchingly, then extending his hand, said: "Sallam aale-kum! be my friend!"

"Aale.k sallem! I will be your friend when you are mine," I replied. "You stopped at my camping-place while I was trying my camel's speed in the desert, and I have ridden after you to tell you what I desire, and then to grant your wish."

He stared at me in amazement, then he said: "We have not been at any camp."

"Ah, but I know that you have! It was at the hidden spring, which we had uncovered for our refreshment. When I returned my servants had gone, and in their place was the grave of a stranger."

"Did you open it?" he demanded hastily.

"I was forced to open it to learn whether the dead man might perchance be one of my people. When I had seen his face I mounted my fleet camel and followed your trail, to tell you, as I have said, what I desire, and to grant you the wish of your heart."

"What is your desire?" asked the man.

"Give me back my servants."

His face did not change by so much as the quiver of an eyelash as he asked: "And what is the wish you will then grant me?"

"Then I will let you go your way unhindered."

"And if I do not do what you desire?"

"Then will I prevent you from carrying out your design."

"You are a madman! You are alone, and we are four, yet you speak as though you had a hundred men at your back. If you knew who we were you would crawl in the dust before us!"

"I will prove to you that I am equal to a hundred. If you resist me we will see who is mad and who is sane."

"You dare to threaten me?" he began to say, reaching for his pistol, but I had my revolver ready, and, pointing it at him, I thundered: "Hands off! If you move one of the weapons in your girdle you are a dead man!"

Withdrawing his hand, he said: "You fool! I have but to call my men, and you are lost."

"Try it!" I replied. "The first word you speak loud enough to be heard twenty feet from here will bring a bullet through your heart."

"That is downright treachery," said my friend, but in a lower voice.

"How do you make that out?"

"I came to you because you dismounted, and I could do no less than follow your example; that is the custom of the desert. We should be free to part as we came; neither has the right to detain the other, but you outrage this ancient law."

"Who dares say so? I spoke to you civilly, nor offered violence, but you threatened me, and when you talk of calling your men to attack me it is you who outrage the law of the desert, and I must protect myself."

"Then let me depart."

"First, I wish to speak with you."

"I will not listen."

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"Then depart."

"And you will not shoot me when my back is turned toward you?"

"No, for I am a Christian, and not a murdering sneak. But I tell you that I will have my servants; you shall not leave this place till they are in my hands."

"At the first attempt at rescue we will kill you; do what you please."

"And you!" I retorted as he moved away. "But if you will not do as I desire peaceably your blood shall be upon your own head."

The man went back to his little band, and a chorus of scornful laughter arose as he spoke with them; evidently they held my threats for empty words.

I had no desire to shed their blood, though it would have been justifiable could I not have rescued the lieutenant and Ben Nil by other means. At best the camels must be sacrificed; but I could easily spare our own beasts, for the prisoners were bound on them, and Selim's was led by the halter.

The little band began to move, shaking their fists at me over their shoulders and laughing derisively. They were moving in the same order as before; the leader with whom I had spoken in advance. I aimed at his camel. A puff of smoke, and the animal fell dead, shot through the heart; a second shot brought down the camel of the rear rider. Loud cries and a volley of curses reached me, but as they were not dangerous I fired twice again, and stretched out the other two camels. There were left now but our own beasts and one belonging to the enemy, who had conceived respect for my accuracy of aim. "Don't move, or I'll shoot!" I shouted. Realizing that my little revolver was not to be trifled with, they obeyed.

"Throw away your guns; he who holds his shall be shot!" I cried.

This order too, was fulfilled, and the four men crawled crestfallen out from under the dead bodies of their camels. The living beasts, mad with fright, had rushed out of sight, bearing Ben Nil and the lieutenant further into the desert.

"Now," I said, coming up. "I hope I have taught you to respect both the courage and the mercy of a Christian. I might have killed you, but I have spared you and taken only the lives of your camels; even they have not been allowed to suffer. Nay, stay; this poor creature still lives; I will end his misery — thus."

So saying, I held my revolver to the head of a camel that was moving feebly and put him out of pain. "You shall give up your weapons," I continued, "lest you may do further harm with them. Hold up your hands while I disarm you — quick!"

In sullen silence they obeyed me, all but their leader. Grinding his teeth, he snarled: "Now, by the Prophet, this is too much!" and reached for his knife.

I saw the movement and sent a bullet through his hand. "Hands off!" I said. With a muttered curse he obeyed me, and with my left hand I stripped him of his weapons. "Now we are ready to say farewell," I remarked. "The task is well done. Go your ways, as I will go mine, for I have rescued them whom I came to seek. When next you meet a Christian do not molest his servants, nor treat him with disrespect. Farewell."

I went over to where I had left my good camel kneeling, waiting me patiently, though his quick breathing and distended nostrils showed the fear he felt at the sight of his slain brethren. Mounting, I rode away towards the left, where the frightened camels that bore my comrades had disappeared, and the last I saw of my vanquished foes they were standing where I had conquered them, staring after me motionless, in silent hate. We were destined to meet again.

The trail led directly into the desert, though not far into it. After five minutes' riding I saw the captives in the distance, with the two pack camels lying close to theirs. When the lieutenant and Ben Nil saw me coming their joy was great. The former called to me as soon as he could make himself heard: "Allah be praised, at last you come! We have suffered more in the moments which have passed since you first appeared on the scene than in all the rest of the time since we were captured. We didn't know whether you had been victorious or had been killed, or

whether we should be found, or were doomed to perish miserably, bound on our camels here in the desert."

"You see that I am the victor," I said, dismounting and going over to cut the bonds which held the camels together, as well as those by which my comrades were tied on their backs. "We will return to the battle-field, for I hope to find booty left by these scamps in the packs of the dead camels."

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We did return forthwith, nor was I disappointed in my expectations. The packs held nothing that we cared for, but they did hold a great deal that the "Asaker" would find useful, and we loaded it on our camels, to be divided among the soldiers when we came up with them.

We sat down to wait for Selim, and I listened to the lieutenant's account of the arrival of the unexpected enemy at the spring and their capture, which had come about much as I thought.

"And now I know what and who they are," I said when the story was finished.

"Their knowledge of the hidden spring betrays them. They are the slave-dealers whom we are seeking."

"Impossible, Effendi!" cried the lieutenant. "They had no slaves with them, and we know that the caravan we are seeking has a great number of female slaves."

"These five men were but the vanguard; they were a sort of quartermasters, looking after the water and whatever was required for the caravan's well-being."

"If that were so we made a great mistake in letting them escape. You should have held them and questioned them; what a help that would have been to us!"

"Help? I don't think so. If I had questioned them they would not have told me the truth, and it is better to have no information than to have false information. As it is, we will follow them, and I will creep up to them when they are encamped for the night, listen to what they say, and, if I am not mistaken, find out all that we want to know."

"But, Effendi, they must be deaf and blind not to discover you," cried Ben Nil.

"I'll see to that. I know how to creep up and spy upon people, yet remain invisible and inaudible myself. And we can start after our acquaintances in a few moments, for I see some one coming, who can be no other than our heroic Selim."

Sure enough, on the western edge of the horizon appeared a white point, which steadily drew nearer, and we saw that it was a foot traveler, running so fast that his white burnoose streamed behind him like a banner in the wind. It was Selim, and when he came up with us he was almost maudlin in his joy at having lived through his unseen dangers and found us once more.

We immediately set forth. Our foes had taken a northeasterly direction, and, that they might not suspect us of following them, we rode more easterly, being sure that we could strike across after it was dark and overtake them. It was the hour of the "Asr," the afternoon prayer, when we came to the spot where our old "Onbaschi" waited us with his "Asaker." We told them our adventures and divided up the booty, of which I retained only a map, a fact which won for me still greater loyalty from the "Asaker," of whom I had already no reason to complain on that score.

We rested for a little while, and an hour after "Asr" set forth once more. Knowing that the slave-dealers' camp must be near Bir Murat, because there was no other place near at hand where there was water, we went directly there. A little after sundown we came to a deep ravine; which

suited our purpose so perfectly that I ordered a halt here for the night. We made our men and beasts as comfortable as circumstances allowed, and I sat down to wait for utter darkness, in which to carry out my plan of spying upon the enemy's camp, a plan from which the lieutenant vainly tried to dissuade me. My faithful Ben Nil begged me to take him with me, but I refused, not only because I would not take him into danger needlessly, but because the enterprise would be a much greater risk to me than if I were alone. Darkness closed in around us, and when it could grow no deeper I set out. I crept out through the ravine and over the sand, keeping close under the shadow of the rocks wherever this was possible, and soon I saw the light of a campfire glimmering ahead of me. I went toward it; a tent had been pitched, and a watcher was patrolling outside. Watching my chance when this guard had passed around to the other side, I slipped behind the tent, and just as I did so I heard a voice call out: "Heda, guard! where is your leader?"

I had heard that voice before, but where?

As I was considering this the flap of the tent was lifted. I could see that a figure approached it. Some one within cried: "Abd Asl! All things are possible to Allah, but who could have dreamed of seeing you here?" and as the light fell on his face I saw that it was the "holy fakir" who enticed me and Selim to our probable death in the tomb outside Siout, and from which I had rescued Ben Nil none too soon! It nearly gave me convulsions to keep myself from leaping out and settling with the old wretch then and there, but I had to set my teeth and keep still, which I did with bad grace.

"El Ukkazi!" replied the old humbug. "I have come to seek you to warn you of a man who has joined the Reis

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Effendina to injure your and my son's business. He is a Christian from a land far beyond in the West, and he is to try to capture the slave-dealers."

"I know of him," replied the other. "He is somewhere about this accursed business now, and he has with him a lieutenant of the Reis, and a follower of his own, called Ben Nil."

"Ben Nil, Ben Nil!" shrieked the fakir. "I knew one by that name, but he is dead."

"Yes, I know; you trapped him in a tomb, and you thought he had starved to death, hut this unbeliever set him free and has him with him now."

"That — is — not — possible!" stammered the fakir.

"It is absolutely true. Hark; some one comes!"

I, too, heard steps; once more the tent door was raised and I saw the leader of the four men whom I had encountered in the desert.

"Welcome, Malef," cried El Ukkazi. "Tell us what hath befallen thee."

Abd Asl, the father of our commander?" exclaimed Malef. "Allah shed grace and happiness before thy feet. Much has befallen me, El Ukkazi; sit down with me and I will tell thee all." With these words my friend sat himself between the other two and told them, not without many angry interruptions, the story of his adventures and misadventures.

"And so the dog is already upon us!" exclaimed El Ukkazi when he had finished. "Abd Asl, what is it you advice that we do?"

"I know not yet your business, nor your destination," replied the fakir.

"We are in charge of a caravan of slave-women of the Fessarah, whom your renowned son Ibn Asl has captured.

He is the greatest of slave-dealers, worthy to call you father."

"The greatest," assented the fakir laconically. "How long were you to remain here, and whither were you to go hence?"

"We were to leave here in the dawn, going southward first, and then toward the northeast in the direction of Wadi el Berd, where we were to join Ibn Asl; we should get there by to-morrow night. There is water there, but hidden from those who do not know the place. There were three gaziah trees growing there, and years ago one of our men, seeing them, concluded there was a spring near by, which he sought and found. The trees still stand, though in our many visits to the place our camels have gnawed off their bark, and they are dry and dead. We have covered the spring with a rock, so that a stranger would never discover it."

"It is my advice that you carry out your plan and go your way early, for this accursed giaour may discover your whereabouts if you delay," said Abd Asl.

"And we will act upon it, O father of the father of slave dealing," responded the leader of the band. I had heard enough, all and more than I needed to know, and the last words had been of the utmost importance, giving me an exact description of the place where this section of the slave-dealers was to join their leader. Carefully, and as slowly as I had approached, I began my retreat to my own camp.

I found my comrades waiting my return in sleepless anxiety. I told them all that I had heard, and ordered an immediate start for Wadi el Berd; it was of the utmost importance that we should be on the ground first, and the "Onbaschi" felt confident that he could take us by a sure and a quicker route than the usual one followed by caravans.

We traveled all night, and early in the forenoon we espied the three dead gaziah trees which marked the spring. So truly had EL Ukkazi boasted of their skill in concealing the spring that we could not find it, even with his description of the place, and had to turn to the camels for help. They were not long in deciding the exact spot where the water lay, and after we had dug away the sand we came to the stone that covered it, and disclosed the spring in the place the wise beasts had indicated.

The next step was to find a place in which our company could be hidden, and I found it in the ravine, made, apparently, by the bed of a stream long dry. Then we posted watchers on the height and waited.

It may have been ten o'clock when the "Onbaschi," who was on guard, summoned me to his side. The moon had risen, and by its light we saw a moving line of shadow across the white sands; it was the caravan! Nearer it came and nearer. Presently we heard something like the twittering of swallows, broken by heavier notes, and

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knew it was the voices of the women captives and the drivers of the camels. At last the caravan came into the valley, and turned directly toward the spring. I saw from my hiding place the white burnouses of the drivers and the light coverings of the invisible women, and I heard the deep voice of the leader of the caravan say: "Halt! Thanks be to Allah and the Prophet, for we have come safely to the waters of refreshment."

CHAPTER XI. TO THE RESCUE

THE voice of the leader giving the order to halt had scarcely died away than there arose a babel of sound; men called, shrieked and cursed, while women's voices rang out shrilly, and camels whined and screamed. It was a great caravan; as the torches were kindled I counted by their light fifteen pack camels, and fully fifty saddle camels, while the litters of the women looked strangely picturesque in the flickering light.

Although I was getting used to the East, I had never seen such an interesting and strange picture as I now looked upon, its effect undoubtedly heightened by the consciousness that the scene would so soon be turned into bloody battle-field.

As I watched, some of the men came forward to uncover the spring, led by a man whom I at first took for Ibn Asl himself. When the stone was raised and the water discovered to be as low as it naturally was after our "Asaker" and camels had drunk from it, this man uttered a frightful curse, and exclaimed: "There is scarcely two feet of water! The rain devil has turned it into another course! A thousand curses on these women, who must have what little there is, if we would keep them fresh for the market."

"Perhaps it will flow in again," suggested one of the men.

"Of that I am quite aware, you son and grandson of all wisdom! But how long shall we wait for it?"

"Forgive me! In any case we must wait till morning for the others, and they will bring water from Bir Murat with them."

"To which you are welcome, if you like the flavor! We will bring the women here to drink, that not one drop be lost. How is it with that girl; will she obey to-day?"

For answer the other called loudly: "Marba! Marba!" and as he did so turned his head so that I saw his face plainly, and it was so superhumanly ugly that I mentally dubbed him "the monster" on the spot.

All eyes were turned toward the women's tents, but the one summoned did not appear.

"Marba!" "the monster" called again, but with the same lack of result.

The leader made a sign and two of his followers disappeared under one of the tents and brought out a young girl, dragging her before the leader. Marba — for it was she — was sixteen years old, and very beautiful, fully bearing out the reputation of her tribe for the beauty of its women. She was barefoot; her body wrapped in a dark garment, like a caftan, and her dark hair hung in two long, thick braids down her back. Her gaze was fixed and immovable; she stared blankly at the leader with her dark eyes; "the monster" she did not glance at.

Pointing to the latter, the leader said: "Thou hast insulted him, and shalt atone for it. Kiss him!"

The girl did not move so much as an eyelash

"Obey," shouted the leader, "or else — " He snatched the whip from his girdle and waved it threateningly. Still she stood like a bronze image, drawn up disdainfully to her full height. The brute strode up to her, seized her, brought the whip down on her shoulders, and repeated his demand. She received the cruel blow without a motion.

"Beat her till she does obey!" shrieked "the monster," furious as he sprang at her.

"Only Ibn Asl may do that," said the other, holding him back. "Wait till to-morrow when he comes! She shall feel then the consequences of defying me!" He gave the girl a few more strokes, and then he and "the monster" resumed their seats on the sand, while Marba slowly walked back to her tent, behind the curtains of which she disappeared.

The blood was nearly bursting from my nails, I had pressed them so hard into my flesh as I watched this scene, powerless to rush out and rescue the beautiful girl from her persecutors. I had heard enough to know that to-night must be done what we had to do, for Ibn Asl, and others not yet come from Bir Murat, would be here in the course of the next day. Slipping from my place I rejoined my companions, comforting myself for my inability to save Marba this last outrage by the thought that it should indeed be the last one.

I had formed my plan, and taking the lieutenant, the "Onbaschi" and Ben Nil aside, I unfolded it to them. The Bedouins, unlike the American Indians, to whom I owed so much of my ability in this sort of strife, lay aside their arms when they lie down to rest. Counting on this, I meant to take Ben Nil, creep up to the tent of the leader and

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capture him while he slept. The "Asaker" were to be ready to rush out on hearing my signal, which was to be the cry of the vulture, and surround the camp on both sides; until they heard this cry they were to lie motionless and still in the ravine.

"And if you are captured and cannot give the sign, Effendi?" suggested the lieutenant, anxiously.

"If you do not hear the cry before the Southern Cross has set you will know that I am captured, and you will come out, attack the camp and rescue me. And one thing more: If you hear three sharp shots in quick succession, then I am in danger and you must hasten to the rescue. But I feel sure that we shall succeed, so now farewell. Come, Ben Nil."

The night was still; weary men and camels alike were sleeping as Ben Nil and I crept silently up to the enemy's tents. The first thing was to determine which of the tents was the one in which the captives slept, for it was necessary to warn them of what we were about to attempt, else in the confusion of the attack they might hinder instead of helping us. We had to break through the circle of the camp, and after a brief search discovered a point at which this was possible, fortunately near the tent which I had seen Marba, the daughter of the Fessarah Sheik, enter. The captors must have felt perfectly secure, for they slept like dormice.

I got through without misadventure, leaving Ben Nil outside the circle to wait my return. I fully expected to find a guard before each tent, but even this precaution was omitted.

The mat which hung before the door was dropped; I pushed it aside and crept in. The tent seemed full of sleepers, judging from the heavy sound of breathing, but a sigh, often repeated, and restless movements from one corner told me that there was one whose heart was too heavy for slumber, and I guessed that the Sheik's daughter was suffering so keenly from her recent abuse that it was she who tossed restlessly from side to side.

"Marba!" I whispered softly. No one answered till I had repeated the whisper several times, then a voice barely breathed: "Who calls?"

"One who brings you freedom. Come to me; I must speak to you."

"Freedom!" she gasped. "O Allah, Allah, who are you?"

"Fear not; I am not one of the slave-traders. I am a stranger, and I have made my way into the camp to tell you that by daybreak you shall be free."

"That is a lie. Here in this Wadi there is none but our persecutors; there is none to pity us."

"I speak the truth, as you shall see."

"If it is true, then swear it by the beard of the Prophet."

"That would be a foolish and vain oath, for I am a Christian."

"Christian? Allah! Can you be the stranger Effendi, who alone conquered Malef and his men, and took away their prisoners beyond Bir Murat?"

"Yes, I am he."

"Then do I believe thee. Wait, I'll come, I'll come."

I heard a quick movement in the direction of the voice, a hurried whisper, then answers. Marba was waking her companions. In a moment a hand touched my sleeve and Marba whispered, with a sob in her voice: "Oh, has my father sent thee?"

"No; we have come by the order of the khedive, through the Reis Effendina."

"They did not know that I heard them, but yesterday a fakir, with a Turk called EL Ukkazi, came to our camp beyond Bir Murat and warned our leader, Ben Kasawi, that a man called the Reis Effendina had sent out his lieutenant and 'Asaker' under a foreign Effendi, but I could not understand what they were sent to do. I only understood that they feared and hated thee."

"So you consider me a wicked man?"

"Ah, no, Effendi; when such as they speak evil of a man it is greatly in his favor."

"That is well said, Marba. And now be prepared for what is to follow. I am going to make the attack and rescue you as soon as possible. When you hear the scrimmage, if there be one, and I fail in my plan to conquer these wretches by cunning, you will know what is going forward. Keep yourselves out of harm's way till the day is won, but if you are forced to act, remember which are your friends and help them if you can. This is what I came to say; so now farewell for a little while, and pray your God and mine for our success."

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"One moment, Effendi; thou hast spoken of overcoming them by cunning. Are these brutes not to be killed, then?"

"No; they are to be delivered up to the Reis Effendina for justice."

"And are we not to be avenged, even on Ben Kasawi and the hideous beast who is next to him in command?"

"Not now; they will be punished by the law. We Christians do not believe in revenge."

"It is well that we are not Christians, Effendi; thy laws are not our laws, and justice is far-off. May Allah go with thee and deliver up our enemies into thy hands. Thou art an unbeliever, but thou wilt rescue us from these hypocrites who call themselves sons of the Prophet; let Allah judge between thee. Farewell."

I crept away, little understanding the meaning of this last speech. Ben Nil was waiting where I had left him, in a fever of impatience, and together we set out to crawl around the outside of the camp and attempt the first part of our plan, which was to capture the leader, whom Marba had called Ben Kasawi, and his aid, "the monster," and carry them off.

Once more I found point at which I could enter the circle of tents, and again I left Ben Nil without while I crept up to the particular tent which I had noted as Ben Kasawi's. As I came around at the back I heard voices talking, not loudly, yet not with any indications of fear of being overheard. It was Ben Kasawi and his "monster," and I was obliged to change the order of exercises on which I had determined in the expectation of finding them asleep. They were talking of me, and the likelihood of my success in carrying out the commands of the Reis Effendina; the terms in which they spoke of me were uncomplimentary enough to make me particularly enjoy the course their wakefulness compelled me to pursue. Both these fellows must be knocked senseless, and I made ready to put forth the strength of my right arm, which had earned for me among the Apaches the name of Old Shatterhand.

I lay in such position that either must come toward me if he moved, keeping close to the ground. Ben Kasawi rose, came over to the side of the tent where I was, and chanced to drop his eyes at the wrong moment.

"Who is this?" he cried as he spied me. "There is something here. It seems to be —"

He got no further. As he spoke he had bent down to see me better, and this was such a fortunate position for me that I immediately availed myself of it. Before he could know what happened he got a blow that doubled him up like a jackknife. The next moment I was on my feet and had his companion by the throat. There was a brief, silent struggle, then I got my right arm free and patted my friend, "the monster," on the head so decidedly that he took a nap on the spot. Putting my hands to my lips I trilled "krrraaaa-rr," not loudly, yet so clearly that it could be heard at some distance. It sounded precisely like the vulture when half aroused from sleep, and was the signal for the lieutenant and the old "Onbaschi" to bring up the "Asaker" to surround the camp. Ben Nil, hearing the signal, rushed into the tent, as we had agreed.

"Are you strong enough to carry a man?" I asked.

"If he isn't quite a giant. Where is he?" asked my plucky little follower.

"There are two; take this fellow, and follow me."

I took Ben Kasawi and went ahead, Ben Nil coming after with "the monster." We went directly to the place where the lieutenant must first appear, and laid our burdens down. It was but a few moments before the other two appeared, followed by the "Asaker." Without losing a moment I addressed them, speaking very softly, so that those on the outer edge of the circle we had formed had to have my words repeated to them. I said: "These two prisoners whom we have here are bound and gagged; they are unconscious, but will not remain so long. One of you must guard them, and I give him permission to kill them if they attempt to get away. The rest must follow me into the enemy's camp. There is a rock to which I will lead you where they have stacked all their arms. We are going to creep there, noiselessly and in single file, steal away their guns, and return here. Ben Nil is to come after me, then the lieutenant; after us the 'Asaker,' each two feet behind his predecessor. You will all do precisely as I do, rising when I do, crawling when I do. Only a noise can make us fail, so let it be the duty of each man to avoid the slightest rustle. Now, then: forward!"

Our Indian-like march began, and it would have been impossible for any body of men to carry out their instructions more faithfully than did my "Asaker." When we were fifty feet from the rock I lay down and crept slowly, softly up to the rock, Ben Nil and the rest doing likewise in their appointed places. At last I came to the place where the guns lay. I seized one, handed it to Ben Nil; then another, and so on till the last gun of the pile

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was in our hands. Then we turned, and in reverse order, I coming last of all, crept back to our prisoners.

We found them just regaining consciousness. I took the gag out of Ben Kasawi's mouth, and setting my knife at his breast, said: "Not a loud word, or you are a dead man. I have brought away all your arms; your men can do nothing to save you. You are in my power."

The wretch turned white to his lips; he was as frightened as a cowardly bully who beat a woman would naturally be in the face of danger. "Effendi, spare me! I will give you all the slaves!" he cried.

"They are not yours to give," I replied. "I came to set them free, and they are freed. But I am anxious to avoid bloodshed; if you will do as I desire you shall not die, but shall be delivered over to the Reis Effendina for judgment."

His whole face brightened, for he well knew the delay and uncertainty of Egyptian justice. "Speak; your will is mine," he said.

"Command your men to yield themselves our prisoners, as they must do in any case, without resistance, and I pledge you my word I will have none of you executed."

"It shall be done; send one of your followers to call them forth," he said.

Ten of the "Asaker" went over near the camp, and putting their hands to their lips, cried: "Rada! Men, awake! Come forth!"

The entire camp aroused into sudden activity. The men of the slave caravan came out of their tents, and at the same time the Fessarah women appeared, unveiled, with their long hair streaming as they marched toward us chanting a wild psalm of triumph.

When the men had come up with us in obedience to their leader's summons, in a few bitter words he explained to them that they were in my power, and he had agreed to yield them up prisoners on my promise that they should be taken to the Reis for judgement. Then he added a few rapid words in a dialect that I did not understand. "Effendi," whispered Ben Nil hurriedly, "he has bidden some of them escape to warn Ibn Asl not to come this way."

"If one moves from this spot he is a cripple; I will shoot him!" I shouted. An instant later I saw a movement in the rear line of men and heard a shout of warning. A man was running at top speed toward the rocks. My shot whistled after him, and he dropped with a howl of pain as the bullet shattered the bone of his leg. Still undeterred by his fate another attempted to escape, and I crippled him, and yet another with like result. After this the man who was apparently the "Onbaschi" of the band turned to me with a snarl of hatred like a mad dog's. "Effendi, you have taken away our arms," he said, "and we are in your power. But do not imagine that we shall be killed; no judge in Egypt will thus delight you, and though to-day is yours, our turn will come."

At this moment a howl arose which could come from no other than Selim, the bold. "Effendi, Effendi! A man has knocked me down and escaped," he cried.

"You unutterable idiot, why didn't you shoot him?" I yelled, rushing after the fugitive, who was already out of my range. And as I ran I heard Marba cry out wonderingly: "Selim el Fallah, el Oschabani — Selim the outcast, the coward! He was driven front the tribe of Fessarah for his cowardice! Effendi, how came such a man with you?"

The fugitive had much too long a start for me to catch up with him, and the ravine afforded him so many hiding places that it was only too easy for him to escape. When I found that there was no hope of capturing him I returned in a fury of rage against Selim, through whose stupidity I knew too well that we should never catch Ibn Asl on the morrow, for the man who had escaped was certainly gone to warn him of his danger.

As I came upon the scene of our recent triumph the first thing that met my eyes was the bodies of Ben Kasawi and his hideous comrade pierced with a knife and quite dead. Our "Asaker" stood keeping at bay their followers, from whom rose a murmur of curses and hatred. My eyes sought Marba for the explanation of the tragedy. There the girl stood proud and motionless, the fatal knife still in her hands.

"Yes, it was I who did this thing, Effendi," she said "You had told me that they were to be delivered to the Reis and we know too well what Egyptian justice is. Punish me if you will. He had struck me, and the stripes could only be washed away in his blood. I leave the others to you; these two were mine. Ask my people, ask your 'Asaker,' whether I have done right! I repeat: punish me if you will." She offered me the knife; I waved it away with repugnance. "Whose is it?" I asked.

"Mine," said Ben Nil.

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"Did she steal it from you?"

"No, she asked for it, and told me for what she asked it, and I gave it to her freely, for she has fulfilled the law of the desert. They have deserved death a hundred times, but the most the law would have given them was the bastinado. It is good for a people to have its own laws; Effendi, respect ours. But if you punish Marba, punish me also, for I have had a share in the blood of these criminals." He went over and stood by the maiden, as if to shield her.

I stood silent, considering for a few moments, while the slave-dealers' men murmured and called on me to avenge the murder. I could not help seeing that the effect of this act on the others would be good, and that the punishment so richly deserved would not have been administered by the law. Besides, in the eyes of these people it was not a murder, but simple justice according to their code, and what right had I to impose on them the laws of a civilization which they had not attained? And, most of all, I was influenced by the fact that it would be most unwise to antagonize my "Asaker" when so much remained to be done, and I must keep them under my control till these women were returned to their land.

So at last I said: "I will leave the decision as to your guilt in Allah's hand. He must judge you, for it is beyond my power. I will believe that you have done what you considered right; you are forgiven."

The women's voices rose in a shrill shout of jubilation, broken by the dull growl of menace from the followers of the dead men. The lieutenant had been watching this scene with a most gloomy face, and now he came to me and said low: "Effendi, I would rather face ten hungry lions than conduct these female devils across the desert. Let us divide our duties; you take charge of the slaves, and I will bring our prisoners to the Reis Effendina."

"Why," I said, laughing, "these women are not devils. I would willingly lead them anywhere. Be sure that as they have required the lives of these beasts who so wronged them, they would cheerfully lay down their own for us who have saved them."

"Maybe," said the lieutenant dubiously, "but I don't like the prospect. Take them to their fathers and husbands, Effendi, and let me have charge of men, for these long haired, chanting, big-eyed beauties give me chills every time I look at them."

"So be it," I laughed. "It is better that we divide our work in any case. Give me twenty 'Asaker' and I will convoy these weak, but awful, creatures to the Fessarah and receive the blessing which you are afraid to share. But one thing I ask of you in return: take Selim with you, for I can stand him no more, nor if, as Marba said, he was expelled from his tribe for cowardice, would the journey be agreeable to him."

So thus it was arranged. We buried the leader of the cruel band in the sand, loaded our pack camels, according to the division we had made, and when the sun was high the lieutenant and I parted with much good will on both sides.

The women were delighted that I was to conduct them to their homes, and we started with happy hearts on our journey. Ben Nil, of course, went with me, and the last words I heard as my camel swung off in his easy gait were from Selim. "Effendi," he said, "I will await thee at Khartum. The Beni Fessarah are not worthy to have such a renowned warrior as I am to visit them. But my protection shall not fail thee, for I will pray to the Prophet that he will take care of thee, and reunite us in a day on which our joy shall know no bounds."

CHAPTER XII. SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT

IT was a long and tedious journey to the dwelling—place of the tribe of the Fessarah, but we made it without adventure. I had restored my charges to the arms of their kindred, had been blessed with all the choicest blessings of this world and the world to come, and had parted from the grateful people laden with gifts, and was now taking the shortest route to Khartum, where I was to resign my "Asaker" to their rightful commander, the Reis Effendina, Achmed Abd el Iusaf.

It was not long after the rains, and the savannah, which at that season is covered with verdure in the northern and western part of Kordofan, although later it resembles a barren desert, was still so green that had I been mounted on a horse instead of a "hedschin," as riding camels are called, I should have thought myself back in one of our own Western prairies.

Thanks to the juicy grass, we were able to ride longer than usual before seeking water for our beasts, but when we came to the "bir atschahn," which means "thirsty lake," and is so called because during the dry season it lacks water, it was high time that we filled our skins again and watered our camels. I should never have found the lake, for it lay in the midst of the flat savannah, with no tree or shrub to mark the spot, but it was well known to our guide, whom the Fessarah Sheik had sent to conduct us to Khartum, and who knew every foot of the country as well as he knew the long Arabian gun which he carried. This gun was the idol of his heart; it was never out of his hand, and he loved to talk about it. As we sat down by the edge of the lake he caressed it lovingly and said: "Did you ever see such a work, Effendi? Is it not marvelous?"

The barrel of the gun was inlaid with ivory in a design that I could not make out, so I answered discreetly: "It's fine, really magnificent! But what is it?"

"What is it?" he cried. "What a question! Don't you see what it is? Here, look at it closely." And he held the barrel under my very nose.

I did my best to make out what the thing was, but in vain; it was not an inscription, not a picture — it was absolutely nothing.

"You are blind!" cried its owner. "May Allah enlighten your eyes! But you are a Christian, so it is not strange that you do not recognize the figure; a believing Moslem would have known at a glance what it was. Can't you see that it is a head?"

A head! There was not the least trace of one; at most, it might have been taken for the unformed head of a hippopotamus. So I shook my own head.

"You cannot? Allah, wallah, tallah. It is the head of the Prophet, who sits in the highest heaven."

"Impossible! There is no sign of a head here. Where is the nose?"

"There is none, Effendi. The Prophet needs no nose; he is the purest of spirits, possessing in himself ten thousand sweet odors."

"Where is the mouth?"

"It is lacking, for the Prophet needs no mouth; he speaks to us through the Koran."

"Well, I don't see the eyes."

"Why should there be eyes? The Prophet needs not to see, for before Allah all things are open."

"I've been looking for the ears, but I cannot find them."

"Because there are none. The Prophet does not need to hear our prayers, for he himself wrote them for us before we were born."

"Where is the beard?"

"There is none. Who would dare profane in ivory the beard by which we swear our most sacred oaths?"

"Then there is nothing of the head here but the brow?"

"Not that, either. The brow is the seat of the spirit; it must not be represented."

"Do you mean there is nothing there at all?"

"Nothing at all," he nodded complacently, "yet I know every feature of the face. The artist who carved this knew not the command that we should not make the image of a man. He had seen the Prophet only in spirit, for

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the gun is very ancient; it was made before the Prophet was born."

"That can't be, for then powder was not in use."

"Effendi, do not deprive me of the glory of possessing such a gun. Why should there be powder? If Allah wills it so, a man can shoot without powder."

"I admit that Allah can work miracles; here there seems to be two; first, a shotgun made before powder was invented, and, secondly, a portrait of the Prophet made before he was born."

"I have already told you that the artist saw the Prophet in spirit. It was a vision, and therefore this is a vision gun."

"Ah, a vision gun! That is good. I don't believe there is another existing."

"Yes, it is the only one. You are right, and I am glad that at last you see its value. It is sacred to me; it has come down to me from father to son from the artist, whose descendant I am; I shall leave it to my oldest son. It does not shoot straight; I can never aim directly at what I wish to shoot, it must point a little higher, a little lower, or to the left or the right, but I will not have a new barrel put in, for it would be sacrilege, and it is enough to own such a gun without hitting what I shoot at."

"That is a matter of choice; for myself, I should consider that the best gun which attained the end for which it was made."

"Which is what my gun does! My vision gun proves that my ancestor saw the Prophet, and that is more than enough; it does not matter how it shoots."

"And in the meantime," I cried, springing to my feet, "here comes a rider."

The man had ridden softly over the grass without our hearing him, and now dismounted close behind us.

"Sallam aale.kum! Will you permit me, sir, to water my camel at this lake?" he said, "and also slake my own thirst?"

"Aale.kum sallam! The lake is here for every one, and I cannot hinder you from using it if you will," I replied ungraciously, for he struck me unfavorably.

The stranger gave me a mistrustful glance, led his camel to the water, filled his water skin, and turned to me. "I am a peddler," he said before I could ask a question. "I ride from lake to lake to find those who may be camping along the way and learn what they need."

"You seem to be a novice in the business," I said. "An experienced merchant would come provided with wares, while you carry nothing."

"I return by the same route," he replied, scowling: "when I bring what is ordered. I carry little, because I do not wish to retard my camel's speed. Whence do you come? Are these 'Asaker' with you?"

I knew he had lied to me, and I felt too sure what he was to answer him truthfully, so I said: "I come from Badjaruja, and I came upon these 'Asaker' here; they allowed me to rest and refresh myself by the lake."

The corners of his mouth drew together in a derisive curve, but he acted as though he believed me. "I wish I could ask the 'Asaker' to be as good to me, but my time is so closely reckoned that I must resume my ride at once," he said, going over to his camel and mounting. Just as he was about to pass out of hearing he turned in his saddle and called to me: "Sallam, Effendi! You have told me whence you came, but I do not believe you. You have not told me who you are; I think I can guess, however, and you shall learn to know me better."

I remained lying quietly in the same position, and he waved his hand to me mockingly and disappeared from sight.

"What was the meaning of that?" cried our guide. "That was an insult. He did not believe you, and he guessed who you were! What do you think he wants?"

"My life, apparently, as well as yours and the 'Asakers'. There's going to be a fight, and as your vision gun doesn't obey you, perhaps you had better ride home again."

"Effendi, that is unkind! I was to conduct you to Khartum, and I will never leave you till I have done my duty. Why should you think of a fight? "The tribes hereabout are in profound peace at present."

"Because that merchant who just left us is a spy. I believe he comes from Ibn Asl, who seeks revenge for the rescue of your women and who may easily know that I am going to Khartum. Is there a wooded spot near here where they may be hiding?"

The guide had heard me with horror on his face, but he pulled himself together and said: "I know the very place. If we were to start at once we should get there a half-hour before sunset; it is a small forest of cassia trees."

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"Then come," I cried, starting up, "for I am convinced the band is waiting for us, and that spy has ridden on to tell them that he has found us."

We saddled, mounted, and rode rapidly away, following the trail made by the spy when he rode toward us. In half an hour we came upon another trail approaching from the right and uniting with the first one; I dismounted and satisfied myself that they were both made by the spy's camel, which "interfered," and so was easy to identify, and that he had ridden round about to return to the path by which he had come. The last tracks showed that he was riding very rapidly, confirming the theory that he was hastening to carry his news to his leader.

We continued our way, following the double trail, and after an hour came upon a place where the riders had halted. The grass was crushed, and an old trail of three camels, with a new one of one beast led easterly; a single trail ran toward the north and south.

"You see this proves that I was right," I said. "Our foes are in the cassia woods, and the leader had sent out a line of sentinels. Three men came here; two camped here, while the third, the spy we saw, rode farther. He came back announcing that he had found us, and rode on to inform the leader, while the other two went to recall the other sentinels from the north and south to the woods. Look at this crushed grass; the fellows must think we are either blind or fools. Since three men were sent in this

direction it is probable an equal number went in the other ways, which shows we shall have to deal with a considerable force. The trail shows that they are short sighted, but strong in numbers. I will leave it to you what we shall do. Shall we fight them, or shall we avoid them, which we can easily do, now that all the sentinels have been recalled to the woods?"

"Fight, fight!" rose the unanimous answer from all sides.

"Good! We will go to the left and come upon the woods from the north, while they are looking for us from the west. We must ride faster to make up for the extra distance."

We rode on as fast as our camels could run, and after a time came upon the trail of the other sentinels returning. We kept on northeasterly, then for two hours rode southerly, and at last saw a dark line against the horizon, which was the woods. Guided by our Fessarah friend, we approached the place from a point whence a larger force than ours might have been unseen.

The first thing to be done was to learn the plans of our foes, and the task of spying upon them I took upon myself. We hid our camels in a thick growth of balm of gilead trees, behind which no one would see them, and I made ready to reconnoiter. Laying aside my white helmet, I donned a dark garment, reassured Ben Nil, who feared to let me go alone, and started off. I crept through the thick undergrowth for what may have been a quarter of an hour, when it seemed to me that I heard voices to the left. I stood up and listened; yes, there really were voices, men talking not loudly, but yet with no attempt at especial caution. I crept up as near as was safe and recognized one of the voices. It belonged to our recent acquaintance, the spy, and the other was nothing else than the voice of Abd Asl, the father of the slave-dealer, the holy old fakir who had so nearly murdered Ben Nil and me.

"We will kill them all," he was saying amiably, "except the Christian; him we will spare."

"Why him?" asked the spy. "He should be the first to be killed."

"No, I will take him to my son; he shall suffer long and horrible torture. A quick death for him would not satisfy me. What sort of death would be the best for one who has slain our comrades and spoiled our plans?"

"Those Fessarah slaves would have brought heavy profits. You must cut off his hands and tongue, so that he cannot speak nor write, and can betray nothing. Then you must sell him to the most cruel Negro chief you can find."

"Not a bad idea. Perhaps we will carry it out; perhaps we shall think of a better plan. The foreign dog deserves the worst we can do, for with the devil's help he has discovered all our plans, and has escaped when we were sure we had him."

"Take care he does not escape this time!"

"Have no fear; it is impossible, and when the Reis Effendina has fallen into the trap my son has laid for him, and is even now executing, we shall have wound up the affairs of the entire gang."

I had heard enough and crept back to my comrades, not a little disturbed by the fakir's last words. Evidently I must get through this business quickly and hasten on to Khartum. "Now," I said to the "Asaker" crowding around me when I had repeated to them what I had heard and seen; "now, we are to creep upon them, surprise them, and

knock each man senseless with the butt of our guns.

We will not try to kill them, but if one gets a harder blow than we intend we must bear up under his loss. I will undertake the fakir and the spy. As soon as I break through the bushes follow me. There can be no commands given, for no one must speak; unless the surprise is complete they will conquer us, as they outnumber us. You must each knock down three or four foes, so you must be as quick as cats."

"Your plan pleases me, Effendi," said the guide as we started. "I cannot depend on my aim, but the butt of my vision gun will make these fellows see stars."

We reached the spot where I had been hidden without being seen, and found everything as it had been a short time before. It took a little time to place my men and indicate to them what each one was to do. Then I hid in a good position, and each of us kept his eyes fixed on his appointed prey. When I saw that everything was ready I sprang through the bushes into the clearing, turned to the right, and with two rapid blows knocked the fakir and the spy senseless. Behind me a mighty wind seemed to be rushing through the bushes — my "Asaker" were following me. A few feet from my victims sat four men, so stunned by my sudden appearance that they made no attempt to move. I knocked down the first one and the second one; the third attempted defense, but I disposed of him, nevertheless. The fourth tried to escape, but I knocked him down on the other three. I had taken care to strike with the flat side of the gun—handle, which stunned, but did not injure them. Then I looked around to see how the rest were getting on, for six men was my allowance. It was a scene never to be forgotten. The "Asaker" had obeyed my injunction and worked in silence, with the anticipated result, for this very silence had increased the horror of the onslaught. Beyond the fact that it is never pleasant to see men stricken down, it would have been a delight to the eye of a soldier to see how the "Asaker" performed their task. From the instant when I had sprung through the bushes, to that when the last foe had been laid low scarcely two minutes elapsed, and not a shot or a blow had our foes got in. This was the result of the surprise, such a complete, paralyzing surprise as it had never been my good luck to see. Even now, when it was all over, the "Asaker" remained quiet and looked to me to learn what was to be done next.

"Bind them all, quickly," I cried. "Take ropes, thongs, chains, strips of your clothing, anything. There is no more need of silence; you may speak."

Speak! What is the use of talking of speech in connection with African "Asaker" in such a case? If I had said, "You may howl," it would have been far from an adequate word for what followed. The twenty voices broke into unearthly yells; it sounded as though a hundred demons had broken loose — yet while they yelled they did not neglect to carry out my orders.

I naturally turned my attention to the fakir and his spy. There was plenty of material at hand for binding the prisoners, for every Bedouin carries rope with him during a long ride; and, besides, the long cords ornamenting and fastening their garments are useful in cases of necessity.

I sat down by my would-be murderer, who shut his eyes to avoid seeing me, either from rage or shame, it did not matter which. "Hail, O great and renowned saint!" I said. I am delighted to see you here, and I hope that you, too, are rejoiced to look upon my countenance."

"Curse you!" he growled half aloud, and without opening his eyes.

"You mistake; you meant to say Bless you! For I know how you have longed for me. You even sent out messengers to look for me. Unfortunately, this desire of yours would have been disastrous to me, for you would have shot down my 'Asaker' and cut off my hands and tongue, and sold me to the most cruel Negro chief."

"He is omniscient!" he exclaimed, opening his eyes in spite of himself to glance at his comrade, whose gaze did not wander from my face, on which it was fastened in a look of bitterest hatred. I nodded to the spy in a friendly way, and said: "You were quite right when you said that I should soon see you again, and learn to know you better. I hardly think you realized how truly you spoke. It was you who conceived the happy idea of cutting out my tongue and doing all the rest of those pleasant things you proposed, and you are not wrong if you anticipate finding me fully appreciative of your intentions."

"I do not understand you," he said. "Why am I bound? Why have you attacked us? I demand to be set free."

"We will fulfil your desire joyfully; you shall be relieved of your bonds when you are delivered over to the executioner. In the meantime meditate on the beauties of Nature around you, on the singular uncertainty of human

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plans, and on the terrors of death, which awaits you speedily." So saying, I walked away to arrange for our night camp, well-pleased that at last the murderous old humbug of a fakir was come to the end of his rope.

CHAPTER XIII. THE REIS EFFENDINA IN DANGER

I SEATED myself by the lake to eat my supper. Ben Nil and I were alone; the young fellow ate hastily and waited with ill-concealed impatience for me to be through. I felt sure that he was waiting to speak to me of the fakir's fate, and hardly had I put the last morsel in my mouth than he said: "Effendi, I must respect the meal hour, but, now that you are finished, I may speak. You have promised this old fakir to me."

"If you mean what I think you do, I made no such promise," I replied.

"You have told me that you overheard him speaking of a trap laid by Ibn Asl for the Reis, which you would discover from him; discover it, if you can, Effendi, and deliver him over to me, for by our customs and laws I have the right to punish him."

"Allah will punish him," I said. "Listen to me, Ben Nil; he is a graybeard, a feeble man, with no power to defend himself. Have you the heart to thrust a knife into his breast?"

"He had the heart to bury you and me alive in a tomb, and to-day he had planned to commit more than twenty murders. If you are merciful to him, you sin against Allah, who is your God as well as mine."

"That is true," agreed the leader of the "Asaker." "We were all of us to be slain at his hands, and we all have a right to claim the blood of this wholesale murderer."

"Right! That is right," cried all the "Asaker," who had come up to hear my decision. "Do you hear, Effendi?" asked the leader. "Will you take away the rights of us all? If you do you must be prepared for us to assume them ourselves."

I had already thought of this, for I knew the soldiers were furious against our prisoners; only the debt of gratitude they owed me had prevented them talking matters in their own hands from the first, and tearing Abd Asl limb from limb. It would be useless for me to attempt to enforce obedience on this point till we got to Khartum, and if my authority were set aside in this case it would never be reestablished. Resolving to temporize, I said: "Will you consider it just if I give the fakir into Ben Nil's hands, to deal with as he sees fit?"

"Perfectly just," assented the leader, while the "Asaker" repeated the words.

"Then, Ben Nil, he is yours," I said to my young lieutenant. "But before you deal with him I must try to find out what the plot is against the Reis Effendina. We will drag the prisoners, or, rather, the fakir and the spy, to one side, and you shall sit down in front of them to guard them. I will creep around behind them, and when I am concealed you shall withdraw, leaving them, as they will think, alone. I hope that they may speak of Ibn Asl's whereabouts, and of his plans; it is useless to question either of them, for they will answer, of course, but it would be folly to expect to learn the truth."

Ben Nil agreed to this plan gladly, and we carried it out. Certain of the "Asaker" dragged the old fakir and his spy over to a thick group of balm of gilead trees, and Ben Nil came in a few moments and sat down before them on guard. Covered by the trees and shrubs, I passed around behind the prisoners, and lying down, crawled up, within hearing distance, seen, of course, by Ben Nil, whose face was toward me, but unseen and unheard by them. When Ben Nil saw that I had taken up my position he rose, wandered up and down restlessly, and finally sauntered off with the air of a person who was weary and suspected no danger. No sooner did the prisoners see that they were left to themselves than they began to talk.

"Quick, quick, before he comes back!" exclaimed the spy. "Have you thought of any plan of escape?"

"None whatever," said the older sinner, grimly.

"But we must concoct one!"

"I know of none. May Allah burn this accursed Effendi in the deepest pit of torture! If only you could get away! You are young, and how quickly could you fly to the Oschefireh (island) Hassanieh and alarm my son! He would come down the Nile with his followers and strike across to us from Makani or Katena, where he has left his ship, and set us free. The Reis Effendina would escape my son in that case, for he has him entrapped in the Oschefireh, where there are thick, dark woods, past which the Reis can never come alive. But I am certain my son would postpone his revenge on the Reis Effendina to rescue his father and capture this accursed giaour, whom he hates a thousand times more. However, since you cannot escape, what is the use of thinking of what might be?"

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Fortune had favored me; whatever might be said after this was not important, so I began to retreat, seeing which Ben Nil sauntered up and once more resumed his post.

The discovery that I had made altered the plans of our journey, for instead of pushing on directly to Khartum I must go to this island of which Abd Isl had spoken, and do what I could to rescue the Reis Effendina from the danger threatening him. Evidently, too, this danger was imminent, and there was no time to lose. I dispatched an "Askeri" to take Ben Nil's place guarding the prisoners, and summoned that faithful friend to me. Ben Nil thought I had sent for him to speak of his revenge on the fakir, now that I had done that for which I had stipulated before the old man should be killed. Without waiting to hear what I might say, he saluted me with the words: "Effendi, as I sat before that hoary old sinner I considered that it was, as, you say, a serious matter to take life, and that wicked though he is, this man is old. You are right; it is unworthy of my strength to kill a graybeard, and I will leave him to the justice of Allah and his earthly judges."

"Spoken like a brave man, for he only deserves the name who spares weakness, and shows mercy to the helpless," I cried, clasping the young man's hand heartily, delighted to find better counsels prevailing with his untutored sense of right and wrong. "And now, listen to what I have to tell you." And I repeated to Ben Nil the conversation I had heard.

It might be too late to warn the Reis Effendina, but the attempt must be made, and if it were too late he must be rescued from the hands of Ibn Asl. It would be impossible to make anything like speed, encumbered with prisoners twice our own number; these must be left behind, and, though I should have greatly preferred intrusting the command of my little force to Ben Nil than to any one else, I could not make this Journey quite alone, and there was no one else whom I would be willing to take with me. So I delegated my authority to the leader of the "Asaker," reluctantly and anxiously, but realizing that it was better that the prisoners should escape than that the Reis Effendina should be sacrificed. The Fessarah guide would be a valuable assistant to the "Askeri" leader, and was to conduct the caravan to the village of Hegasi, which lay near the island of Hassanieh, where I was to await them. And thus having arranged matters as best I could, Ben Nil and I set out on our desperate enterprise of rescuing the Reis Effendina.

The Oschefireh Hassanieh was seventy-five good miles from the lake where we had captured Abd Asl; our splendid camels covered the distance in two days, but they were so tired as they neared the end of the journey that we were obliged to let them go slowly. It was toward evening when we reached Hegasi, which is a miserable little hamlet consisting of a few huts, lying high on the bank of the Nile, apparently well protected from the river's inundation. A road led down to the river from the village, ending at the place where the boats landed and camels were watered, such places being called on the Upper Nile "mischrah."

I was glad to see the river again, for I had not caught a glimpse of it since I had gone to the rescue of the Fessarah. We led our camels down to drink, not less glad than their masters to see Father Nile at the end of their long journey. Just above the "mischrah," on the height, sat a man who did not appear to belong to the village. He was better clad than the dwellers in Hegasi, and was fully armed. No one knew anything about him, beyond the fact that he had arrived early the previous day, having been rowed ashore from a ship which had passed up the river; that he had taken up this position as soon as he had come, apparently watching for a ship, and that he had a fleet horse ready saddled below; evidently, as soon as he espied whatever he might be awaiting he was to ride fast to carry tidings to some one. I inquired if a ship which was striking in appearance, being neither a "dahabijeh" nor a "noquer," an old craft, had passed, and on being told that it had not, felt most uneasy, for no one could have failed to notice the Reis Effendina's ship from her peculiar build, and if she had not been seen it showed she had not passed beyond Ibn Asl's reach. Putting this fact with the presence of the sentinel on the height, I felt sure that he was an emissary of the slave-dealer's, watching for the Reis, and I resolved to try what I could do with him.

Ben Nil lay in the grass watching the doings of the villagers; I sauntered up the height toward the stranger, who was eyeing me sharply.

"Allah send thee a happy evening," I said, when I had come up with him, showing by the formal politeness of the unabridged greeting that I wished to be especially agreeable.

"Happy evening," he responded curtly.

"I have no net with me to protect myself from river gnats," I said. "Is there any place in the village where I can get one?"

"I do not know. I do not belong here."

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"Then you, too, are a stranger? May Allah guide your journey."

"And yours. Whence come you?"

"From Khartum," I replied, forced to deception.

"What are you?"

I tried to look very crafty, as I replied hesitatingly: "I deal in everything, but chiefly in —" I interrupted myself with a gesture intended to convey that I had said more than I meant to.

"In forbidden wares?" the stranger asked eagerly.

"If they were forbidden how could I admit it?"

"You could safely tell me; I would never betray you: and how can a man do business if he never speaks of it?"

"There is no chance of doing business now."

"There might be. I like discreet and silent men. What have you come here for?"

His manner had become eager and very friendly. I saw my conjecture was right, and I was succeeding in making him think me a slave-trader, like his master.

"I came to purchase," I said.

"To purchase what?"

"That," I answered, nodding and laughing mysteriously.

"Let us speak frankly; in any case, you may trust me. Have you ever heard of Ibn Asl?"

"The greatest of us — the famous slave-dealer?" I added, as though correcting myself.

"You were going to say the greatest of us!" cried the man, triumphantly. "Tell me frankly: would you like to buy slaves, and have you money?"

"Frankly, then, that is my errand, and I have plenty of money. What of Ibn Asl?"

"He is near here, and he can sell you what you want. I will take you to him."

"But Ibn Asl does not know me, nor I him. It would be putting my head into the lion's jaws if he distrusted me, or objected to my coming."

"Can you not give us proof that you are what you claim to be? If you are a slave-dealer you must know some of Ibn Asl's associates."

"I have met his father, Abd Asl, and I know the Mokka-dem of the Kadirine in Cairo; Abd el Barak would remember me, I am sure." And indeed I was, for he had scarcely forgotten a man who had snatched his two child slaves from his very hands.

"Is it possible! Then I am the more rejoiced that we met. You will find yourself among friends. We will start after the 'Aschia.' I must wait here till that hour, for I am watching for the ship of the Reis Effendina, which must pass this way, and to destroy which Ibn Asl is hidden down the river."

"I will go with you gladly. The Reis Effendina is the agent of the government to stop our trade, is he not? Will Ibn Asl catch him, think you?"

"It is absolutely certain, and when he does we shall never be troubled with the Reis again. Abd Asl may return at any moment. He has gone to capture a Christian Effendi who is returning from the Fessarah country, where he has taken women of that tribe whom Ibn Asl had captured, and this accursed cur rescued."

"A Christian? What has he to do with us? And when Abd Asl has captured him what is to be his fate for such meddling?"

"He has nothing to do with us, but he is a friend of the Reis Effendina. As to his fate, it will be the most horrible that we can devise. See, the sun is setting; we must say the 'Mogreb.'"

As I had been transformed into a Moslem slave-trader, it would never do for me to sit bolt upright while all other faithful followers of the Prophet knelt in prayer, so I went back to Ben Nil and knelt beside him.

As soon as he had finished reciting the prayer I whispered to him: "Attend to what I say! I am a slave-dealer from Suez, and am called Amm Selad. You are my servant, named Omar. We know Abd Asl and the Mokka-dem from whom we have bought slaves. We have just come from Khartum, and are bound up the Nile."

"Very well, Effendi," replied the young man.

"In heaven's name, don't use that word, or we are lost! We are going to Ibn Asl to purchase slaves. It is a

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dangerous undertaking; if you have any desire to be out of it I will pardon your returning alone."

"Sir, I will go whither you go, and if it is into danger, so much the less will I forsake you."

"Good! You are a brave, true fellow. I expected no less of you. Now I must return to my new friend; in an hour, at the 'Aschia,' we are to start. We are waiting for the Reis' ship."

For another hour I sat on the height, my eyes straining up the Nile no less anxiously than my companion's, though not anxious for the same end. If the Reis did appear before I had a chance to warn him he was certainly lost. The moments slipped past, and he did not come. The "Aschia," the prayer ordained for the hour after sunset, was said, and we mounted and began the ride which was to bring me, for life or death, into the presence of the dreaded Ibn Asl. For an hour we rode directly southward into the interior, then we turned eastward toward the river again. Some trees came in sight, increased in number, and at last we found ourselves in a wood. Our guide left us to wait at the outskirts of the woods, while he rode on to announce our coming to Ibn Asl.

"Are you afraid, Effendi?" whispered Ben Nil when we were alone.

"No; but I am most anxious," I replied.

"And I also," he said. "If we are recognized we are lost."

"There is no one there who knows us; still, we must be exceedingly cautious. Whatever happens, we must not allow ourselves to be separated, for two are not too many to protect each other."

Our guide was not gone more than ten minutes; he returned, bowed, and said:

"My lord is ready to receive you."

It was pitch black night, and under the trees not even the light of the stars penetrated; but after we had gone a few feet we saw the light of camp-fires coloring the water of the Nile a golden red.

Straight ahead was a clearing, in which all vegetation had been cut down. In the middle burned a fire, around which we saw more than a hundred men, half clad, and of all shades of color. At one side, a little distance from the larger fire, burned another, and here sat three men, who rose as we approached. One was middle-aged, heavily-built, and wore a full brown beard; I knew him in a moment instinctively as Ibn Asl, the renowned slave-dealer.

CHAPTER XIV. IN IBN ASL'S CLUTCHES

"SALLAM," I said, greeting Ibn Asl as I advanced.

He made a motion commanding silence, and demanded my name.

"Amm Selad, from Suez," I replied.

"And this young man?"

"Omar, my assistant," I said, not daring to use the word servant lest Ben Nil should not be allowed to remain with us.

"How many slaves do you wish to buy?"

"As many as I can get."

"Where is your market for them?"

It would never do to allow him to cross-examine me in this way if I wished to impress him with my importance, so this time I replied curtly: "Wherever I get my price. Do you expect me to reveal my business secrets to every one?"

"Amm Selad, you answer me very independently."

"Do you look for timidity in a man of my calling? Is it customary to question a guest in this fashion, without so much as asking him to be seated?"

"Who said that you were to be my guest?"

"No one, but I took it to be a self-evident fact."

"Not so self-evident as you think. I must be cautious."

"And I equally so. If you don't like me you need not bother yourself about me, for I certainly shall not exert myself to please you, and can take my departure. Come, Omar." I turned away, as did Ben Nil. Ibn Asl stepped up to us quickly and laid his hand on my arm, saying: "Stop! You don't understand the situation. Who so comes here to me cannot go away."

I looked laughingly into his face, and said: "And if I go, nevertheless?"

"I shall know how to hold you."

"Try it!" As I said this I seized Ben Nil's hand and sprang into the woods, drawing him after me. Fortunately, he was quick-witted enough to move as fast as I did, and the action was so unexpected to Ibn Asl that we were off before he knew what had happened. When he realized that we had disappeared into the profound darkness of the trees he cried: "Seize them, you men! Go after them!"

Every one that had legs to run on ran into the woods, searching wildly here and there. I went but about twenty feet, and drew Ben Nil after me into a covering of the thick stubble where the long "Omm Sufah" grass that abounds at that part of the banks of the Nile had been cut down. As the voices of the searchers died away around us I said: "Now we will go back."

"What! Are you not going to escape?" whispered Ben Nil.

"No, indeed! I only wanted to show Ibn Asl that I don't intend to be ordered to obey him. Now they are all out of sight; come."

We crept back to the campfire, where we caught up two pipes that the men had dropped, filled and lighted them, and waited. In a few moments some one spied us, and cried in amazement: "There they are, sitting by the fire smoking!" This cry was repeated from mouth to mouth, and they all came scuttling back, while, like Charlotte in Thackeray's verses, we quietly "went on cutting bread and butter" — in this case the pipe took the place of the viands.

"Allah achbar — God is great!" cried Ibn Asl. "What ails you? We are hunting for you, and you sit here!"

"I wanted to show you that if I choose to go away I can go; you could not have got us back then. But I came here to transact business with you, and I have no desire to go till it is done." I said this so confidently that his face, up till then so stern and forbidding, broke into a laugh and he said, shaking his head: "Amm Selad, you are the first specimen of your kind I have ever seen, but I like impudence, and you please me. Be seated with me."

From this moment my acquaintance with the chief villain of the gang of slave captors made great strides, and

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by the time he had asked me the details of my past life, and I had entertained him with adventures that made me feel I ought to be at home writing for the daily papers, such unsuspected talent in inventing I found myself possessed of, and he had allowed us to partake of a bountiful supper with him, he had concluded that I was really what I represented myself to be and a man after his own heart besides — a compliment I was grateful to feel was undeserved. For, as his friendship and confidence in me waxed, he related to me the history of his own life, a history which made me shudder, for this man had never known what a heart or conscience meant. And in the course of his relations he reached the story of his capture of the Fessarah women, and then I came into the history in my own person, for he told me how the stranger Effendi had rescued these captives, and how he had sent his father to overtake him, and that he was waiting to cut off his limbs one by one, and deprive him slowly of eyes, ears, nose, lips and tongue. This was pleasant hearing, considering that I was even then in his power, and that any chance at any moment might betray my identity to him! But, though he had talked to me so freely and cordially, and had spoken of being waiting there to carry out a plot he had laid to entrap the Reis Effendina into certain death, I had not been able to lead him up to telling me what form his plans had taken, and dared not press the point for fear of arousing his suspicion. So I had not accomplished much when the time came to turn in for the night, although he did me the honor to invite me to share his cabin aboard his "noquer," the "Lizard," an honor not extended to Ben Nil in spite of a hint, which was the most I could venture, that I should like to have him with me. We crept under the mosquito netting, which Ibn Asl held up for me, and he lighted a torch just long enough for me to see where I was, for the heat is too great and the insects too many in that region for a light to be comfortable in a close cabin. In that brief time, however, I saw that a small ship's chest of tools stood near the conch assigned to me.

Ibn Asl and I laid down each in our appointed place, but not to sleep, for after a few moments' silence the rascal spoke: "If you are not inclined to sleep I shall be glad to talk longer; you can lie as late in the morning as you will." This gave me the opportunity I was waiting for, and I seized it: "I am not able to sleep, so I shall be glad to chat.

"Why are you not able to sleep; are you uncomfortable?"

"Oh, no; but I know you are awaiting the Reis Effendina, and there will be a fight."

"Are you afraid of a fight?"

"Not I! I have smelled powder often, and I am far from a bad shot. I should like to take a hand when the row begins."

"There won't be any powder in this case, for it must be done in perfect stillness. But if you feel like breaking the heads of a few 'Asaker' I have no objections."

"So it's to be blows, and not shots! It is just the same to me; I shall gladly be there in any case. But how are we to get from your 'noquer' on board the Reis Effendina's ship?"

"We shall take good care not to get on board. Fire is better than powder or blows. Listen to me; I'll tell you my plan, for it can do no harm, and I am proud of it. Did you see those piles of 'Omm Sufah' grass on deck?"

"Of course; they are big enough."

"I had it cut down and laid there ready. Did you see the casks which are close to the grass?"

"Yes."

"They are filled with destruction to the Reis. They are casks of oil."

"Oil! Ah, I begin to understand! But how can you get this oil on board his ship?"

"On board! I don't mean to get it on the ship, but to it. When my sentinel comes from Hegasi to tell me the Reis is there I shall divide my force and place half on each side of the island. When the ship has come down so far that she cannot escape, the oil will be emptied in the river and the dried grass thrown on top of it. The oil will spread over the water and surround the ship in a sea of fire, from which she cannot possibly escape. What do you think of my plan?"

I was horror-stricken, but controlled myself sufficiently to say: "It is magnificent, wonderful! I don't believe another man on earth could have conceived it. Most people would have put an end to the Reis alone, but you have thought out a way to burn all his crew and soldiers alive. It is wonderful!"

"Yes, I am proud of this idea, and the best of it is that it cannot fail. But I am getting sleepy and we will try to sleep, and be fresh to enjoy the fine spectacle of the burning ship. Good rest. I will waken you if you steep too

late."

It was not likely that I should oversleep, nor sleep at all. What was I to do? Could it be possible that a human being had thought out such a fiendish scheme? One thing was certain; its execution must be prevented, but how? If Ben Nil and I could steal away, slip back to Hegasi and warn the Reis it would be the simplest and best plan, but I had no idea where Ben Nil was, and the risk and delay of looking for him was too great. There was but one thing to do, and I resolved to do it. I waited until Ibn Asl's regular breathing announced his slumber, and then I arose. Softly, slowly and most cautiously I lifted the mosquito net and crawled out on the deck. But before I left the cabin I groped in the chest of tools, found and pocketed a small gimlet, without which I could not carry out my plan.

There was no one in sight on deck; everything lay in the deep shadow of the half-light of the stars, silent and motionless. I made my way over to the casks and examined them. They stood close to the side of the ship, ready to be thrown over quickly. Each of the casks must have two holes made in it, one to let the air in, the other to let the oil out. I made the holes, taking care not to come in contact with the oil, for if I brought the slightest odor of petroleum back into the cabin on my clothes I was lost. It took me, perhaps, a quarter of an hour to accomplish my task. Then I washed the gimlet clean in the river, and crawled back to the cabin as carefully as I had left it. Not a movement indicated that Ibn Asl had been disturbed, and I lay down again to consider the danger that threatened Ben Nil and me when the discovery that the casks were empty was made. It was not a pleasant prospect that opened out before me, yet, in spite of it, my heart was light, for I had done what I came to do, had delivered the Reis Effendina, and the relief of that thought made me fall asleep in spite of the dismal outlook for ourselves.

I slept late, and was awakened by Ibn Asl calling: "Get up, Amm Selad! You must have slept enough, for the sun has long arisen, and there will soon be something for you to do; the Reis Effendina is coming."

This woke me thoroughly, and I instantly sprang up. I looked at him searchingly, but nothing in his face indicated that he knew what I had done.

"Yes, yes," he repeated, nodding his head. "The hour has come. Go above; your coffee is ready for you."

I went up, and as soon as I had taken my breakfast Ben Nil joined me. "You have slept long, sir," he said, reproachfully. "Have you forgotten what is to be done?"

"I have not only remembered it, but I have done it," I said.

"What do you mean? I have not been able to sleep at all for anxiety about the Reis Effendina. Two of the ship's officers spent the night with me, and they told me that the Reis was to be burned. Only think of it!"

"Ibn Asl told me the same thing; the oil was in those casks down below."

"For heaven's sake, what shall we do? Here is the Reis coming now, and there is the oil ready. It is awful, horrible! And yet you have slept, and not bothered about it at all."

"Don't jump at conclusions! It is not so bad as you think. I bored the casks in the night; the oil has all run out."

"Allah it Allah! Is that actually true?"

"Yes; it was not very difficult, and the oil must have been remarkably pure, or else this strong wind has blown away all odor of it, which is a fortunate thing for us."

"I can't see anything fortunate about it, sir. When it is discovered the suspicion will fall on us."

"Very likely; but who can prove anything?"

"Such people as these do not ask for proof; we must escape — escape this moment!"

"It would certainly be the best thing to do, if it could be done, but there is not the slightest chance of it now, with everybody on the alert, and in broad daylight."

Hardly had I spoken than Ibn Asl sprang up the ladder and came down upon us, with a very different face than I had last seen him wear. While several of his followers closed around us, he came up to me and said threateningly: "You did not expect this! You seem to have a long head, so I had to catch you craftily, but I have done it. You must be a fool to think you can deceive Ibn Asl "

"I am surprised at such words," I said. "By what right do you address me thus?"

"Oh, you don't know!" he sneered. "I have heard all that you have said. You have dared to empty my casks; you shall pay the full price of your treachery. You accomplished nothing by it, for a messenger has just come to me announcing that the Reis Effendina has marched by land taking his men from his ship. But you cannot be a slave dealer if you sympathize, and secretly try to rescue, this confounded officer of the government. What you

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are I will discover, and when I know I will pay my debt to you down to the last piaster. Bind them, men; you are my prisoners."

We were seized, and bound hand and foot, and so tightly that the flesh was cut by the ropes. Before I had a chance to expostulate with Ibn Asl, even had such expostulation been of any avail, he was summoned to the shore, where a rider had just dismounted from his camel, as we could see from where we lay, and had sent one of Ibn Asl's men after his master; evidently, he was a messenger.

It was not long before the slave captor returned, in worse humor than he had gone away. He did not look toward me, but said to his lieutenant: "My father and all his men have been captured by that accursed foreign Effendi, whom the devil has taken under his protection. That man who is now following me to the ship was one of them, and he has escaped and ridden here to tell me the tidings. How do I know that you, you humbugging slave dealer, you, Amm Selad, are not in collusion with this devil from across the seas?" he added, turning to me fiercely.

"You don't," I said, coolly. "There are a great many things you do not know; that is one of them."

"You dare answer me thus?" he cried, kicking me.

"You dare kick me because I am bound; wait, my turn will come."

A small boat came alongside at this moment, from which a man sprang lightly up the gangway. I should not have known him, although he was clad like the men who had been with Abd Asl, but my face was turned toward him as I lay, and as he advanced and saw me he stopped short, crying: "The Effendi and Ben Nil! Praise be to Allah and the Prophet that you have captured them; but why did you not tell me so?"

"Ben Nil! The Effendi! Allah achbar!" cried Ibn Asl, falling backward in his surprise and joy. Then bending over me with his face blackening with the rage that overpowered him, when he remembered all that had happened between us, he hissed: "You are in my power at last, at last! You shall be tortured by all the tortures the human brain can invent. Do you realize, do you know, you cur, what lies before you?"

"I know that in the Far West, whence I come, we are taught it is not polite to call names. I know, too, that if my case is desperate there is one who is no better off, and that is your father, who is old and fears death like a coward, or an old man." Ibn Asl tried to speak, but he could not, and foam stood on his black lips, mingled with blood as he bit them.

"Keep cool," I said. "If you kill me your father's blood is on your head, for I have ordered that if I am not back at a certain time he is to be executed. If you set Ben Nil and me free, uninjured, so shall you have your father back once more; if I die, he dies; if we suffer, so in like manner shall he suffer."

Ibn Asl sprang up, paced up and down the deck, vainly striving to get himself under control. I could see when he turned our way that a struggle between duty and what little natural affection the man had was going on within his breast. I watched the signs of it with intense interest and anxiety. At last, he came over to us and kicked me again with the concentrated force of the fight he had been going through. "I have decided," he said hoarsely, "if my father must die, then let him die; he has lived long enough, anyway. It is worth all other loss to gain the pleasure of torturing you, and I shall find a way of adding something to the pain I meant to inflict on you to pay for my father's death. Take these men and throw them into the prison; I will follow to see that they are safe."

Four big, bronze fellows took Ben Nil and me by our head and feet and carried us down somewhere into the hold of the ship. We were thrust, with blows and insults, into a place that seemed a sort of dark pit, and Ibn Asl followed immediately to test our bonds and make sure that he actually had us secure. Satisfied on this point, he stood astride of us like an evil Colossus of Rhodes, and laughed with diabolical joy over his triumph.

"Look at them! Look at the Effendi, who thought he was mightier than all the sons of the desert and the followers of the Prophet! Ibn Asl has shown him that there are men mightier than he! You dog, you son of dogs and beloved of Sheitan, the father of evil, I have you now! Lie there and wait till I am pleased to begin your slow killing, and meditate on the skill with which I shall torture you!" So saying, he turned away, bidding the guards beat us with their great whips if Ben Nil and I attempted to speak to each other. The door swung to behind him, the heavy bolts slipped into their place. We were alone, prisoners in the hands of Ibn Asl.

CHAPTER XV. SLIPPED THROUGH HIS FINGERS

FOR an hour, it may be — it seemed like an eternity — we lay in the utter darkness, not speaking, and unable to move.

At last we heard a slight scratching sound, which ceased, began again, and was followed by a light tapping. Then our door was shaken, but very carefully, and when we made no sound a voice whispered: "Effendi, do you hear me?"

"Yes," I replied.

"I have been appointed your guard. I am the man who brought you here from Hegasi yesterday. Ibn Asl would kill me if he knew that I had told you all that I did tell you during that hour when we were waiting to start. I beg you not to destroy me, but keep my indiscretion secret."

Ah, thank God! Here was a glimmer of light in the darkness! I had not thought again of certain private matters of Ibn Asl's of which he had told me, but I instantly resolved to use the advantage his chattering gave me.

"I am sorry, but I don't see how I can spare you," I said.

"You do not! Ah, Allah pity me! Will you not be merciful, you, a Christian?"

"A Christian does not love his life less than a Moslem."

"But you cannot save yourself by repeating what I have told you."

"You are mistaken; you said a great deal that I can turn to my account."

"O Allah! O Mohamed! Then I am lost!"

I made no reply, and for awhile he, too, was silent. I waited the effect of my threat. It was not long before I heard the light tap again, and my guard murmured. "Effendi, listen; what if you could escape?"

"That would be most fortunate, certainly, for you as well as for me, for then I should not have to betray you."

"It is impossible, absolutely impossible! You are bound, you will be guarded; and if these obstacles were removed how could you get away from the ship?"

"There is nothing in these three points to make my escape impossible. I only need some one to help me."

"It would be dangerous, Effendi."

"Not at all; the only thing the person must do is to bring me a thin, sharp knife, and plan with me the best time for me to use it."

There was a long pause; evidently he was considering. Then he said: "You shall have the knife as soon as I can come back here, and — hush! some one is coming!" It was Ibn Asl, who came with a clay lamp to see that we were still safe in his possession, and our bonds not unloosed in some miraculous way. The light of the lamp showed me that the fierce heat of the Sudan had warped the boards of the walls, opening cracks in them, many of which were wider than the thickness of a strong knife. I looked at the bolt; it was not one that would be hard to shove back. My heart beat so high in the joy of this discovery that I scarcely heard the insults with which Ibn Asl gratified his hatred by pouring upon me. His visit was brief, and when he was safely beyond hearing our fellow conspirator returned: "Effendi," he whispered, "the crew will be ashore to-night, and will not come aboard till late."

"Good! Will you see to it that some fellow who deserves punishment is on guard here when our attempt is made, so that when our flight is discovered at least no worthy person suffers for it? Where are our weapons?"

"In Ibn Asl's cabin. He will keep them for himself."

"I must get them, otherwise there would be no use in trying to escape. I want to reward you if you serve me well in this affair; nothing has been taken from our pockets. Ibn Asl evidently thinks he has us too secure to bother about robbing us till we are dead. At the last moment, when we are about to leave the ship and I know the attempt is a success, I will put money for you wherever you consider the best place."

"If you will be so good as to remember me, Effendi, there is no better place to leave your gift than at the head of the ladder, under the old palm fiber mat which lies there."

"So be it; get it as soon as we are off, or some one else may find it. When we are at a safe distance I will imitate the angry cry of the long-tailed monkey which abounds in these woods; that is a sound which will not

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attract attention. When you hear it you will know that we are safe; go get your reward."

"Thank you, Effendi; I hope that I may hear it, and know that you are safe. Here is the knife; make the attempt after you hear me pass here, and bid the guard watch you well. Farewell; Allah prosper your undertaking."

He drew the bolt very softly, slipped the knife through the door, closed it, made it fast again, and in a moment I heard him talking to one of the crew about the Reis Effendina having gone around by land, and the likelihood of Ibn Asl overtaking him.

The moments crept by. I heard the crew going ashore, and waited to see if our assistant in this desperate scheme would keep his word. Yes, he was faithful to his fear for his own safety, and the desire for gain; he came presently, tried the bolt and door of our prison, bade the guard watch us well, and went away. The time had come. I picked up the knife from the corner where I had thrown it lest Ibn Asl should visit us again and discover it, and shoved and rolled myself over to Ben Nil. My hands were tied to my back, and it was a dangerous thing to try to cut the ropes that bound his hands, for it was almost impossible not to cut him. Finding the knife—point with the fingers of the left hand, I thrust it into the ropes, and did succeed in cutting them. Ben Nil shook his hands free, and it was the work of but a moment for him to cut the thongs around his ankles, and liberate me. I thrust the blade of the knife through a convenient crack in the door and shoved back the bolt. We opened the door just far enough to admit our bodies and crept out. The guard had his back toward us as I came out, but turned in time to see Ben Nil. Before he could utter a sound I seized him around the throat, and he collapsed from lack of breath and fright. I bound him with his girdle, and gagged him with his fez.

The next step was to go above, a risky climb, which we accomplished safely. A fire burned on the shore, and lighted the deck just enough to guide us; by its light I saw that no one was about, and came fully on deck. I took from my wallet a sum of money which would generously requite our self-seeking friend for his share in our escape and hid it in the place he had designated. The most important part of our enterprise was to get our weapons, and we crawled as fast as we could on our hands and knees to Ibn Asl's cabin. We found them quickly, thrust them into our girdles, "And now for the boat," I whispered. "The tender lies under the bow; we must jump into her and row swiftly and silently up stream in the shadow."

We could not see whether or not the oars were in the boat, but trusted to finding them there, since we did not see them on deck. There was something white in the bottom of the boat, and my heart leaped for joy when Ben Nil called my attention to it, whispering that it was the sail. I sprang over the side of the ship first, and Ben Nil rose to follow me. The light of the fire blazed up that instant, and one of the men on shore discovered him. He took in the situation at a glance and gave warning, shouting: "The prisoners are out! The prisoners are out!"

"Run down the deck astern, Ben Nil," I said. "Dive off under the shadow of the sail and swim here; they must think we are hiding on the ship."

Without a moment's hesitation he obeyed me, and in five minutes' time I pulled him into the small boat and we began rowing swiftly, close to the opposite shore from the one where the crew had been sitting, under the shadow, made deeper by the light opposite.

In the meantime the crew were making all speed back to the ship. We heard them rushing up and down the deck, shouting, swearing, and above all the hubbub rose Ibn Asl's harsh voice roaring: "Where are they? Look, look for them! They are hiding in the cabin, the dogs! Catch them; quick, quick!"

We rowed up the stream, beyond the range of guns, and Ben Nil said: "You can give the cry you agreed upon, for we are safe."

"I know something better than that; I didn't think of it before," I said. "I am going to have a little fun with Ibn Asl." I had always been a bit of a ventriloquist, and at school used to entertain the boys that way. I felt like an uncommonly jolly schoolboy, who had escaped a rather severe punishment and could not resist the chance for a prank. Standing up in the boat I put my hands to my lips, threw my voice apparently on the shore Ibn Asl had just quitted, and cried: "Ibn Asl! Ibn Asl! come catch us!"

"The dogs! They are yonder," we heard Ibn Asl roar. "Shoot them, shoot them!"

Several shots rang out; then, making my voice sound as if it came from underneath the ship, I called: "Come down after us; come down!"

"He has a devil!" shrieked Ibn Asl at the top of his voice. "I always knew it! Now he has gone down below to his master."

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It was still too risky to keep up this sort of sport long. I resisted the temptation to try another locality, for I knew that at any moment they were likely to discover the loss of the boat. We bent to our oars, rowing for life and freedom, and soon had gone far enough to make it safe to hoist the sail. There was a strong breeze blowing on the river, just right for the little boat we had impressed into our service, and we sped away from our foes at a speed that soon made pursuit by a larger craft impossible.

It was late in the night when we approached Hegasi. Through the darkness a little light glimmered over the water, and soon we saw the hulk of a ship outlined in the starlight, and I recognized the graceful outline and three slender masts of "Esch Schadin," "The Falcon," the Reis Effendina's ship.

We drew in our little sail, and as we did so a voice from the dock shouted: "A boat, here on our starboard side." I whispered to Ben Nil, and we turned off as though we wanted to avoid being seen, whereupon another voice from the upper deck cried: "Stop, or I'll shoot."

At that moment the alarm bell of the "Falcon" sounded, and in an instant all hands came on deck. I did not dare carry the joke any further, but lay to obediently. "Whose boat is this?" asked some one, and I recognized the voice of the Reis Effendina. I had no idea he had returned to the "Falcon," and was overjoyed to hear him speak and know that he was safe. Not wishing him to guess that I was there, I whispered Ben Nil and he replied for me: "It is the tender of the 'Lizard,' Ibn Asl's ship." The effect of this information was electrical. Everybody uttered exclamations of surprise and rage, while the Reis said: "You are a bold man who announces such a fact without knowing to whom you speak. Come on board." We threw our rope up to the deck and were made fast. I had kept my face shrouded so far, and made Ben Nil climb on board first. Before he had fairly planted both feet on deck he was seized, and might have been roughly treated had I not followed immediately. As I appeared and threw off my hood the emir fell back a few steps and stared at me as if I had come up out of a grave. When he got his voice and recovered sufficiently to move, he clasped me in his arms with truly Eastern effusiveness.

"Effendi!" he cried. "You here! What a joy to see you safely back from the country of the Fessarah! I have feared for you, and I cannot tell you the happiness it is to see you though I do not understand how you have come by one of Ibn Asl's boats and men."

"It is a long story, emir," I replied. "This is not one of Ibn Asl's men, but my own true Ben Nil, of whom you have heard from your lieutenant."

Before I could say more a long, thin figure, with interminable legs, pressed through the crowd on deck, and a strident voice cried: "Effendi, O Effendi, my soul overflows and my heart leaps with joy that my eyes behold you once more! I have longed for you as a loving wife longs for her spouse. Without you my days have been dark as the ashes on the hearth when the fire is extinguished. Now new life rushes through my veins, and my wisdom and my courage shall again protect you. Welcome, Effendi!" This was a most poetical salutation, yet must I confess it? even with its flowery figures echoing in my ears, I did not feel unmixed delight in recognizing Selim!

We were given coffee, and sat down to relate our adventures, the young lieutenant who had been with me in the rescue of the Fessarah women being as glad to see us again as we were to meet him. It took all the rest of the night to tell the emir the history of the past two weeks, and I was interrupted many times with questions and exclamations, and cries of the emir's men to be led at once in pursuit of Ibn Asl.

"We really must start before dawn, you and Ben Nil and I. Time is precious. I think it would be well for us to separate, you to pursue Ibn Asl, while I ride back to meet my caravan, which I left to come and warn you. Ibn Asl will be mad with rage over our escape, and he will hasten after my caravan to set our prisoners free, with the hope at the same time of capturing us there again. My idea is that you can take your men around to intercept him and set a trap for him into which he must walk, with the double attraction of liberating his father, and getting me into his hands again to draw him. I feel sure that he will abandon the pursuit of you for the time, until he has accomplished this pretty piece of revenge."

"And your idea is that I am to head him off, and capture him? That is a well-conceived plan, Effendi. See, the stars are already beginning to pale; if you are ready we will start at once. This has been a most unsatisfactory excursion to me, but if it ends by giving into my hands the worst of all the slave captors, Ibn Asl, and that old hypocrite of a moss-grown villain, Abd Asl, his father, I shall feel that it is a success surpassing my wildest hopes. Come then, Effendi," added the Reis Effendina, or the emir, as we more properly styled him when we addressed him, laying his hand kindly on my shoulder. "Come. You are young, but I trust to you more than to myself to bring about this happy result."

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"Abd Asl we already have," I said, rising, "and Ibn Asl I feel confident of catching, if we are quick and crafty. I am ready, emir; let us start at once, for, as I have said, time is precious and we have not a second to waste."

CHAPTER XVI. THE CROCODILES REJOICE

HAVING arranged where we were to meet again, the Reis Effendina and I parted. Ben Nil and I had left our camels in Hegasi; they had had a long rest, and were fresh for the present journey. We rode all day, and the sun was but little above the western horizon when we came in sight of the trees which marked the lake appointed as the spot where I was to find my caravan.

As we rode into sight we heard a voice cry: "The Effendi!" and instantly a chorus echoed: "The Effendi! The Effendi and Ben Nil! Praise be to Allah, they come, they come!" All the "Asaker" ran toward us, shouting and trying to touch us. We had to dismount then and there, while the men pressed our hands and shouted in delight that was very pleasant to me to witness, for it proved that I was not regarded as a stranger, but had won their hearts.

Of course, the first thing was to give an account of our adventures, and we sat down with the old "Askeri" to whom I had intrusted the command, and recounted all that had befallen us since we left them to go to rescue the Reis Effendina. Abd Asl and his spy lay near us, a little apart from the other prisoners, and could hear all that I said. Abd Asl stood it as long as he could, and then broke out in scornful laughter. "You boaster!" he cried. "Everything you say is a lie; you cannot deceive us. No one was ever in the hands of my son and escaped."

"Take care what you say, if you wish to spare yourself the whip," I said, rising and going over to him. "Politeness is most becoming to a man in your situation."

"I will be silent now," he said with a snarl, "but you shall hear my voice, and that soon. You shall crawl in the dust before me. My son will come as our avenger, and destroy you utterly."

It was hardly worth while answering the empty threats of an old sinner completely in our power, so I turned away with a smile to explain to the "Asaker" leader the next move in a game I confidently hoped to win. We could only delay long enough to rest and refresh our camels at the lake, and then must immediately strike across to effect the conjunction with the Reis Effendina which was to ensnare Ibn Asl on his way to wreak his vengeance on me.

We got the prisoners on the camels, not an easy task, for they made it as difficult as they could, and swung off on the long-suffering beasts. I had not told any of the "Asaker" what lay before us, lest by chance the prisoners might get wind of it; but after we had ridden a great part of the night I ordered a halt, and getting my men around in a circle, told them what we hoped to accomplish. If I had said then that each one of them was to receive a thousand piasters their joy could not have been greater. To capture Ibn Asl and all his companions in his iniquitous trade by entrapping them! That was a thought which put new life into them. Each one wanted to be told the precise part he was to play in the drama, but I could not quite assign individual roles, since, until I had reconnoitered, I did not know myself exactly what was to be done.

Midnight passed without our catching sight of a human being on the plain. To the right lay a small ravine, and, since I could not be sure that Ibn Asl might not pass through it, rather than over the open plain, I resolved to investigate it by the first morning light. And, as it was possible that he might pass out of it by the other side when I entered it, I thought it better to leave part of my force where we were then camping until this was done. As soon as the East was streaked with red I made ready to go. I had received enough men from the emir to carry out my plan, while my own "Asaker" who had gone with me into the land of the Fessarah I gave into the command of the old "Askeri," the Fessarah guide who had thus far so well fulfilled his duties.

Having given him careful instructions and warned him to keep a sharp lookout for Ibn Asl, and above all things to prevent his escape, I started with the "Asaker," Ben Nil accompanying me, for the ravine.

Just beyond the ravine lay a swamp; it was here that the Reis Effendina was awaiting me, within hearing distance of shots should it be necessary to summon him, or if I came upon Ibn Asl before he did. Everything seemed to be arranged so that miscarriage of our plans was impossible, and I marched toward the ravine confident, and rejoicing in coming success. When we had penetrated the ravine for a considerable distance we found that the marsh extended into it, and we were compelled to proceed by twos. Ben Nil and I walked together a little further, and then I bade him keep back and follow me with the "Asaker" at a certain distance while I went on

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alone.

I turned into a narrow winding path which bent from left to right, and led directly into the rocks. Suddenly from out the shadow of the cliffs rang a voice, crying: "Halt! Not a step further, or we shoot." I stopped and looked around. Two trees stood side by side there, and before them a great rock jutted out, behind which three men must have been hidden, for I saw as many gun muzzles pointed at me from it — a pretty bad situation to be in, for with but a finger pressure I could be riddled with shot.

"Who are you?" I asked, in what I tried to make an easy, conversational tone.

"An old acquaintance of yours. Would you like to see me?"

"Of course."

"Then lay down your weapons, and I will come out."

"That would be sensible!" As I said this I made a sudden jump to the nearest tree, behind the trunk of which I was fully sheltered.

"Put down your weapons and come over the stone which lies there between us. I will do the same," said my "old acquaintance."

"Very well; I'll come, but if I see the glimmer of the smallest weapon, the tiniest knife, you will go whence you cannot return."

I put my revolver in my trouser pocket, and stood my gun against the tree, with my knife beside it. I might have left the revolver there, too, for I was perfectly safe; a glance backward showed me that my followers were ready.

I had recognized the voice which had addressed me as that of Ibn Asl's lieutenant, so was not surprised when I had taken my stand by the stone designated to see him come forth — but where was his master?

The man paused a few feet from me, stood looking at me a moment, then said scornfully: "You did not expect to find me here!"

"Yes, and no," I replied. "I knew that you would be awaiting me here, yet it was not you, but Ibn Asl, for whom I was looking."

"You knew that? Allah alone knows all things," the lieutenant sneered.

"Bid Ibn Asl come here," I said, disregarding him.

"He is not here."

"I know that he is here somewhere."

"You know that. You are not so omniscient as you have the credit of being. If you really did know where Ibn Asl was now, you would not act quite so confidently as you do at present." These words made me consider; if only I had left Ben Nil to guard the prisoners! However, I kept my uneasiness to myself and answered with a laugh: "You need not tell me where he is. I know enough. You are not sufficiently clever to deceive me, and you cannot escape the trap I have set for you."

"You! A trap?" He laughed scornfully. "I will not say that Allah has stricken you with blindness, for you seem to see me, but I can tell you that you and your twenty 'Asaker' are in a trap, and not we."

"Then you know, I suppose, that the Reis Effendina is behind you with his 'Asaker,' and that your retreat is cut off?" I asked quietly.

"The Reis Effendina?" he gasped. "You lie!"

"I speak the truth; and I have not twenty, but many more men with me. I had twenty, but yesterday the Reis gave me a great many more. So I demand that you lay down your arms and surrender. If you resist your blood be on your own head; you will be thrown to the crocodiles."

"Effendi, you are trying to get around me by craft. I — it can't be —"

"See here," I interrupted, "it is not necessary for you to insult me further. I will be merciful and prove the truth of my words, and save unnecessary bloodshed, though you do not deserve it." I put my hands to my lips, trilled a long, peculiar note which was used by the Reis Effendina's troops, and it was echoed nearer than I had thought to hear it.

"Well?" I suggested.

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"What was that?"

"What should it be but the Reis answering my signal? That will announce to him that I am here, and he will advance at once. Then look at this." I turned and waved my hand. Ben Nil and his forty men rushed through the pass, their guns pointed at the lieutenant. As he saw this unwelcome sight he cried out: "O Allah! There are a hundred men! I surrender." He turned, waved his hand, and his two comrades came forth, and all three laid their arms at my feet. That portion of his troops which Ibn Asl had left with his lieutenant were stationed at the back of the ravine. The Reis Effendina found them there as he advanced to join me; we heard a few shots, and then the Reis came in sight, calling as he came: "Effendi, Effendi have you captured the wretch?"

"Ibn Asl is not with his men," I said low, going over where the lieutenant could not hear us. "He must be near by; let us disarm and handcuff this crowd and hurry back to the rest of my men, who must have caught the chief villain."

We accomplished the task of disarming very rapidly, secured our prisoners, and Ben Nil and I made all possible speed back to our "Asaker."

As soon as we got within sight of them it was evident that something was wrong. Three men lay on the ground, and the old leader, with several others were bending over them; it took but a glance to see that they were dead.

"How did this happen?" I asked.

"They were shot by a stranger, Effendi," replied the leader, looking up. "He said that he was sent by the Reis Effendina with a message for you. These men, with two others, were on guard. They told him that you had gone to meet the Reis and capture Ibn Asl. He asked in which direction, and when we had told him he suddenly drew his revolver, fired these three fatal shots, laughed, and said they were a message to announce who had called on you, and rode away before we could recover from our surprise and horror."

"What did he look like?" I demanded, though it needed no description to tell me who the murderer was.

"He wore a white ha-k, and was not tall, but very strongly built; he wore a full brown beard."

"Of course; what kind of idiots did I intrust with this post? Let me congratulate you on having had a chance to kill or capture Ibn Asl — and of having let him slip away as safely as if he were a harmless turtle dove."

"Ibn Asl! Oh, Effendi! how could we know him? He said he was sent by the Reis. But since he killed our men and rode away so mockingly my soul has been full of foreboding that it could be no other than Ibn Asl."

"You are getting keen-witted," I said; but Ben Nil, whose wrath was too mixed with disgust to allow him to comment on this maddening piece of stupidity, interrupted me. "He cannot have gone far in this short time, Effendi. Let us not waste a moment on this son and grandson of stupidity," he said.

"Yes, we will do what we can to avert the consequences of the blunder. Here, you men; some of you saddle Ben Nil's camel and my own. We will ride after Ibn Asl. You are to watch the prisoners. Go, tell the Reis Effendina what has happened, and say that we shall not be gone long." In two minutes we were in the saddle, riding like the wind toward the northern end of the swamp, at which point we were told Ibn Asl had disappeared.

At a certain point not far away from where we had started Ben Nil and I separated, he to ride to the south and I to the north. I held my gun ready for instant use, and kept my eyes open in all directions; but for a long time I saw no one. After I had ridden for perhaps seven miles I saw ahead of me a spot where the grass was long. I saw a camel lying in it, and as I looked it sprang up, as if at a word of command, and a man swung himself into the saddle. The camel, which was a magnificent one, broke instantly into a run, and its rider turned in the saddle and swung his gun in the air in an insolent salute.

I was not sure that I was near enough to shoot, even if I had wanted to. I gave chase, but, fast as my camel was, he was no match for the fleet beast the slave-dealer rode. He was riding across the line between me and Ben Nil, and when I saw that I could not overtake him I gave up the chase, feeling sure Ben Nil would have the chance I had missed.

As I watched what was happening I saw that Ibn Asl made a turn to the left, as though he feared the swamp, and this movement brought him out of the range of Ben Nil's gun. Then I saw Ben Nil come out from behind the bushes, where evidently he had hidden feeling certain of firing at his foe unseen, and fly after Ibn Asl at the best speed his good camel was capable of making. He had come a little nearer the pursued, who turned his camel away from the swamp, thus bringing its side toward Ben Nil and giving him a fine chance to shoot the beast in the breast. And at that very instant I saw Ben Nil stop and fire. I saw the smoke from his gun, heard the shot, and saw

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that the white camel, which deserved a better master than it had stopped short as though stunned. Then it gathered itself together and flew as if it had been shot from a cannon, urged every moment to even greater speed by its rider.

Once more Ben Nil fired, but Ibn Asl rushed onward toward the marsh — he had escaped! A few seconds later and I had joined Ben Nil, and stood with him looking after the diminishing white speck which represented the downfall of our hopes.

"Your first shot struck the camel, but not the second one," I said. "Why on earth didn't you shoot again quicker?"

"I was so surprised not to see the camel fall that I could not," he replied. "I know that my first shot struck it full in the breast. It must have been wounded; it can't get far; let us follow him."

"It could not have run like that if it had been wounded," I said. "We will go look for traces of blood, if you like —"

We followed the trail of the camel, but saw not the smallest red drop to warrant Ben Nil's hope that the camel was wounded, yet I was as sure as he that the shot had hit it. As we returned on foot, for we had dismounted the better to examine the ground, we saw something bright glittering in the grass just where the camel had been when Ben Nil fired. We picked it up; it was the spent bullet from Ben Nil's gun.

"What a shame, what an unspeakable pity!" cried the young man, looking at it with tears of rage in his eyes. "I hit the ornaments on the camel's breast-plate. The whole thing is spoiled by a miserable little metal breast-plate."

"That is precisely what happened," I assented. "I noticed that the camel wore a sort of shield, studded with brass knobs. It can't be helped, Ben Nil; you aimed true and you did your best, but if you had followed up that first shot with a second one quickly, while the camel paused that moment, the beast would be dead now and its master in our hands. It is a thousand pities, but we will hope to capture Ibn Asl yet. Let us go back to the emir."

We rode less rapidly in returning, for there was no need of haste. Ibn Asl was safe for the present, and we were not impatient to tell the news to the Reis Effendina.

We found him forming an impromptu court of justice for the trial of the prisoners. We told him our misfortunes briefly, and when he had mastered his disappointment sufficiently we returned with him to the circle, in the midst of which lay the old fakir and his spy, with all the other prisoners bound and lying around the outer edge of the ring formed by the "Asaker."

All pretence of courage had been abandoned by the two miserable wretches in the center; the fakir, especially, was fairly howling with terror, imploring the Reis Effendina to spare him, and, the moment he caught sight of me, appealing to my duty as a Christian to forgive my enemies and intercede in his favor.

It was a disgusting spectacle, and it sickened me with a contemptuous half-pity. I knew there would be no use in pleading for the fakir, nor did I see how I could justly ask the Reis Effendina to spare one who deserved the utmost punishment of the law, if ever a man did. But I did ask him to pardon the spy, conditionally on his future good behavior and his solemn oath never again to take part or service in the crime of slave-dealing.

The emir, who, as I think and hope, not only felt under obligations to me, but had grown fond of me, granted my request, and the spy gave the required promise — let us hope that it was kept.

Then the old fakir was unbound, and fell on his knees before the Reis Effendina. Ben Nil thrust the "Asaker's" banner into his hand to emphasize, with a boy's sense of humor, the contrast between the man's abject terror and anything that suggested spirit. The leader of the "Asaker" stood beside him, and, raising his hands outspread before him, called for silence, while all the men, headed by our Fessarah guide on his Arabian horse, looked grimly on, impatient to see the end of the old hypocrite. I looked at him as he knelt there and reviewed my own experiences with him, my meeting him at the tomb in Siout, how venerable and pious he had looked! — his attempt to bury me alive, his having already done so to Ben Nil — his long life of cruelty to his fellow-man under the pretence of extraordinary piety, and I could not but own to myself that, whatever his fate, he deserved it.

The emir must have felt and thought as I did, for his eyes rested sternly on the collapsed old figure and he said severely: "At last, at last you have come to judgment! I have sought for you long and you always escaped, but now justice shall be done!"

"I demand another judge!" cried the fakir, rousing himself from his terror.

"There is none who could deal with you as harshly as you deserve. Whoever he was, and whatever he did, he

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would always be in arrears in his accounts with you. Your crimes mount up into the hundreds; thousands of men have to thank you for being enslaved, as well as for the murder of their dearest ones. How many villages have you attacked and burned? How many innocent children have you slain? And all the time you wore the mask of a saint, praying, and profaning the name of Allah and His Prophet. Your role is ended and I will send you where you belong, to your master, Sheitan, whose works you have performed."

"You have no right to kill me," whined Abd Asl.

"Not only I, but many, countless others, have that right, and have had it for many a day. It is a pity that it has not been used, for each day of your life meant more crimes. I will not have on my head the responsibility of continuing your misdeeds. It is my solemn duty to rid Egypt of you, her latest plague. It is for me to pronounce sentence upon you, and that sentence is death."

His words fell like the blows of a hammer. The cowardly old sinner groveled on the ground imploring mercy, and appealing to his reputation for sanctity as a reason for receiving it, apparently not being able to understand that it was that very thing which increased the Reis' wrath against him.

"Enough of this!" he cried, angrily. "Have you not the decency to meet with some pretence of courage the fate you imposed on so many? You would have torn out the tongue and eyes, and cut off the limbs, of this Effendi; how should you die? There is no death painful enough for one who loved to torture others; but I have no taste for such pastime, and the Effendi, whom you would have tortured, I know desires to beg for you the mercy which even for his sake I would not grant you. Your death shall be quicker than you deserve; you shall be thrown to the crocodiles"

"O Allah, you cannot do that! Spare me, Reis Effendina," moaned the wretch.

"Spare you? To what end? This Effendi spared you; Ben Nil gave you your miserable life, and you forthwith began to plot against them anew. You are a fiend, whose nature is to return good with evil, kindness with cruelty. What I have said, I have said; you shall be thrown to the crocodiles. Men, do your duty."

In spite of his shrieks and struggles the fakir was bound hand and foot. Then he became quite still, and we, too, were perfectly silent. Not a man in the camp spoke a word as four "Asaker" took up the prisoner and carried him away. Not a sound was heard till from the swamp came a moaning that rose into a cry, and ended in a shriek that pierced one's flesh and bones. Then all was still again; the crocodiles had received their prey.

I was shuddering and horror-stricken, yet even then I could not say that, according to the customs of this people and the primitive forms of punishment which they still knew, the sentence had been too severe for such a criminal.

The emir laid his hand affectionately on my shoulder. "The history of the fakir is closed," he said. "I hope that our work together does not end with it. There is much to be done. Ibn Asl is still at large, and the slave trade in Egypt is far from being abolished. Will you stay with me and see the end?"

"My time is my own, and my life untrammelled," I replied. "I shall be glad to help you if I can, and my thirst for adventure is not sated."

"Come, then," the emir said, smiling. "That is pleasant hearing! We will rest now, for rest is as uncertain as it is sweet in the desert. You have saved my life, having rescued helpless women from slavery worse than death. You have wrought a good work, my young hero from the new land of the West, and you have wrought well. Our task is done; we will await the will of Allah for our next one."

CHAPTER XVII. AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW GUISE

THERE are people to whom an unfinished air, whistled, sung, or played, is torture. I confess to being one of these, and it may be that which rendered it impossible for me to do otherwise than accede to the desire of the Reis Effendina, and remain with him till his triumphal march should be completed. It was much that we had put an end to the crimes of the father and coadjutor of Ibn Asl, the fiercest of the Egyptian slave-hunters, but the chief villain was still in full cry after his prey, and the Mokkadem and muza'bir, whose wickedness I had good personal reasons for remembering, were still unpunished. Though the task I was engaged in was full of dangers and privations, I could not regret having promised the emir to see it through, nor would I have felt that I could turn my back on that good officer of the Viceroy until the work was done. We knew with certainty that we were not far from the haunts of Ibn Asl and his associates, and, before starting forth to raid them, held a council of war, in which the Reis gave me a piece of information which was both surprising and unpleasant. He said that he had information that Murad Nassyr, the Turk with whom I had stayed in Cairo, and who had also suffered at the hands of the Mokkadem, Abd el Barak, had entered into friendly relations with Ibn Asl, and was to give him his sister in marriage; indeed, was at that very moment somewhere in that neighborhood, bringing the fair "turtle dove," as she was called, to her brutal future master. This arrangement had necessarily converted Murad Nassyr from my friend to my foe, since I was associated with the emir in hunting down his would-be brother-in-law, and putting an end to his nefarious trade. I was sorry to hear this, for I had liked the Turk during my stay in his house; but without stopping to consider his fall from honest ways, the emir proceeded to unfold to me the immediate work in hand.

There was a sangak, as a certain native officer is called, named Ibn Mulai, in whom the emir had always felt entire confidence. But a Negro had recently been captured, bearing a letter to this man from Ibn Asl; a letter which, though not positively incriminating, gave him good reason to suspect that the sangak was in secret collusion with the slave dealer. The Negro had been killed, and it was the emir's desire that I should disguise myself, and carry the letter to the sangak, and try to discover whether or not his distrust was well founded, since this man held a post important enough to frustrate all our plans should he be treacherous.

I agreed to undertake this dangerous mission, was furnished with the letter and the necessary information for my guidance by the emir, and set out in the morning, accompanied only by my faithful Ben Nil.

Two men alone in the wide desert! Who can picture to himself what these words mean? The sun burns so fiercely that one's flesh is parched, and one must pull the hood of his ha-k well over his eyes to keep the reflection from blinding him. The silence is unbroken, for not only is there nothing to talk about, but one's swollen tongue presses painfully against one's dry lips, and speech would be torture. Before, behind one, and at every side, sand, sand, nothing but glittering, burning sand! The solitude is indescribable, and it is increased by the mechanical stride of the camel, going on like a machine. There is none of that comradeship between the camel and his rider which exists between a man and a good horse. Not only is the animal's temperament responsible for this, but the difference in the manner of sitting the two animals increases it. The camel rider is perched on his peculiar saddle, with no more connection with his beast than if he were in a buggy, while the horseman clasps his steed with his own limbs; the nervous creature feels and understands every pressure of knee and hand, till man and beast half realize the ancient's conception of the centaur, and form a perfect whole, one in sympathy and understanding.

Both our camels were willing and swift animals; but we did not feel that they loved us, and that knowledge increased the loneliness of a desolate ride which the friendship of a horse would have brightened, and we were glad when we were aroused from our torpor by the screaming of hawks, and, on scanning the horizon with a glass, discovered a village, which was undoubtedly the headquarters of the man I sought.

Another hour's riding brought us to a small but thickly wooded island of green in the ocean of the desert, and here we dismounted, concealed ourselves and our camels, and prepared for our visit to the sangak. I wore the ordinary costume of that section of the country, and my sunburned hands and face looked as though they might belong to a genuine slave-dealer, except that the cut of my features, which I could not well alter, might betray me.

Of course, I read carefully the letter I was bearing, and mastered its contents before setting out for the village, which we did at sunset. It was perfectly dark when we reached the river. The village lay on the other shore, and

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we met servants of the sangak, who had been hunting, and who, when we made known to them our desire to visit their master, ferried us with our camels across the Nile.

As far as the darkness allowed us to see, the houses in this village were all mud huts, with two small windows, just large enough to shoot through, on each side of the narrow door. One hut, which seemed more prominent than the others, became the object of my attention. There seemed to be neither door knob nor lock, but I felt the end of a rude latch as I passed my hand down the door, which I tried, and found that it lifted. The door did not open, however, so I knocked, and soon heard swift steps and a voice demanding: "Who is there?"

"A messenger to the sangak of Bahr el Oschebel."

"You must come another time; he is not here."

"I am a stranger here. Let me in; I will wait until he returns."

The man was silent, apparently considering. Then he said: "Stay a moment – I will ask if you may enter."

I heard him go away, and presently other steps approached, and another voice asked: "Is your message important?"

"Yes; I have a letter."

"Give it to me. I will open the window."

"I can't do that. I must deliver this letter only into the hands of Ibn Mulai, the sangak of Bahr el Oschebel."

"Then come in, if you must." A heavy iron bolt groaned, and the door opened. I saw by the light of a small oil lamp which he carried a man armed with two pistols, two knives and a crooked saber, although he was in the house. Two glittering evil eyes regarded me suspiciously as he asked in a mistrustful tone: "Why do you come at night? Could you not have got here earlier?"

"No one could have come quicker than I have," I replied. "I must hasten away again this very night, and it is above all things necessary for me to give this letter into the sangak's own hands."

"Your tone is too confident, fellow! I am a soldier, and my knife is never fast in its sheath. Do you understand? Follow me."

I entered, and he barred the door again. The walls were covered with weapons on every side, and opposite the entrance to the room I saw another door, through which I was led into a second, much larger room, lighted by a clay lamp with four branches suspended from the ceiling. There was a door on each one of the four sides of the room, but no window. A sheepskin mat was spread under the lamp, upon which lay four savage-looking fellows, who regarded me with unfriendly curiosity. My companion threw himself down beside them to resume an interrupted game, saying to me over his shoulder: "Wait here till our lord comes. But be silent and don't disturb us or we will close your mouth for you."

It may be imagined that my thoughts were not altogether pleasant. Here I was locked in a place that to all appearances was one of the headquarters of a deadly enemy, with five fellows of the wildest sort of native soldiery, and, lest they betray me by their Western workmanship, I had left my own weapons, with my watch and all my belongings, with Ben Nil, who was to await me at a short distance.

Having no watch, I could not tell how late it was growing; but it must have been three good hours that I sat in this hole before a thundering knocking was heard at the door.

"The sangak!" cried his followers, starting to their feet, while the one who had admitted me hastened to let him in.

The outer door opened, and I heard low voices; evidently the sangak was hearing of my arrival. In a few moments he entered. It is said that every man has likeness to some animal, and as I looked in the sangak's face I could think only of a steer, coming with lowered horns and red, angry eyes to gore his prey. He threw me a quick look, and, with the one word "Come!" preceded me through one of the side doors, which one of his men held open for him.

As he seated himself he said: "You have a letter? Hand it to me."

He took the letter without looking at it, examined me closely with his cruel eyes, then demanded: "Your name?"

"Iskander Patras," I replied, giving a Greek name, hoping it would account for my lack of Oriental features, and knowing there were many of Levantine origin in the Sudan.

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"A Greek!" exclaimed the sangak. "Where from?"

"I was born of Grecian parents in Kahireh," I replied, for spies cannot answer their foes truthfully.

"Christian?"

"Yes."

"It is the same to me. What are your duties at the Seribah Aliab?"

This was Ibn Asl's own seribah, or headquarters, but I replied quietly: "I act as interpreter. I have been long among the Negro tribes and I know their dialects."

"That brings you profits without risks," he said half contemptuously. "I will see what this letter says." He glanced at it as he spoke, and my heart beat high. The room was well lighted, and, if he saw that it had already been opened and resealed, I was lost. Luckily his impatience made him break the seal quickly and read the letter without paying attention to its wrapper.

When he had finished reading he thrust it into his pocket and said: "They tell me you waited three hours for me. You must be hungry; you shall eat, and tell me about the seribah." So saying he left the room, motioning me to be seated.

If only I had dared to run away, or could see any chance of doing so! It was likely the sangak knew the seribah well, and if I, who had no notion of what it was like, talked about it, I was sure to get into a scrape!

However, there was no possibility of escape, so I tried to look pleased when the sangak returned, followed by a servant bringing a steaming joint.

"How long have you been at the seribah?" asked Ibn Mulai, after I had obeyed his command to attack the meat.

"For two years," I replied, as I made a show of eating with relish.

"Ibn Asl must have confidence in you to entrust you with this letter to me. How long are you to stay here?"

"I dare not linger an unnecessary moment," I replied "The boat which brought me here is to wait for me but a few hours, and if I am not on board it will sail without me."

"But I must hear all you can tell me of the seribah!" he cried impatiently. "And take care you do not fall into the hands of the Reis Effendina! Beware especially of a Christian dog, a foreign Effendi, who is somewhere between here and Khartum now."

"Why should I fear a Christian? I am a Christian, too," I said innocently.

"You have every reason to fear him! He is helping the Reis Effendina hunt our people and stop our trade. You evidently have not heard of him; I must tell you about him."

How thankful I was that he began forthwith to recount to me as I ate, his version of my deeds and character! I plied him with questions, meaning to take up all the time that I was eating with his story and then go. Thus would the danger of mistakes in my description of the seribah be averted. Could anything have been more lucky than this turn in the conversation? Fortune had smiled upon me; but she is notoriously a fickle jade, and, just as I was thanking her in my thoughts, she turned her back on me.

Suddenly a confusion of noises arose outside; doors slammed, voices clamored and then a man entered, announcing: "My lord, we have captured a spy! He was creeping up to listen at the door, and, as we took him, the holy man with his friend came up, asking to see you. They both say that they know the fellow."

As the sangak gave the order to bring in the prisoner the door opened again and five men came in, dragging and pushing into the room — poor Ben Nil! And as I was wondering who the holy man and his friend who had recognized Ben Nil could be, lo and behold! who should follow the procession but the Mokka-dem and the muza'bir!

Both had formerly tried in vain to murder us and knew us perfectly. What was to be done? There were twelve men against us, and outside were more, how many I could form no idea. I had no weapons, except useless old things I had taken for better disguise. The prospect looked black. The only possible chance would be through a sudden onslaught. Thus far I, who sat in the shadow, had not been seen, and as the sangak demanded of Ben Nil who he was, the Mokka-dem answered for him: "Mudir, our hearts rejoice, as yours will wonder, when I tell you that we have here the friend and companion of our bitterest enemy, whom may Allah confound!"

"What enemy?" asked Ibn Mulai.

"The Effendi, the Christian dog. This young man is Ben Nil, of whom we have told you, the faithful follower

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of that cur. Where he is the other is not far distant, and, since we have captured Ben Nil, we can be sure that the Effendi is in Faschoda."

"Beat him!" cried the sangak, "and make him tell where his master is."

"That is not necessary," I said, rising from my corner. "I can tell you for myself where I am."

The effect of these words was indescribable. The startled men stood as stiff as if they had been turned into stone. Some of them fell back against the wall; one only made a motion as if to seize me. I must make good use of this surprise. Two leaps brought me to Ben Nil. I snatched him from his captors and pushed him toward the door, the soldiers falling away to the right and left. With blows and kicks I made good my path and got to the exit. Here Ben Nil stumbled. I stooped to raise him, and instantly the whole crowd regained their senses. Blows rained thick and fast. One fell on my head, but, half stunned, I fought on, blinded and scarce knowing what I did till I lost consciousness, and when I came to myself again we were both bound, lying on the floor among the ruins of my supper.

Poor Ben Nil, whose love for me had led him to take the foolish risk he had run, was watching anxiously for my eyes to open, and, when they did, he whispered: "Effendi, I have been guilty of such recklessness that you will find it hard to forgive me."

"I am not angry," I said. "You have harmed only yourself, for the Mokka-dem would have come in in any case and recognized me. Though it is true that if you were free you might have gone back and brought the emir to my rescue. However, I hope that even now —"

Just then four men entered, carrying huge bast mats and ropes. We were gagged, our eyes bandaged and we were rolled up and tied in the mats like living mummies. The only part of us left out was our heads, so that at least we should not smother.

Then we were carried away; where, of course, we could not see. We were thrown with some violence on a hard surface, and we heard the sound of oars, and felt that we were in a boat and were rowed a long, long distance — for hours, it seemed to me.

At last the motion ceased; we were lifted, borne somewhere, once more thrown heavily on a floor. Then we were unbound, the gags taken from our mouths and we found ourselves on the deck of a ship. Twenty or so men stood around us, and at their head was Murad Nassyr, my former friend of Cairo.

CHAPTER XVIII. A WOMAN'S GRATITUDE

IT was an interesting theme for speculation, the manner in which Murad Nassyr, from whom I parted as a friend, would greet me. There was little doubt that he would be more relentless to me than if we had parted differently; for, as I had never wronged him, he would be forced to the greater violence to maintain his own injustice. It is possible for a man to forgive an injury, but it is doubtful if he will ever forgive one whom he has injured.

As I waited for his salutation I heard him speaking with one of the men who had brought us hither, and I heard him ask: "Where are the Mokkadem and the muza'bir?"

"They left Faschoda by the land route to go to the Dinka country, where Ibn Asl is. They wished to tell him themselves of the capture of these two men," replied the sailor.

"Then they may miss him. I am looking for him any moment with the captured Dinkas."

These words proved that Murad Nassyr was not overburdened with prudence. It was a mistake for him to say before me that Ibn Asl was about to seize the Dinkas, even though I was in no apparent likelihood of using the information. The plump little Turk then turned to me and said:

"Do you know me, you dog, or has your memory failed you?"

I did not answer an inquiry couched in these words, and he continued:

"Open your mouth, you black crow! Has fright made you dumb?"

I laughed and said: "Fright! And of you? My fat little friend, don't be absurd! No one would fear you, I least of all. You were not so brave when I last saw you and helped you clear your house of the supposed ghosts, who proved to be this very Mokkadem and his gang, with whom you are now so friendly."

"Dog, you dare to ridicule me! I will redouble your torture," he cried.

"Oh, leave me in peace!" I said. "You cut such a ridiculous figure with your threats that I can only laugh at you. You know me well enough to be sure what effect your boasting must have upon me. Go to sleep; that is better employment than wasting your strength trying to impress me. If there are any ghosts, call me, and I'll tackle them. And in the meantime you would do well to reflect that I have never harmed you, Murad Nassyr, and whether you are likely to be better off for the criminal course and evil companionship you have entered upon."

My words were not without effect, for the Turk turned away without another word; but I heard him bidding his men watch me well, for Ibn Asl would rather have me than thousands of piasters, and when he came would himself devise the tortures I was to undergo.

The room in which we were confined resembled a tent; its walls were linen, its ceiling matting stretched across stakes, and it was divided in the middle by another piece of linen. I could hear the murmur of feminine voices on my left, and conjectured that the Turk's sister had her apartments and her servants' apartments on that side.

Back of us hung another linen curtain, which was raised, and beyond was a smaller room, filled with boxes and casks, which had been pushed back to make room for us. Stout nails had been driven into the planks to which we were fastened, a precaution that was most wise, for, if by any means we could get free of our shackles, we had nothing to do but raise the matting that formed the door, and jump overboard.

When we had been thus securely fastened Murad Nassyr surveyed us with satisfaction, saying: "Now you cannot move. Just try to escape me if you can! Ibn Asl will return by to-morrow and will pronounce your sentence. I sleep on the other side, and can hear all you say. If it should be a syllable that displeases me you will taste the whip. Now may Allah send you sweet slumber and still sweeter dreams."

These last words were said mockingly as he withdrew with his men.

He raised the side curtain and disappeared, and we heard his voice and a woman's, which we supposed to be and later learned was his sister's, whispering. We saw his shadow reappear on the linen partition of his own apartment, and shortly a woman's shadow was thrown beside it; they bent together, we heard them whispering,

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and then both rose and went on deck.

Scarcely had all this occurred than a female shadow appeared on the side of our apartment; it grew larger came nearer, the curtain was raised, and a woman's voice whispered: "Effendi, where are you?"

"Here," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Fatma; do you remember?" she replied.

I did recollect her. She was a Negress who had served me in Murad Nassyr's house and who was the favorite servant of his sister.

"What do you want of me?" I asked.

"My mistress has sent me. She has learned from my lord, her brother, that you are to be tortured to death, and her heart is sorrowful."

"May Allah bless her for her sympathy," I said.

"Yes, Effendi, she is good. She will deliver you."

"Hamdulillah! How can she?"

"Unfortunately she cannot do much; but all that she can she will do. She has never forgotten that you cured me when I was so ill, and she begs you to tell me what you need."

I had completely forgotten that I had doctored this girl with the medicines in my little travelling case till she recalled it to me, and I was not a little touched that these two women should have so faithfully remembered a circumstance not worth recording.

"Where is your mistress?" I asked.

"Above on deck. She has coaxed her brother there so that I may speak to you."

"But suppose he returns unexpectedly and discovers us?"

"He will not. She will keep him there till I give her a signal that we have succeeded."

"Now, may heaven bless you," I said, starting up with sudden hope. "Bring a sharp knife."

She had already provided herself with one, which she produced, and, as I could not move my hands, I bade her cut the ropes which bound them.

"Allah!" she gasped. "What a thing you ask of me! My hands shake with fright; but I will do it, for you have been good to me."

I felt her hands quiver, but she cut true, and I snatched the knife to finish the work, crying:

"Thank you, Fatma, best of the daughters of Eve! May Allah reward you! How many men are there on this ship, and is the boat that brought us here still astern?"

"There are twenty-two men aboard, and the boat is still there."

"That is all I need to know. You may go in peace and you need not give the signal, for your mistress shall see with her own eyes that her blessed kindness has succeeded. I am sure we shall meet again, and then I will prove my gratitude to you both, as I cannot prove it now."

She withdrew, and it took but a few moments to complete the work of liberating myself from my bonds.

"What a miracle, Effendi," whispered Ben Nil as I cut the ropes that held him, and he stood erect. "Who could have dreamed of such a rescue?"

I raised the mat which served as ceiling a little way and peered out. The crew lay sleeping on the deck, while the Turk and his sister leaned over the rail on the side nearer shore talking. The boat must lie on the other side; and over the stern, near the spot where I thought it should be, hung a chain brought through an iron ring, and fastened near our prison.

"Everything is favorable," I whispered. "We will climb down this chain into the water. No one is watching us, for Murad Nassyr has assumed that duty, and that good girl is occupying his attention."

We slipped out under the matting, seized the chain, and softly let ourselves into the water. Then we swam to where the boat was lying, keeping close under the ship that we might not be seen from above. The oars were in the boat, ready for her speedy return whence we had come.

"Now pull, Effendi," whispered Ben Nil, as we each took a pair. "We are free; but we must not lose a moment in getting away from here."

We had not pulled half a dozen strokes before we were discovered.

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"The Effendi is out!" cried Murad Nassyr. "He is trying to escape! Look in the boat there! Follow him, men! A thousand piasters for the one who brings him back to me!"

Instantly the deck was all confusion, voices clamoring and feet scurrying to unfasten the ship's tender from her davits, get her in the water and pursue us.

"Quick! quick!" shouted Murad Nassyr's voice, rising above all the hubbub. "Two thousand, three thousand piasters for the one who catches him!"

"Ten thousand piasters for him who catches me," I laughed in reply. Then we bent to our oars, and the boat sprang away like a hare. Ben Nil was an unusual oarsman; I could row a little myself — I had pulled stroke on my college crew — and, with the current helping us, we got such a start that we were soon beyond reach, and in a short time had put the ship out of sight behind us.

We were to meet the Reis Effendina at Faschoda, where he was to receive our information as to the sangak's being innocent or guilty of complicity with Ibn Asl.

We rowed hard all night, discussing the extraordinary action of the "turtle dove," in saving us from her brother and future husband. Whatever Murad Nassyr might be, she was a tender-hearted, grateful girl, and I made up my mind to do all I could to save her from falling into the hands of such a brute as Ibn Asl.

When the east began to be streaked with light we already were nearing Faschoda and espied the masts of "Esch Schadin," the Reis' own swift "Falcon," lying at the farther end of the town.

We encountered no obstacles in getting to her, and were welcomed with relief by the Reis, who was getting anxious about us, for the arrangement had been that we should wait for him on shore and be ready to board "Esch Schadin" the moment she arrived. After a hearty breakfast and a refreshing bath I related to the emir the history of my visit to the sangak and the indubitable proof of his alliance with the slave-dealers found in the actual presence of the Mokkadem and muza'bir in his house and his cooperation in my capture.

The wrath of the emir knew no bounds.

"You can hardly understand," he said, "how base this fellow is. I have loaded him with favors and trusted him, and he has used my confidence and kindness to further the crimes I am commissioned to stamp out. But his punishment shall equal his crime. Has any one seen you return?"

"No, I am certain we were not seen," I replied, wondering.

"Then Ibn Mulai will not know that he is found out. I will send a messenger to bid him come here to confer with me. You shall conceal yourselves and let this slender youth disguise himself as a woman. His figure will not betray him, and you shall see something that will amuse you."

The messenger was dispatched, and, though we could not imagine what game the emir was going to play, Ben Nil donned women's garments, which he provided, and was thickly veiled like any Eastern beauty.

We stood behind a curtain at the end of the emir's cabin when the sangak entered. He gave one sharp glance at the Reis Effendina's face, but, seeing that his brow was unruffled, threw off the half fear that he entertained of having been detected.

"Ibn Mulai," began the emir, "I sent for you, bidding you come to confer with me; but that was not the true reason for my desiring your presence. I have never rewarded you for your service to me in the manner such fidelity deserved." He paused and the sangak said:

"I am the truest of all your servants."

"The truest of them all," assented the emir, gravely. "For this reason I have chosen a wife for you as a reward, a wife who may be compared to all the houris of paradise."

"A wife!" stammered the sangak in amazement.

"Even so, a wife. A picture of beauty and virtues, a compendium of loveliness. Although it is contrary to our customs, that you may know what a treasure you are to possess you shall see her now. Come forth, fair maiden, and lift thy veil, that this brave sangak may fall at thy feet, blinded by the splendor of thine eyes." He turned toward our hiding-place as he spoke and Ben Nil slowly advanced.

"It really is a woman!" cried the sangak, staring at the veiled figure. "I thought you jested. Is she as lovely as you say? Is she black or white?"

"Answer these questions for yourself. Look and wonder!"

The Reis Effendina rose and lifted the veil with his own hands. The sangak uttered an inarticulate cry and fell

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back in terror.

"Now, how does she please you?" asked the emir. "Are you not delighted?"

The sangak tried in vain to speak, and, as I came out from behind the curtain, could only turn a little more livid under his brown skin than he had been before.

"So you see that your game is played," said the emir fiercely, suddenly dropping his tone of mocking banter. "I know the length and breadth of your treachery. This Effendi, whom you delivered up to my enemies to his death, has escaped and returned to confound you." He clapped his hands and eight sailors entered. "You know your duty. Shoot him and throw his traitor's body into the Nile. Not a word," he added, as the sailors seized the sangak and the wretch essayed to speak. "You are a traitor and shall have a traitor's fate," and the fellow was dragged away to meet the death which, according to the laws of all lands, he had merited.

"And now, Effendi," said the Reis Effendina, "since that disagreeable duty is done, and we are by so much nearer success in stamping out these slave-traders, that we have discovered their treacherous ally among our own followers, let us lose no time in proceeding with our work. You have learned through the Turk's imprudent words that he is expecting Ibn Asl with a capture of slaves from a Dinka village. Will you and Ben Nil go up the Nile toward where Murad Nassyr's ship is lying and try to get further tidings of their movements? I will follow by land and be ready to protect you with my 'Asaker' should you need me. It seems to me we can work more effectually separately than together until we are perfectly sure of our next move."

The plan struck me as the best possible, and, undismayed by all our previous hairbreadth escapes, Ben Nil and I made our simple preparations for departure.

Two hours after the noonday meal we were returning up the Nile in the direction whence we had come during the night. We were not obliged to hasten; we were very weary from loss of sleep, so each took turns at the oars while the other slept.

Thus by slow and steady progress our little boat crept up the great river till the sun went down.

CHAPTER XIX. JACK PAYS HIS DEBT AND MAKES A CONVERSION

WE had rowed up the river in this leisurely fashion for some six miles when we espied a landing place, called in that country a "mischrah," and, partly from curiosity and partly because it looked inviting, we rowed over to it and went ashore.

We found it in such excellent condition and so unmistakably in frequent use that I could not but wonder whether it had any connection with the slave-ships and caravans we were trying to track down. Great stakes driven into the ground closed the further end of the "mischrah." It looked decidedly like the entrance to a seribah, which is not only the headquarters of a slave-trader, but a depot for the reception of the wretched captives until they can be shipped to market.

"We can't get through there, Effendi," said Ben Nil.

"I have no idea of going into the seribah, if that is what this is," I replied, stooping as I spoke to examine the stakes. There was not a living thing in sight, although the moonlight was brilliant enough to have revealed a mouse.

As I bent forward to look at the lower part of the stakes Ben Nil uttered a shriek of horror. I started to rise, but a tremendous blow fell on my head, and I knew no more. When I regained consciousness I was bound hand and foot with ropes and lay in a pit beside Ben Nil, who was bound in the same manner.

As he saw me open my eyes he exclaimed:

"Allah be praised! I feared you were dead, Effendi."

My head was in agony, my eyes saw strange things dancing before them, and my ears buzzed like a swarm of bees; but I was not dead, as I assured him.

"Were you stunned, too?" I asked.

"No."

"Then tell me what has happened, and why are we here in what I take for a pit in a seribah?"

"Alas! that is precisely what it is. Just as you said that you had no idea of going into the seribah, I looked up and saw a man standing over you with an oar raised to strike you, and four or five other stout fellows were coming up. I shouted to warn you, but too late; the blow fell, and you dropped without a sound. I fought with all my might, but it was no use, and we were both bound and brought here."

"The Reis Effendina will find us," I said.

"I hope so. I managed to kick our boat adrift, trusting he would find it.

But suppose they kill us at once?"

"That is not impossible. We have escaped our enemies so often that they may prefer making sure of us. I wonder whose hands we are in this time? Hush! Some one is coming."

We heard steps, and the matting that served as a door was raised. Several men entered, led by Murad Nassyr and his sergeant, which is the nearest English equivalent to the office filled by the stout Turk's adjutant.

Murad Nassyr came up to me, stroked his beard contentedly and said: "Are you actually here? I trust you will make us a longer visit this time, or do you hope to disappear so mysteriously again?"

I made no reply and he turned to the sergeant, saying:

"This is the Christian dog of whom we have told you. He must die."

"I have no objection," replied the man; "but let us wait till daylight, so that we can see them suffer. We are out of meat and must go fishing while it is moonlight and they bite best. These dogs are safe in this kennel. Would it not be well to start at once?"

"You are right; we will take two boats, for we need a big haul. Each boat can carry five men, and two will be enough to leave in the seribah."

"I don't agree with you," objected the sergeant. "There should be more here on guard. How do you know that these two came alone? The Reis Effendina's ship may be near."

"I will ask them, and woe to them if they answer falsely." Then turning to me, Murad Nassyr drew his knife and said: "Each time that you do not reply to my questions will cost you a finger. I am not joking. See! my knife

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is ready. Did you come here alone?"

"Ben Nil was my only companion," I said.

"Where is the Reis Effendina?"

I hesitated, as though reluctant to answer, and he bent over me, seized my left thumb, placed the edge of the knife against it, and said threateningly:

"Answer, or I cut! Where is he?"

"He is at Bahr el Oschebel looking for you," I said, reflecting that, though this was a lie, he might soon be undeceived.

"Why are you not with him?"

"He sent me to see if I could discover Ibn Asl's whereabouts."

"Good! I thought I could make you speak. One more question: How did you escape from me before?"

"Here goes for a fairy tale," I thought, for it would not have done to have betrayed his sister, and said aloud:

"I had two knives with me and you found only one. The other had fallen from my pocket where I could pick it up and cut my fastenings. Then we climbed down the anchor chain into the boat which lay astern."

"So that was the way?" nodded Murad Nassyr, well satisfied. "We will do better this time."

We were thoroughly searched and then our captors departed for their fishing.

All was still. The starlight shone down on us, but, except for companions in the pit, which were far from consoling ones, we thought that we had been left entirely alone. Indeed, no guard was necessary, for even had we been unbound there was no way of getting up from the pit, the ladder by which Murad Nassyr and the rest had descended having been drawn up after them.

It was not long, however, before we heard a voice demanding:

"Where are you, you curs? Have you sworn brotherhood with the scorpions and the rats?"

We did not answer. But another voice from the entrance of the seribah called out something in return. We knew, for Murad Nassyr had imprudently said so, that ten men were gone fishing; one was sitting by our prison and another was guarding the water gate. In a few moments our guard spoke again.

"Who comes there?" he asked.

We heard a voice reply, but we could not understand what was said.

"Who are you? I do not know you!", cried the guard. "Halt! or I'll — oh, Allah! Allah!"

The last cry ended in a gasp. We heard a brief struggle and then a voice called: "Effendi, are you down there?"

"Yes," I replied. "Who are you?"

"I am the pilot, Abu en Nil, for whom you obtained mercy from the Reis Effendina when he seized the slave-ship which I was piloting. I have sought the service of the Reis, and he has sent me with one of his men to look for you and my grandson. Is he with you?"

"Yes. Don't waste a moment, but lower the ladder and come down and free us," I cried.

He obeyed, and, sobbing with joy at seeing Ben Nil and me once more, freed us from our bonds, and we mounted the ladder, rejoicing and puzzled at this unexpected meeting.

"You must wonder how I discovered you," said the old man. "I saw your boat overturned in the reeds not far from the 'mischrah' and I made my way —"

"Yes," I interrupted, "but don't stop to explain now. We are not safe yet."

We got the guard, who had been stunned by a blow from the "Asaker" who accompanied Abu en Nil, down the ladder to take our place in the pit, and we went off to find the arms, if any were about, which we so sorely needed. We not only discovered our own, which had been taken from us, but those of the men who were peacefully fishing, ignorant of the sudden turn of the tables.

We stationed ourselves behind trees at the entrance of the "mischrah" to wait their return. We were four to ten, but we were armed with guns, while they had but their knives, and could only enter two at a time, and stooping at that so carefully had they placed the stakes which made the seribah inaccessible.

We saw in the moonlight that the fish were biting briskly, and it was not long before the boat that held Murad Nassyr turned to come inshore.

As she glided into the entrance of the "mischrah" the Turk stepped first over her bow. I was ready for him. As

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he stooped to pass between the stakes I sprang on him, surprising him so completely that he was overpowered almost without resistance. While Ben Nil brought the ropes to bind him his grandfather and the "Asaker" covered the other four with their guns, and when Murad Nassyr was made fast we served his followers impartially in like manner, and had them all stowed away in the pit before the second boat came in.

There was no trouble in handling the second lot as we had the first; indeed, they had heard such accounts of my deeds of daring that the sight of me, combined with the loss of their master, unnerved them completely.

"Mercy, Effendi, mercy!" wailed Murad Nassyr as I brought the last of his followers into the pit, he having by this time regained his senses.

"Dare not to speak of mercy," I said. "You would have shown me none. A life for a life and blood for blood! You shall be treated as you would have treated me."

"But I would have pardoned you!"

"Pardoned! What had you to pardon? You have returned my goodness to you with evil and shall be repaid in kind. To-morrow's sun rises on your last day."

"Don't say that. You are a Christian," he wailed.

"A dog of a Christian, so you called me. You can't expect pity from a dog! Dogs fight their foes and rend and tear the weaker. You appeal to my religion for your own ends; but you insult it when you have me in your power. Your hour has come!"

"Effendi, think of my sister! What will become of her if I am dead?"

"She will be better off than if you lived, for I cannot imagine a worse fate than you designed for her, to be Ibn Asl's wife and slave. Be silent; I am going now to find her before the emir comes, who will save me the trouble of hanging you."

I walked away, leaving him to the pleasures of imagination, while I visited his sister. But first I sent Abu en Nil down the river to meet the emir and bring him to me. The other two guarded the prisoners.

I entered the apartments which Murad Nassyr had set apart for his sister and her servants, although Mohammedan law forbids a man's presence in such apartments. It seemed to me the double excuse of my being an unbeliever and the stress circumstances warranted the intrusion. Kumra — whose Turkish name means in English "turtle dove" — seemed to think so too, for she not only received me without protest, but unveiled. She had heard of what was going forward and was greatly excited. She really was beautiful, and I marveled that the rotund Murad Nassyr should have so fair a sister, as I had before wondered that he should have one so kind-hearted.

"What have you done with my brother?" she demanded, ignoring all ceremony or salutation.

"I have captured him, bound him and put him in the pit, where he will sleep securely the rest of the night," I said.

"My brother in the oschura ed oschaza? Such a man as he! Such a renowned and mighty lord!" she cried in dismay.

"Am I an ordinary man?" I asked, feeling that I must assert myself.

"No, Effendi; were you but a true believer, you would seem to me a greater man than even my brother."

"Yet he threw me into that pit! If it was fit for me, it is surely fit for him. I have obeyed the law of God and man, which he has transgressed."

"Is slave-dealing really a crime?"

"There can be none greater."

"I did not know that. I thought the white race had a right to capture and sell the Negroes. Can my brother be punished?"

"He not only can be, but must be."

"Allah, Allah! Not with death? I know you are a friend of the Reis Effendina. Is that dreadful man here also? Tell me the truth — does he kill slave-dealers?"

"He comes in the morning. It is true that he punishes that crime with death."

"You must save my brother, Effendi! Do you hear; you must save him. I have saved you." She rose, lifting her hands to me imploringly.

"Yes, you saved me from imprisonment and death," I said gently. "I am not ungrateful. I came here to tell you

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that I would do my best for your brother."

"Then all will be well," she sighed, as satisfied as if Murad Nassyr himself was with her. "I know you can save him, and now I will make you coffee."

"Thank you, beautiful Kumra. Make a great pot full, please. My two comrades would be grateful for your goodness, and your favorite Fatma can take the coffee to them."

She cheerfully set about her task, and I took my departure, wondering. What a true Oriental! Not for long could her native indolence of mind be shaken, and, on the mere assurance of my attempting to save her brother, she dismissed all anxiety and brewed her coffee with tranquil mind.

I lay smoking my pipe when the Reis Effendina arrived in the early morning.

"Ha!" he shouted as he approached. "There sits the conqueror of the world, smoking the pipe of victory. Imprisonment does not seem to harm you."

"It was so brief," I answered, holding out my hand to help him land and saluting him at the same time.

"So I have learned from Abu en Nil; but I want the story from you. Come, sit down by me and tell me what you have done."

I obeyed him, and, when I had ended, told him of my promise to Kumra to beg her brother's life. "I am sure," I said, "that this plump Turk will readily promise to forsake his evil ways. Nature never intended him for a villain; he has not the brains nor courage. I ask you, emir, pardon him for the sake of his sister's goodness to me, under the condition that he swears to have no more dealings of any sort with Ibn Asl and gives us all the information he possesses as to his whereabouts and movements."

The Reis Effendina shook his head. "I can hardly refuse you the means of paying such a debt, but I am reluctant to let even the most insignificant of this gang escape. I will give this Turk into your hands, however. Get this vow from him and let him go, if you must."

I lost no time in acting upon this permission. When Murad Nassyr came up out of the pit on my summoning him his face was ghastly, and it seemed as if great folds had been made in his fat cheeks during the night.

"Murad Nassyr," I began, "you deserve no mercy at my hands but for your sister's sake I will spare you. The emir has given me full power over you. If you will solemnly swear to renounce Ibn Asl and all slave-dealing forevermore I will set you free."

"Is that all you ask — nothing harder than that?" cried the abject creature, falling on his knees from gratitude and weakness. "I will gladly do that. I have long seen that this man was my evil genius and regretted bitterly the peaceful days and honest life in Kahireh from which he lured me."

"And you must give us all the information that you possess which will lead to his capture," I reminded him.

"I have sworn never to reveal what I know of him," stammered Murad Nassyr.

"It is a sin to keep such an oath. What is he, one man and a villain, beside the countless souls he is enslaving and murdering?"

"I will obey you. I see that I have done wrong. I am sorry, and I will return to Kahireh and resume my business there."

"Swear, then, to renounce Ibn Asl, to tell us truthfully all you know of him, and that you will forsake slave-dealing, in any form, forever."

He rose tremblingly, raised his hands to heaven and said: "I swear it by Allah, by the Prophet and the beard of the Prophet, and by the salvation of my ancestors and all my descendants. Never will I deal in slaves nor with slave traders again. And may heaven bless you, Effendi, that you have spared me who have so grievously wronged you," he added, turning to me and lifting the hem of my robe to his lips with a gratitude that was unmistakably sincere.

"Come to the Reis Effendina; you must fulfil your promise and give him your information as to Ibn Asl's whereabouts."

He followed me without a word, though I could see that he was trembling at what he was about to do as well as at facing the emir.

The Reis Effendina scowled at him as we approached. "Your pardon is this Effendi's doing, not my will," he said. "I have decided to take you with us to assure myself of your fidelity. We must leave the ship behind, as we are to proceed by land, so I will send your sister with her attendants back by 'Esch Schadin.' You will now tell me

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all you know about Ibn Asl."

Murad Nassyr obeyed. At first he spoke so low that we could hardly understand him. But at last, plucking up a little courage, he gave us information which proved to be of the utmost importance.

Just as he was ending we saw a queer procession approaching. First came Kumra, veiled, and bearing a steaming water pot in her hands. Behind her was Fatma, carrying ground coffee; then two other servants, with cups and spoons, and lastly black girls, with pipes and tobacco. I almost laughed aloud, but the emir frowned forbiddingly and said:

"What are you doing here? Your place is in the harem, not in the councils of men."

But the procession kept on and stopped before him.

"Our place is indeed here, O most high lawgiver," said Kumra. "We bring you refreshment after your journey, coffee, fresh and warm, and tobacco, a marvel of fragrance, precious as the odors of paradise. Drink, smoke and give my brother his freedom, for which I will bless you and shed upon you –"

She got no further; her little arms had been too heavily burdened, her tender hands were burned with the hot metal. The steaming pot swayed from side to side, her body bent to balance it, but too late! As she spoke the catastrophe came. The great water-pot toppled over, emptying all its boiling contents into the Reis Effendina's lap! I thought she would have fainted from fright; not at all! Instead she gathered the pot into her short arms and said:

"Patience, O emir, and I will boil more water!"

There was no hope of regaining the former solemnity of tone nor severity of manner toward the brother of this lovely but phlegmatic being. The Reis took my arm, and we went to breakfast, Murad Nassyr joining us. His little sister, true to her promise, brought us more coffee, which this time we used internally and found it better than an external application.

CHAPTER XX. SELIM ONCE MORE

ACTING on the information received from Murad Nassyr, the emir and I separated once more, I to follow up the river on shore, he, altering his plans, to sail after me, for we found it would be better to bring up the "Falcon" after all, since we could not be sure when Ibn Asl would make his intended assault on the Dinkas, nor, when he had captured them, whether he would bring them down by water or land.

Murad Nassyr and the "turtle dove" went on board "Esch Schadin," and I may state here that when I parted from the contrite Turk and his sister, it was forever.

But I received an addition to my force which was by no means a welcome one. Selim, the lengthy, the boaster and marplot, who had been so long with the Reis Effendina waiting to join me, begged so hard to go with me this time that I could not refuse, and he, with Ben Nil, a Negro called Agadi, whom the Reis had given me for interpreter in case we came upon any native settlements, and a force of "Asaker" sufficient to hold Ibn Asl at bay till the ship should come up if we met him, constituted my little army. Our march was made through a marshy country, and we were mounted upon oxen, as neither a camel nor a horse could traverse it. Indeed none other than that prosaic animal is found in that region, though the ox does not figure in poetry as frequently as "the noble Arabian steed" and the "ship of the desert."

Our destination was a Dinka village, not the Gohks', which Ibn Asl intended to raid, but another branch of that tribe, from whom we hoped to draw assistance in rescuing their kindred. We had seen no sign of a human being during our wearisome march of four days, but at twilight of the last day we came upon a deeply trodden path which led from the water. Between two posts erected over the path at the point where we came upon it hung a heavy rock, which was attached to a cross-beam between these posts, and on the rock hung a short iron spear, which was connected with a bundle of tempting reeds by a rope. There was a barbed hook on the end of the spear. We recognized in this contrivance a hippopotamus trap, and, concluding that where there was a trap there must be men who set it, resolved to conceal ourselves to watch for their coming, it being uncertain whether they would prove friends or foes.

Agadi, the interpreter, offered to reconnoiter the village, which we assumed was near by, an offer which we accepted. He was gone more than an hour and returned with the report that it was a settlement of the Dinkas of the tribe of Bor, the very tribe which we were seeking to aid us in rescuing their kindred.

Just as we were about to sally forth on the strength of this assurance to visit the village we saw two Negroes approaching, and resumed our position till we had made sure they were from the Dinkas. They went toward the river, and as I watched them I saw something coming up from the bank which made me hold my breath. It was a hippopotamus cow, a giant to judge by the size of the head, and by her side ambled her youngster, which was about as big as a Newfoundland dog. Evidently the Negroes had not seen this pair, and I watched anxiously for the men's and the animals' discovery of each other, for the hippopotamus is not the mild creature it is sometimes said to be. It often attacks without provocation; when wounded it is always dangerous, and no wild animal tolerates the presence of man when it has young.

The mother and her clumsy child were enjoying an unwieldy game of romps in the swamp, drawing nearer the men, whom I saw suddenly get behind trees, showing that they had seen the little one, which had preceded its mother some distance, quite unconscious of danger. I was all eyes, watching the scene with no thought of anything but the present moment, for I saw the Negroes were absorbed in the prospect of a roast of tender young hippopotamus. The young and inexperienced future tid-bit, drawn by the bait in the trap which it now scented, came close to the men. In a moment they fell upon it, and, with two or three heavy blows on the upraised nose, dispatched it with the oars, which were their only weapon.

Then I saw Nemesis coming in the shape which they ought to have known she would come in — the great body of the old hippopotamus. She had heard the death cry of her young, and responded with a roar which could be compared to nothing else, as she plunged toward its destroyers with a rapidity one could not have expected from such a tremendous mass of flesh. She passed under the trap, setting off the spring. The harpoon fell, but in the animal's rear, because she was moving so fast, and she continued her course unharmed till she reached the

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body of her calf, at which she paused, turning it over with her snout.

Why the Negroes had not looked for the old hippopotamus was hard to see, but evidently her coming was entirely unexpected. They stood motionless, staring at her, transfixed with horror. But as she paused over the little one's body they came to their senses and took advantage of their brief opportunity for flight. Throwing away their oars, they started to run toward their village. My hiding place was between the animal and the Negroes, and it seemed to Selim and Agadi that lives as precious as theirs should not be placed in such hazard. They slipped softly through the trees and were lost to sight, though Ben Nil, as usual stood by me.

In the meantime the hippopotamus, having satisfied herself that the young one was dead, rushed on after the Negroes, who were still in plain view. The speed at which she moved was incredible, and as she ran she gave forth roars which no words could describe. As she approached me I stood still, not from fright, but because I was calculating. Both barrels of my gun were loaded. I could have shot, but was too cautious to do so. The gigantic beast must be wounded in such a place that the wound should be mortal. The trees were so thick that it was impossible to aim with certainty, and there are very few spots in a hippopotamus' body where it can be wounded mortally. I would not attempt the shot from a distance.

What followed happened quicker than it can be described. The scene of the drama, which came nearer being a tragedy, was a path made by the heavy feet of hippopotami, which was not a path in any ordinary sense, but rather deep holes filled with water. To the right and left the thicket; above, palm branches so shading the path with their great leaves that only a few straggling rays of moonlight could break through. The shouts and screams of frightened men arose in front of us from the village, which had been aroused to the danger of the Negroes gone to look after the trap by the infuriated roars of the hippopotamus, and, to add to the horror, the forest resounded with the cries, howls and roars of beasts and birds awakened from their sleep by the roaring of the enraged mammoth and the human voices. And here, close upon us, a raging, furious mass, which had to be disposed of to save the lives of not less than a dozen men!

Hoping to get into the open where I could aim, I started to run, but in a moment I had stumbled and went headlong into the thicket as if thrown by ten-horse power. I heard an awful roar close behind me, gathered myself up and flew onward. How I ran so fast I could never tell, then nor now. The hippopotamus bounded after me, and I rushed blindly on, over holes and stumps, between the walls of the thicket. I stumbled over the bodies of the Negroes who had fallen on their way to the village, and at last the darkness overhead began to lighten; I was reaching the clearing and the moonlight was flooding the ground. Just ahead of me black figures were wildly rushing to and fro, and I heard the hippopotamus stamping a man to powder not twelve feet from me. I made five or six long, running leaps, then stood still and aimed. First I made sure that my hand was steady, that I was not trembling from exertion. Then I fastened my eyes on the left ear of the hippopotamus. The shot echoed through the woods; a second one followed it instantly. I ran toward the left into the shadow of the nearest hut, felt in my pocket for a new charge, reloaded and turned back to see what had been the result of my first shots.

The beast stood erect, motionless. Her great jaws were open, showing her strong, blunt teeth. She looked as though she had intended to roar, but her gigantic jaws emitted no sound, for the source of her voice, the lungs, were wounded. A great shudder passed over her body. She swayed to the right, then to the left, pitched forward, swung from side to side again, then fell heavily, with the sound of a falling log, and lay stark and stiff without the slightest motion of a limb.

In the meantime I had reloaded and come cautiously up to the head, ready for another shot should one be necessary. It never was. Both my first shots had gone home, one passing into the lung, the other into the brain; she was dead.

For the first time I now looked about me to see what had been the effect of the encounter on the Negroes. A few who had been injured lay on the ground, and some were dead; but there was not another human being in sight. From the huts came sounds of voices. I went to the entrance of the largest of these huts and called: "Selim, Agadi, are you here?"

"Yes, Effendi," replied two voices, and, looking in, I saw my interpreter bound fast to stakes.

"Now what does this mean?" I asked as I cut the ropes.

"They took you for Ibn Asl," said Agadi, "and me for your spy. It will be all right now. Heaven, how frightened we all were!"

"They were frightened, Effendi," said Selim, emerging from beneath a pile of blankets, his bronze face

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blanched. "I should have saved them if you had not. I was about to shoot when the beast fell."

"So I see," I remarked. "All good hunters crawl under bedclothes to take aim. Lead me to the chief."

Agadi did as he was bidden, and, as we approached the chieftain's hut, he came forth to meet me. He was a well formed Negro, almost perfectly black, his features of the characteristic Negro type, and he was tattooed in a fashion doubtless beautiful to the initiated. He made me a deep genuflection, scanned my face closely, his gaze getting every moment more friendly, and at last said:

"No, you are not Ibn Asl."

He used the language of his tribe, so that Agadi had to interpret.

"I have come to warn you of a new crime planned by that wretch, so you may trust me."

"Agadi has told me. I do trust you now with all my heart. Tell me how I can show my gratitude to you. I will do anything for you."

"I have done nothing to merit gratitude; but there is something which I might ask of you, for which we will pay you honestly. We need oxen for riding and to carry our packs."

"Then it is true that Ibn Asl will attack the Gohks?"

"It not only is true that he will, but that he is already about the work. I know that you are of the same tribe, and hope that you will help us save them."

"They are our kindred and neighbors, and it is our duty to stand by them. Besides, you have delivered us. They are strangers to you, nevertheless you are trying to rescue them. How could we, who are related to them, refuse our help? How many oxen do you need?"

"Possibly two hundred. Can you get us so many, and that quickly?"

"You can have a thousand by to-morrow noon, for we are richer in cattle than any other tribe. Two hundred will not be enough."

He looked at me laughing as he said this, as if something lay behind it, and I asked expectantly:

"Why not?"

"Because two hundred cannot carry the force of our warriors which will go with you. When strangers go to rescue our kindred we cannot stay behind. I will send two hundred of my best warriors with you."

This was better tidings than I dared hope for, and I answered joyfully:

"They will be most welcome. We do not fear Ibn Asl, but we cannot be too strong. I will go to fetch my 'Asaker' into the village and will send messengers back to the Reis Effendina that he may know where to find me and how generously you will help us."

This I did, and we supped royally, my comrades, our new allies and I, on roasted baby hippopotamus, which really is an acceptable dish.

After a refreshing night's sleep we wakened to a breakfast of the same unusual delicacy, and then, since there was nothing to be done until the warriors and oxen could be gotten ready, I asked the chieftain, through Agadi, if there was any shooting to be had.

"You will not find anything about here, Effendi," he replied. "Our presence has driven away all game; but, if you will row across the river, you will get all you want."

"Do you know whether I might run across an enemy over there?" I asked.

"I know you have nothing to fear. You will not see a human being, for we are the only ones near here."

This assurance was quite enough, for the chief was well acquainted with the region, so I made ready to go hunting, taking Ben Nil with me. But Selim did not fancy this arrangement. He hastened after me, imploring:

"Take me with you, Effendi; take me with you."

"Not I," I said. "You are sure to do some idiotic thing. I don't want you."

He threw up his long arms, clasped his hands over his head and shrieked:

"Idiotic! I, Selim, the most renowned warrior in the world, idiotic! Who ever heard the like? You insult the very depths of my soul and wound the tenderest feelings of my heart. If fifty hippopotami and a hundred elephants attacked me they could not harm me; I would lay more than that low in five minutes. And you are to shoot nothing but birds!"

I should scarcely have yielded even to this heart-rending appeal, but Ben Nil seemed to want the old gas-bag to enjoy himself, and begged me to let him go, reminding me that he really could do no harm.

"Well, let him come, then," I said; "but he will scare off the birds, if he can't do anything worse, for he is

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doomed to make a mess of everything he puts his finger in."

We took a small boat and rowed out on the river. A little way up on the opposite bank we saw a small inlet, into which I steered. Selim was rowing, and the instant we got near in he pulled so hard on one oar that I could do nothing with the tiller, and he landed us on, or rather in, a marshy island overgrown with reeds. Selim thought it was solid land. I saw that he was making ready to jump and I shouted:

"Stop ! You'll go through."

Too late! He had made the jump quicker than I could speak, and my prophecy was fulfilled on the spot, for he immediately disappeared in the long grass. Our light boat nearly capsized when the careless fellow leaped. I jumped to the other side to right her and Selim's head appeared, terror written on his face, while he clutched the boat rail, drawing us downward.

"Let go, you idiot you'll upset us!" I shouted. "Lift up your legs; swim!"

"I must get in; take me in," he blubbered. "The crocodiles! The crocodiles! Lift me, quick, quick; they'll get me!"

There was not a sign of a crocodile anywhere; nevertheless the coward hung stiff and wild with fright on the edge of the boat, so that with Ben Nil and me leaning with all our might over the other side, we were in momentary danger of upsetting.

"Don't stay on that side; take me in," Selim implored, pulling himself along the edge toward us, trying to escape the crocodiles which were not there. As he passed to the stern the little boat keeled over, and in an instant we were all in the Nile. I struck out for shore. Ben Nil instantly rose and followed me; but Selim, Selim, the hero, grabbed my foot, and I actually towed the creature in and hauled him up the bank, where he lay with his eyes closed as if drowned.

"He isn't dead?" said Ben Nil doubtfully.

"Certainly not; no one drowns so quickly. Selim, open your eyes."

He obeyed, looked at us and then at the water with an expression of anguish and shrieked:

"Where are the crocodiles, where are they? Quick! get away from here."

He actually started to run, but I held him fast, saying:

"Stay where you are, coward! No crocodile is such a fool as to mistake you for good eating. You are perfectly safe here. There isn't a crocodile anywhere around, but our shooting is done for, thanks to our letting you come with us. I knew you'd do some fool thing."

These words aroused him.

"I?" he exclaimed. "Effendi, it was you, not I, who steered to that treacherous island. And as to drowning, I tell you I am so at home in the water that I would be more likely to drown on land than in the waves."

"You don't say so! Then go in and dive for our guns and bring the boat here."

He scratched his renowned ear and was silent. Of course, I had no idea of sending him after the guns and boat, but emptied my pockets, took off my belt with my knives, laid them in the sun to dry and went into the river to get our property.

There was no trouble in finding the guns, for they lay exactly under the spot where the boat had capsized, and, while I was disentangling them from the grass, Ben Nil, who had laid off all unnecessary encumbrances and followed me, righted the boat, and we pushed it ashore, guns and all safe.

We sat down on the bank and set to work emptying out the gun barrels and drying them. Our faces were turned toward the water, and we talked in ordinary tones, having the chief's assurance that there was no danger of being overheard. Unfortunately he was mistaken when he said no one was in that neighborhood. There was some one about, as we were to discover.

When I had finished working on my gun and was about to begin on my revolver I heard a voice behind me cry in a tone of command:

"Quick! Seize them and bind them."

Before I could spring to my feet I was overpowered and thrown down. Three or four dark-visaged fellows knelt on me, while another bound my arms with his head cloth. I tried vainly to throw them off. Once I half succeeded, but at last I was bound and resistance was impossible. Three other men had in like manner disposed of

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Ben Nil. Selim, "the greatest hero of the world," had been conquered by one man!

Now that we were all rendered powerless, the leader of the gang came forward from the bushes and strode over to me, saying:

"You here in Maijah Semkat, you dog! This is the work of Allah. He has given you into my hands, and this time you are at the end of your rope."

I looked up and saw in amazement that it was the muza'bir, the man from whom I had already escaped so fortunately and who thus far had been able to escape me.

CHAPTER XXI. THE MUZA'BIR AND THE MOKKADEM GET TO THE END OF THE ROPE

THE muza'bir stood looking down upon me with an expression of keenest delight upon his face and he said, continuing to gloat over his triumph:

"The devil has helped you escape us many times when we thought we were sure of you. But this time even he can be no use to you, for we won't give you time to escape. As soon as we reach the camp you shall be hanged. It is a pity, for that death is far too quick for you; you should have been put to slow torture. But, if you tell me the truth, you may escape it, so speak out. Whence came you here?"

He spoke of a camp. Could Ibn Asl be near here? Hardly likely. But, whatever it meant, it would avail me nothing to be silent. Still less did I mean to tell him the truth, so I said:

"We three came up the river alone; no one else came with us."

"Don't lie, dog! Your boat betrays you. There are no such boats around here; it belongs to a ship, and that ship is the Reis Effendina's. Confess. From whom did you get that boat?"

I thought I would tell the truth this time, hoping it would make him believe me later, so I answered:

"You are right, I got it from the Reis Effendina."

"I thought so. Where is his ship?"

"It lies down the river, a half a day's sail from here."

"I wonder if I can believe you. Why are you not with him?"

"We were sent ahead to set hippopotamus traps, so our 'Asaker' would have meat when they came up. We are after Ibn Asl."

"After Ibn Asl!" he echoed, laughing scornfully. "You have no idea where to find him."

"Where is he?" I asked with what I tried to make childlike simplicity.

"Where is he?" he repeated, sneering. "Do you expect me to tell you? Still, I will tell you, to prove to you that there is no need for us to fear you, that you really are lost. Ibn Asl has gone with more than two hundred warriors to Wagunda to capture the Gohk Negroes for slaves."

"Why did you not go with him. Were you afraid?"

"I afraid? I ought to answer that question on your face. I stayed behind with the MokkaDEM, because after Ibn Asl has made the capture he will return this way, and we are building a new seribah of slight huts to shelter the slaves till they can be taken to market. You shall see this new seribah. We will start at once."

He had nine men with him. Two of them took Ben Nil, another pair took Selim between them and the other five were entrusted with me, with the caution to be especially careful that I did not escape.

We were borne along the river bank, and after a little while we came to the end of the woods, and I saw a grass grown plain leading up from the water's edge for nearly two miles. Then we saw more woods, on the border of which some huts had been erected. Their circular walls were made of clay and rushes and their funnel-shaped roofs were thatched. This was the new seribah of the slave-dealers.

Four men came toward us as we approached. Three had African features, but in the fourth I recognized my old acquaintance, the MokkaDEM. He was thunderstruck at the sight of me. But when he recovered sufficiently to do so, he expressed his delight at my capture in no measured terms and asked the particulars of its accomplishment. The muza'bir gratified his curiosity, repeating to him the information I had given him, over which they both chuckled as a proof of my stupidity.

Since the muza'bir had informed me that I was to be hanged without delay, I was casting about in my mind for means of a speedy escape. The head cloth with which I was bound, my hands tied fast to my sides, must be broken, and, though it was not new, it was strong. I began to strain on it cautiously, trying to get it so that it could be forced apart suddenly. Besides our two enemies, there were in the seribah twelve "Asaker," whom Ibn Asl had left there, all well armed, though with pistols and knives, not long guns. A little to one side were two oxen, saddle oxen apparently, with their bridles thrown over their necks. It is not necessary to add that all our property had been left on the bank where we were captured.

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The MokkaDEM agreed with his companion that we should be hung, but he held out for a little previous torture for me. While they were arguing this point I whispered to Ben Nil and Selim, who stood near me:

"I am going to cut your bonds. Run, without once looking around, to our boat; get in, and be ready to row away when I come."

"How can you free us?" whispered Ben Nil. "You are bound fast and have no knife."

"I shall do it. All you have to do is to follow my orders. I shall run in the opposite direction from you, and they will go after me and pay no attention to you. Be sure to wait for me to come."

The muza'bir looked around at that moment, and I, pretending not to see him, moved my arm as if trying to loosen the cloth. Instantly he was down upon me, crying:

"Dog, are you trying to get free? You won't succeed. Ah, the cloth really is loosened. I'll see to that!"

He did not consider that in order to do this he must untie the knot. It was undone only an instant, but in that instant I had thrust up my elbow, gotten my arm free, thrown myself on the muza'bir, with my right hand had drawn the knife from his girdle, while with my left I dealt him such a blow in the face that he fell over. Two quick cuts — Ben Nil's and Selim's bands were in halves, and both were running as hard as they could run in the direction I had told them to take.

All this happened with the greatest rapidity, but not too rapidly for the MokkaDEM, who sprang forward and seized me by the left arm. I had the knife in my right hand, but, though I must get away from him, I did not want to stab him; so I threw it away, knocked him down and then ran for my life in the opposite direction from the one my comrades had taken. This brought me to the oxen, and, acting on a sudden inspiration, I sprang on the back of one, seized the bridle and struck him a blow that started him on a dead run. His first movement showed me that he obeyed the bridle, and, as far as that went, I was all right. The slave-dealing gang came after me, howling like madmen. Looking back I saw that the muza'bir had recovered and had mounted the second ox to pursue me. I was well pleased. No one had given a thought to Ben Nil and Selim and I had such a start that I felt sure I should escape. Unfortunately my confidence was not well founded; my ox stepped into a hole which I had not seen and fell, throwing me with such violence that it was a little time before I could pick myself up again. I was not hurt, though my whole body was jarred; but my poor ox had broken his forefoot, and I must depend upon my own speed for escape.

The muza'bir had come up to within two hundred feet of me. I heard his triumphant shout as he waved his pistol toward me. The others were also in pursuit, but too far behind to be reckoned with. I had to decide hastily whether it was better to try to run from the muza'bir or wait his coming up. I chose the former course. He was mounted and armed; I was neither, but I resolved to trust once more to my keen sight and good luck. So I stood facing him as he rode upon me, and at about a hundred feet distance he aimed, and, shouting, "Die, dog; you will escape the rope, but here is a bullet," fired — and missed me! He would have been a better shot than he was to have done otherwise, with his ox at full gallop, so I was not surprised.

The pistol had but one barrel. He drew the second pistol from his girdle. Once more he fired, and once more he missed me. Now was my time! Putting up the second pistol, he drew his knife. He was so crazed with rage at having missed me that he lost control of himself, and, instead of stopping beside me, he guided the ox wrong, and it darted past me before it could be drawn up. He lost but a moment by this mistake, but it sufficed to give me the advantage. I ran after him, sprang up behind him on the ox, and put my hands around his, pressing them so forcibly to his sides that the ox felt the pull on the bridle and started off again at top speed.

"Dog!" he gasped. "Let me go or we shall both break our necks."

"I'll break nothing," I laughed; "but I'll crush your bones. Drop that knife or I'll crack your ribs."

He held the bridle with both hands and the knife also in the right hand. He dropped it as I spoke, for as I did so I pressed him harder.

"Stop!" he whispered. "my breast — you're breaking it!"

"If you obey, nothing will happen to you. But, at the first sign of disobedience, I will crush you like a rotten apple. You have the bridle. Turn the ox toward the left."

I pressed his ribs as a gentle hint, and he did as I bade him, groaning with rage and pain. The ox ran at full speed over the grass toward the woods. In the distance I heard the voices of the MokkaDEM and his men howling like demons, but we were far beyond their reach. We had nearly come to the woods when the muza'bir attempted

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to swing his leg over the ox's back, hoping to slip thus through my arms. I had no intention of letting him get away, so I relaxed my hold just long enough to give him one of those love pats on his temple, which had earned me the name of "Old Shatterhand" among the Indians, and the raised leg sank peacefully into place as his body drooped forward on the ox's neck. I took the bridle from his powerless hand, held him with the left arm only, and guided the willing beast toward the moat, which I reached with no further adventure.

Ben Nil and Selim were awaiting me anxiously, and, as they saw me, Ben Nil cried joyously: "Hamdulillah! Praised be Allah that you come. We have been terribly anxious about you, Effendi. But who have you there? Is it by the Prophet, it is the muza'bir!"

"That's just who it is. He meant to have us, and now we have him."

"What luck! What a victory for you! How did you do it?"

"I'll tell you later. Get him on board and hasten away. The whole gang will be after us."

"We have our weapons," said Ben Nil as he and Selim dragged the limp muza'bir into the boat. I followed, seated myself in the stern, took the tiller ropes, while the two men rowed, and the light craft flew down the river to the Dinka village.

I found, as I had expected, that the Reis Effendina had arrived during my absence. He had posted sentinels on the bank, and the whole camp was alarmed over our long delay. When the Reis learned from me what had happened, and saw that we were returning with one of Ibn Asl's chief allies as prize His amazement and delight knew no bounds. His pleasure soon gave way to his indignation, remembering the many crimes of the man now in his power, and his long pursuit of him. The emir was not a person to let the grass grow under his feet. He held with Macbeth that what was to be done was well done quickly. As the muza'bir returned to consciousness the Reis Effendina took him by the arm and led him into the full glare of the camp fire.

"Do you know me?" he demanded sternly.

"You are the Reis Effendina. I am glad to be in your hands, for now I have nothing to fear," replied the prisoner in tones that he meant should be confident.

"Whether or not you fear me is your affair," said the emir. "Mine is to administer justice."

"If you are just you will set me free, for I have not wronged you," said the muza'bir.

"No barking, cur. You are a slave-dealer, and you are a subject of the Viceroy, in whose place I stand. You knew when you were captured and brought before me that your hour had come. My law is the law of the desert: 'Like to like'; 'woe to him who does evil!' Aziz, bring a rope."

Aziz was our old friend, the Reis' "right hand," and he went readily to get the required rope. As he returned with it, and the muza'bir realized that his hour actually had come, he cried out: "Effendina, you are not in earnest. Consider the consequences! The MokkaDEM of the sacred Kadis is my friend. He knows that I am innocent and will make the Viceroy answer for my death."

"The MokkaDEM is also a friend of mine," said the emir coolly, "and to-morrow he will swing, contentedly beside you here. Up with him on the bough."

Three "Asaker" held the muza'bir, while Aziz laid the noose over his neck and threw the other end to two more "Asaker," who climbed a tree to attach it to a branch. The condemned man tried to resist, shrieking and howling, until I could not help asking mercy for him, but the emir turned on me in a rage and said: "Be silent! You know how often I have been merciful for your sake. If I had not done so we might have been through with these villains now. If you will make these pleas of weakness and ignorance of the evil we are trying to stamp out you run the risk of angering me so deeply that our friendship will be ended. Be quiet, and, if you cannot bear the sight, go away till the man is hanged."

This was plain language. I would not have allowed a friend to speak thus to me, yet I saw that the Reis was much disturbed, and I could not but acknowledge that my plea really was unjust and foolish. Naturally I said no more and walked away, for I had no desire to witness an execution.

In less than an hour I heard steps, and, turning, saw the Reis Effendina coming to seek me, and, as I turned to meet him, I saw the dark figure of the muza'bir outlined in the moonlight, swinging from the limb on which he had paid the penalty of his crimes. The emir's anger had disappeared as quickly as it had arisen. He was smiling and said, holding out his hand: "Effendi, justice is done, but only partly satisfied. We must get the MokkaDEM, too. I hope your humanitarianism won't prevent you leading me to capture him. If it does, Ben Nil must take your

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place. I warn you honestly I will hang him as I said I would the moment I catch him."

"My sense of justice is as robust as yours," I replied.

"Hang a thousand men if they deserve it, and you can put an end to the suffering death of the slave victims they are making. I will lead you to the MokkaDEM."

"Those are welcome and sensible words. We must start at once, for you have told them that I am down the river, and we shall surprise them."

We took enough "Asaker" for our purpose and the Dinka chief, who requested to be allowed to accompany us. The emir, Ben Nil and I led the way in the small boat.

It was bright moonlight when we reached our destination. As I have already said, the seribah stood on the edge of the woods. A camp fire was burning, and so entirely secure did the MokkaDEM feel that he had not deemed it necessary even to post sentinels. We saw the men sitting around the fire without their guns, which were evidently left inside the huts. I was glad of this, for I hoped the capture might be made without bloodshed and his followers be pardoned, although the MokkaDEM's fate was sealed. I had gone on ahead, and now turned back to call up our men and make this suggestion to the Reis Effendina, but before I could speak he took me by the arm and drew me away, saying that I might be shot. I followed, with no suspicion of what was to happen, and said:

"Shot! Why, I was about to tell you they have no guns. We will fall upon them and —"

"Effendi," interrupted Ben Nil, "all but the MokkaDEM are to be shot. The Reis Effendina has ordered —"

"Silence!" the emir said angrily. Then pointing toward the fire, he shouted to his men:

"Now, fire, quick!"

Twenty guns were raised and twenty shots rattled. All the men, seated unsuspecting around the blaze, fell at the same moment, while the MokkaDEM started up and rushed into the shadow.

I guessed that he would make for the river. and ran in the opposite direction from the one he had taken, while the emir shouted after me: "What ails you? The other way; there's the fellow, the other way!" Not heeding, I ran on, calculating as I ran that he would never risk going out in the full moonlight, but must have taken refuge in the high marsh grass. I turned in that direction, and in a moment I saw him. I slipped out of sight myself, and he ran toward my hiding-place. As he came up I rose, and when he saw me he fell back, crying: "Oh, Allah! the Effendi!"

He was so shocked that he never thought of using his weapons, but only of flight. As he turned to run away I seized him around the body, lifted him and literally threw him to the "Asaker" who were pursuing him. I felt no further responsibility, and hastened back to the Reis Effendina and ventured to reproach him for the slaughter of the twelve followers of the MokkaDEM. "Twelve!" he exclaimed. "If I forgave this twelve I should have to forgive all the slave dealers in the Sudan. They deserved their fate, as I know better than you can. Woe to them who do evil! Let us look after the MokkaDEM and then return with him and finish up this good day's work."

The MokkaDEM was bound hand and foot and laid in the boat, and we rowed back to the Dinka village more slowly than we had come. Either the man had sufficient nerve to control his fear or he really did think that the emir would not dare touch one so high in authority, for he acted as though he were perfectly secure, and even ordered the Reis Effendina to unfasten his bonds, threatening him with the power of the Kadis if he refused.

For answer the Reis pointed to the tree whereon hung the muza'bir's body, saying: "There is your answer and the proof that my power is at least equal to yours. In a few moments you shall be at his side, as you have been companions in crime.

Look there!"

As the prisoner's gaze fell on the tree he was silent for a moment, while his eyes seemed starting from their sockets. Then he cried in horror-stricken tones:

"Who is that? Am I seeing aright? O, Allah, Allah, Allah! It really is the muza'bir!"

"Yes," nodded the Reis. "He exalted himself over us, so we gave him that high place. Yours shall be as much higher, as you are more exalted than he."

"You dare not, you dare not!" shrieked the MokkaDEM as Aziz fixed the rope around his neck at a sign from the emir. "It is murder! Your life shall pay for it! I will destroy you! Let me go — mercy, murder — ah! ah!"

"Silence, you cur!" interrupted the emir. "How dare you threaten me? Do you imagine your insane ravings are

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hasheesh that will make me forget my duty? You know that all your deeds are known to me and yet you dare threaten me. Up with him — up! at least two branches higher than the other villain. Let his sacred Kadis, with which he threatens us, save him! Allah is just, and I am doing his will. Woe to him who does evil. Up with him, up!"

CHAPTER XXII. FRIENDS FALL OUT

IT was the sixth day after the capture and execution of the two coadjutors of Ibn Asl, and we were on our way in pursuit of the principal malefactor.

Our train wound like a snake through the forest, the gigantic branches of its trees forming a shelter through which even the burning rays of the sun of the Sudan could not penetrate. This was a blessed thing for us, for the scorching heat in the open country beyond the woods destroyed all life. Yet the dangers surrounding us were not less than those outside, for under this vault of leaves lay ground which could not be called earth and which threatened at every step to engulf us as well as breed in us deadly fevers. It was a swamp, apparently without limit, from which rose the giants of the vegetable world, their gnarled roots tripping our feet as we felt for a secure foundation. We were all mounted on oxen, the Bor warriors in advance, then a band of "Asaker," then pack oxen, then more soldiers and more beasts of burden. It was fortunate for us that the Negroes had joined us, for otherwise we never should have reached our destination, but been swallowed up in the swamp in which they were as much at home as if it were their native country, and their accustomed eyes distinguished at a glance between the spots where one could tread and those in which it was death to plant a foot. We could proceed only in single file, and I rode, wondering at the accurate vision of our guides, and learning every moment to respect oxen more and more, for, without these reliable beasts even the Bors could not have come out safely.

At each step they sank half a leg deep, yet never seemed to tire, and each one perfectly understood that he was to put his feet in precisely the same spot that his predecessor had trodden.

For three long days we rode through this deadly country, driven almost mad the while by the insects which stung and tortured us. There was no place safe to encamp in at night. The water gave out and the air we breathed was hardly to be called air, but a blasting fever. Hence it may be imagined that we heard the long drawn shout of the Bor chief, which all his men repeated, and which announced that we had come to the end of the swamp, with unspeakable gratitude.

The Bor chief drew up, waiting for us all to come up with him, for he had reached solid ground, which allowed us to ride together, and, turning to us, he said:

"The swamp is behind us and good roads lie ahead. Soon we shall drink water and see fields which belong to the Gohks. By evening we shall be in Wagunda."

These tidings we received with cheers and shouts. The men, heretofore so silent and listless, began to chatter and grow lively. Even the oxen seemed to know that they were near their journey's end, for they began to bellow and pushed forward, no longer keeping in their order of march. In a short time we emerged into full sunshine, which was like plunging into an ocean of light after the long twilight we had passed through, and its great heat was to us no more than a welcome warmth that penetrated gratefully our bodies and revived all our senses.

We came upon a brook, or what is called a brook in the Sudan, though not what we mean when we use the word at home, for in that country of swamps and deserts every little swell of ground is a hill and every stream that is not positively stagnant is a brook. We followed this "brook" upward till it emptied into a little river, on which stood a small Gohk village, before which we halted to send a messenger into it with tidings of who we were and why we had come, lest its dwellers might flee, frightened at our approach.

We saw him returning, apparently with every living thing of all ages and sizes in the village streaming behind him fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, young men and maidens, and all the children coming out to see us, attired in the best finery time and their possessions allowed them to don. An old, gray-headed man who was presented to us as the head of the village, was clad simply in a pair of something like bathing tights, yet wore on his head a round structure of basket work, which was certainly three feet high, and adorned with waving feathers. A village belle had twisted her hair into ringlets and then so stiffened it with fat and oil that it looked as though she had bored a half gross of corkscrews through her skull from within and left them standing up around her head. A youth, unquestionably the village Adonis, wore airily the brim of a hat which had been torn from its crown at some long previous day. His right foot was clad in a soleless leather shoe, while the left wore a sandal. But his chief ornament — possibly the most precious possession in all the village — was a pair of brass spectacle rims, guiltless of glasses, which he had tied around his neck with a slender string.

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I would gladly have continued the study of these full dress costumes, but the old man took the proud owner of the spectacle rims by the hand and led him to the Reis Effendina, who had been pointed out to him as our leader, and began with much gesticulation a speech, of which we could not understand a word, but of which the meaning was plain by the pantomime before our interpreter told us that he said: "You are strangers, most noble lords, and you wish to go to Wagunda. This young man, who owns precious ornament, alone is worthy to guide you thither."

We responded politely, gave the old man some trifling things, which were infinitely valuable in his eyes, however, and rode on, the proud possessor of the maimed spectacles leading the way. He was a good runner, in spite of his being so queerly shod. He kept up with our oxen, leading us up the river at a rapid pace toward the village of Wagunda, doomed, unless we could get there in time to save it from being raided by Ibn Asl.

At last, after long travel through unshaded plains, we reached woods through which we rode to the banks of a lake. A glance sufficed to show us that we were near our destination. The lake shores were surrounded by fruitful fields and canoes lay on the water's edge. To the right rose a hill, which really deserved the name, and its summit was crowned by a thick thorn hedge shutting off a glimpse of what lay behind it.

There was a small opening in this hedge through which people were streaming, coming down the hill toward us, and, as the dwellers in Wagunda had been apprised of our approach by a messenger, we knew that they were pouring forth to give us a formal welcome. We drew up in order to receive them at the foot of the hill, the Reis Effendina, the Bor chief and I in front, our followers and pack oxen in the rear. The Wagunda Gohks were, of course, on foot, and armed with spears, sabers, knives, clubs and bows and arrows. As they moved toward us we also advanced toward them, and whoever had a gun fired it, all howling like savages as some of us were, but I bore my part in this ceremony so faithfully that my throat was raw for some days.

After we had finished our evolutions and vocalizing — and this took a quarter of an hour — we drew up in two parties, each under our own leader, and faced each other. Then the Gohk chief stepped forth, and, with many genuflections to the emir, swaying his body to the right and left as if he were in agony, rolling his eyes, wringing his hands, leaping backward and forward, twisting his neck and going through the most violent and marvelous contortions, began a speech to the Reis Effendina, which lasted for another quarter of an hour, setting forth his gratitude and willingness to die for any and all of us who had risked our lives to rescue him and his people. At the last word all the Gohks burst into jubilant cries, in which we joined to the best of our ability.

Now it was the Reis Effendina's turn to reply, which he did briefly, in kindly words of praise of the Gohks, fierce denunciations of Ibn Asl, and with strong protestations of his intention to rid the country of the man who had for so long been its curse. A silence fell upon the Gohks as he ceased speaking. I felt that the speech had not pleased them and guessed that it was because it lacked the noise and gesticulation which was essential to the savage notion of a good speech. While I was wondering what could be done to repair this mistake the Gohk chief uttered a few long cries, pointing to me as he did so. I was mystified, but the interpreter exclaimed to me that they wanted a speech from me. A speech! This was as truly "unexpected" as the after dinner orator assures his audience a like request is to him, but I summoned my wits to help me out of the scrape. Setting my ox running at full speed, I rode round the Gohk chief some twenty times, giving the while the war whoop of the Apaches, which I had learned while among the Indians, sprang from the ox, leaving him to run where he would, stood before the gaping chief, threw up my arms and began reciting the famine from "Hiawatha." As the poem progressed — and a few lines omitted or mistakes made did not matter — I sprang here and there, threw up first one limb and then another, bent down and sprang up, ending at last with a wild howl and rapid shots from my gun.

For a moment deep silence reigned. Then every voice among the Gohks and our own "Asaker" burst into cries that sounded like a western cyclone. I never heard such a noise in all my life. Ben Nil, who, though he did not understand what I had done, suspected a joke, and was delighted with my success. Only the emir remained silent, and, when opportunity offered, he called me aside to expostulate with me for having lowered his dignity by such pranks.

"You will see whether I have done the harm you think or not," I replied. "You and I know I was playing pranks, but I lose my guess if the Gohks have not a much higher opinion of us for my noise and agility."

Even as I spoke the Gohk chief came toward us. He had been consulting with his followers since I had ceased speaking, and now he bowed to the Reis Effendina and said, of course, through the interpreter:

"Great lord, you have come to deliver us from pressing danger. You are more welcome than can be said. I hear that you are the favorite of the Viceroy. We are not his subjects, for we are free Gohks, of the great tribe of the

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Djangeh, but we honor you as he honors you. Be our guest and stay with us as long as it pleases you." Then turning to me, he continued: "Great lord, the Bor chief, who is our brother, has told us briefly of your deeds. You come from a land where great men dwell. You blast your foes to dust with your hand, and no man can conquer you. And I have heard and seen you speak as I have heard and seen no other speak. Whoso hears your voice is enlivened as with strong drink, and the motions of your arms and legs prove the truth of your words. Should a foe resist your knife, your voice will conquer him. Therefore are you the man who can deliver us. Ibn Asl is a devil, and his men are demons,

from whom there is no deliverance, but if you will go with us we shall not fear, for you alone are equal to a hundred of my warriors. I will summon my followers and put them under your command. Tell me that you will be our leader."

This certainly was not "drawing it mild," as Sairy Gamp would have said. According to this good Negro, one would think I were what Selim claimed to be, a sort of fairy tale hero. Well, there really was no reason why I should not take the honor offered me, and I did think they would get on with me better than alone, since they had declined the leadership of the Reis Effendina. So I assented to the proposition, and my assent was received with jubilant cries.

The emir had left me before the last words of the Gohk chief had been spoken, and it was evening before I saw him again. Then to my surprise and grief I found him in a most unfriendly state of mind; in fact, jealous of the preference of these savages.

"Are you an officer, Effendi?" he demanded at once as I came up.

"You know that I am not," I replied.

"And you know well that I am one, and, as Reis Effendina, one of no ordinary rank. Therefore it is most unbecoming that you should lead this expedition. If you choose to lead the Negroes, you may; but remember I am your superior."

His voice was angry, and I thought, considering that I had served him so well for so long, it need not have been so, but I pretended not to notice it and answered quietly:

"Why do you tell me this? Have I ever disputed your rights or done anything except as you desired? I did not dream that you would object when I gave this chief my promise to lead them, but I will recall it now that I see you do. I am from the West, and it does not matter to me what happens here in the East. My plan was to march out to meet Ibn Asl toward Aguda, whence it is likely he will come, but if you have a better one I will gladly accept it, and, if you prefer, will help you to the best of my ability in the ranks. You surely know I have no thirst for such honor as lies in leading these men."

The emir, disregarding everything else I had said, took up my previous words and replied: "You say truly that you are a foreigner and have no part in the affairs of the Sudan. You bewitched these simple people with your antics, and they think you are a better leader than I. I not only wish you to renounce the command the chief offered you, but I prefer that you should take no part in the capture of Ibn Asl."

"You have spoken clearly this time," I said, turning on my heel. "I need no further hint. I leave it to you to consider whether you have made a decent return for the services I have rendered you. Allah isallamak — God protect you."

So saying, I walked away, returning to my good Ben Nil, who received me with anxious looks, having had some hint from the emir's men of the way the wind set.

When he heard what had happened he was furious, and I had difficulty in keeping him from going forthwith to tell the emir and every one else what he thought of them.

At last he calmed down enough to obey me, get our things, and go with me to lie down alone by the lake's side, where I proposed spending the night.

Although Ben Nil wondered at the apparent indifference with which I had accepted the new state of affairs, in reality I was not so calm as I appeared. It was not a pleasant experience, and I did not get much sleep that night. What was more, I learned from Ben Nil that the emir intended marching to meet Ibn Asl in the opposite direction from the one I should have taken, and the more I thought of it the more convinced I became that such a course would prove fatal to the Gohks. I made up my mind that I had no right to sacrifice these people to my pride and that as soon as morning broke I would go to Fagoda, which was another Gohk village, and get help and lead my new allies in the direction in which I should have gone had I been permitted to lead these Gohks.

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Ben Nil's sleep had been light. He awakened early and I told him my resolution.

"They are not worth it," he replied.

"Why do you speak so? I know you are not afraid," I asked.

"Not for myself, but it is my duty to warn you of the dangers before you. You know that I would go with you to the ends of the earth. Fagoda is three days' journey from here, through forests and swamps, and we have no oxen. You know the Gohk tongue no more than I. We have no interpreter; you cannot make them understand your errand, and, last of all, we have nothing to eat."

"We will live on what we can shoot, and for the rest I will trust once more to my good fortune. One thing is certain. I am convinced that Wagunda will be destroyed if the Reis Effendina takes the route he intends taking, and I will make this desperate attempt to save the unhappy village."

"Very well, Effendi, be it so, and I will start with you for Pagoda as soon as you are ready," said the fine fellow quietly. Never yet had Ben Nil failed me in courage or devotion.

CHAPTER XXIII. IBN ASL'S LAST CRIME

BEN NIL and I had no preparations to make for our dangerous journey. We turned our steps away from the lake and started off in the direction in which we had come the day before, without a glance toward the village, which appeared to be still sleeping. We had walked but about ten minutes when we heard a kind of whining behind us, rather like that of a dog which has lost his master and cannot find the trail again. I turned around with my gun held ready to shoot. We were followed, but I soon saw had nothing to fear, for our pursuer was none other than the long Selim, who came after us in such gigantic strides that his garments fluttered behind him in the wind.

"Wait, wait, Effendi," he called; "where are you going?"

"Where are you going rather?" I retorted.

"With you," he panted as he came up with us.

"Not much! You will stay where you are, you magnet of misfortune. I am going into danger. I have left the Reis Effendina because he is ungrateful to me."

"I have heard, and the 'Asaker' are regretting it, for they are fond of you, and they are hoping you will return. I rose up early to seek you, because I am your natural protector. I took my knife and gun and left the village. Even as I started I saw you and called to you, but you could not hear me, so I have run after you."

"I am sorry, for you will only have to return."

"No, Effendi, I will not return. If you do not take me with you I will follow you at a distance."

What was I to do? Ben Nil begged me to let him go, and I certainly could not have him lumbering alone behind me all the way to Fagoda! He was a faithful old man, though unquestionably an idiot, and I knew he would follow, as he said he would, so I said ungraciously: "Come along then. I know you will bring misfortune upon us. But once more I will try to impress upon you that you must obey my smallest order to the letter."

"All, all, Effendi," he protested, laying his hand on his heart. "Demand of me what you will, I will do it; only do not demand that I should leave you."

So it was with this addition to our rescuing force that we finally set out, and the addition soon made itself felt by bewailing the hunger from which Selim chronically suffered. We turned a little from the route which we expected Ibn Asl to take, toward the south. We did not come upon the swamps which we dreaded, but entered a tamarind forest which seemed to be endless. There was a large lake in the heart of these woods, however, beside which I was able to shoot some birds which served to satisfy, not only Selim's clamoring stomach, but the necessity of us all. At sunset we came upon a second forest, having at last passed through the first one, and here we spent the night, the dry leaves and dead branches furnishing our beds.

We resumed our course before the break of day, and soon were floundering through swamps and again swamps, where there was not an edible berry to be found nor a sign of game. If Selim complained the day before he was unendurable now, and made such a row that, hungry and tired as I was, I thought I should go crazy and shoot him if nothing else turned up. Fortunately rescue came, for, like a promise of help, we heard a voice overhead crying: "Karnuk, karnuk, karnuk!"

"There's our dinner!" cried Ben Nil. "Where the karnuks are there are other birds."

"Karnuk" is the Arabian name for the crane, because as it flies it cries: "Karnuk, karnuk, nuk, nuk," and I knew that Ben Nil was right, for its presence betokened water near at hand. We plunged to the right, heard the cry repeated, and, calling Ben Nil to follow me, I unslung my gun from my shoulder and waded in the direction of the sound.

"Let me go with you," said Selim. "All wild things tremble before my gun."

"And then fly off unharmed!" I said. "No, my unlucky hero, you stay precisely where you are. Don't you move from this bush, where we shall know where to find you. You are not to move one inch. Understand?"

"Yes, I will stay just here, Effendi. I have promised to obey you to the letter. But only shoot something to eat, I beg you."

Promising to do our best, to which our own appetites urged us, Ben Nil and I went off to market, leaving Selim sitting in the exact spot designated.

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We made our way toward the head of the swamp and soon saw the cranes which had called us standing on one leg in a little lake in approved decorative art attitude. The handsome gray birds, with their long crests, were splendid to look upon, but too old to be good eating. Beyond them, however, we spied a flock of geese and some plovers, which the natives of the Sudan call "sik-saks," because of their note.

Deciding that we preferred a goose, we crept over nearer to them, when suddenly the plovers started up, crying in fright: "Sik-sak, sik-sak!"

"What startled those plovers?" I asked softly, pausing to look around.

"We did; they saw us," whispered Ben Nil.

"They couldn't see us; the grass hides us. Besides, if it had been we that startled them, they would have flown away from us, not toward us.

"Perhaps they saw Selim."

"That might be. Come on, we must have our goose, whatever it was."

We succeeded in creeping up to the flock without startling them, and, taking aim, we each bagged a young fat one, which we dragged out of the water. Then, each with a goose in our hand, we started back to our starving hero, from whom we had been absent something over a quarter of an hour.

We made the best time possible through the swamp, but when we got within sight of the spot where we had left him Selim was nowhere to be seen.

"That man has not stayed where you told him to," cried Ben Nil, and, coming up to the place, I saw that there were footprints leading thence into the swamp and branches of the shrubs growing near lay on the ground.

"He has gone back into the woods," I said. "Now, what has he done that for?"

The question was scarcely uttered than I received its answer in an unexpected way. A figure rose up from behind the bush with the butt of a gun raised to strike. I would have sprung back, but it was too late; a blow struck me down, and as I struggled to rise a second blow robbed me of my senses.

When I recovered later my head was in agony, and I saw everything as if through a veil, behind which figures were moving, and both my arms were fastened to my sides. I heard a voice that sounded far away, saying: "The dog's eyes are open; he is alive, then. What a pleasure for us!"

I feebly tried to think where I had heard that voice before, but my senses were too far scattered by the blows I had received to place it. It continued: "If you had died I should have missed a great deal, but now you live, and shall be tortured till you die by inches. This time you shall not escape me!"

Now I knew who was speaking! It was Ibn Asl, and I had fallen into his hands! Weakness and pain made me fall asleep as I made this discovery, and when I again awoke the pain was greatly lessened and my strength was returning. I opened my eyes, and what I saw was far from consoling. I lay close to the spot where I had been captured, Ben Nil at my right, Selim on my left, both with their hands and feet bound, but alive.

Before me sat Ibn Asl, his eyes fastened on my face with an expression of hatred and triumph; beyond were the Djangeh Negroes whom he had forced or deceived into his service, busied with saddling and bridling a train of oxen which stood between the woods and the swamp — they were destined to carry the slaves which he expected to capture. As Ibn Asl saw that I was conscious, he rose, and, raising the hippopotamus skin whip which he carried, struck me a severe blow, saying: "At last Allah has heard my prayers, and delivered you into my hands! Do you know what lies before you?"

"Yes," I replied calmly; "freedom!"

"Dog! Do you dare to mock me?" he cried, giving me another blow which was heavier than the first. "I have already described to you the tortures which await you. You had the good fortune to escape me, but this time you cannot escape. I will cut off your eyelids, and you shall go mad and die in the slow torture of sleeplessness!"

"You will die long before I do, and Allah will inflict upon you the pains you intend for me, but which you will never be able to make me suffer." As I spoke it seemed to me that something assured me that I spoke the truth, and that this time, too, I should escape.

"Not able?" Ibn Asl cried. "At a word from me you are dead, but I shall not speak it. You think I shall die before you? Don't imagine that you will be rescued; I know on whom you reckon, but you hope in vain."

"You know nothing whatever of my hopes," I said, to draw him out.

"I know everything," he retorted triumphantly. "You have learned my plans through Murad Nassyr, and you

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have come with the Bors to warn the Gohks of Wagunda."

"You are dreaming," I said, hoping to hear more.

"I am not dreaming, and my informant is a sure one. This wise Selim of yours has acknowledged everything. You have combined with the Reis Effendina, but have fallen out with him, and are on your way to Fagoda to get help. Fortunately I shortened my march, for I had an inspiration, and decided not only to destroy Wagunda, but to fall on Fagoda also. This Selim is such a fountain of wisdom that it never occurred to him to run away when he saw me coming, though he had plenty of time, for our oxen could not pass under the trees as fast as he could have gotten away. If the warriors you have are equally sensible I shall have child's play in dealing with them. We captured the man, and by threatening him with death found out all that we wanted to know. Then you came back and were captured; you are lost. Now we will start for Fagoda, and give you a glimpse of slave capturing. What you see there may give you an idea of what you have to expect." He rose, and made a signal which brought all his followers to their feet to prepare for going. I employed the moment thus secured by asking Selim if what Ibn Asl said was true, and he had actually sat still, waiting to be captured.

"Certainly," he replied. "Have you forgotten that you ordered me to stay where I was, and that I had promised to obey you in everything?"

This was too much! "Oh, you idiot! You most idiotic of all idiots!" I cried in a fury. "There never was anything to equal this! How could I have known that Ibn Asl was coming? I knew well you would get us into some sort of scrape. If you had jumped into the bushes quickly at your first glimpse of Ibn Asl, before you were seen, you could have warned us, and he would now have been our prisoner instead of our being in his hands. And how came you to tell him everything about us?"

"You heard him say that he threatened me with death?"

"Stupid! don't you know that unless I deliver you you will be killed in spite of your information?"

"Do you mean that it is possible that you can deliver us, dear Effendi?"

"I have not lost hope; we have a saying that while there is life there is hope. Pray Allah that He may —" I was interrupted by the coming of some white "Asaker" to prepare us for the march. I was forced to rise, and a heavy "schebah" was laid upon me. A "schebah" is a stout forked branch, in the fork of which the neck of a slave or prisoner is thrust, and held there by a crosspiece of wood. Thus the prisoner retains the free use of his hands and feet, while the long branch which he has to carry before him prevents his escape. It seemed as though the heaviest bough possible had been sought out for me, but lest it were not sufficient I was also handcuffed, the handcuffs held together by a short chain. Ben Nil and Selim were secured only by the "schebah."

The march began. A number of good runners were sent ahead, then came a body of Djangeh, followed by Ibn Asl with his white "Asaker," the remainder of the Djangeh bringing up the rear. Most of these people were mounted on oxen. The point of my "schebah" had a strong rope fastened to it, the other end of which was made fast to Ibn Asl's saddle. We passed through open country for more than an hour; then we saw woods before us outlined against the sky. One of the fore-runners came out from these woods and said something to the Djangeh leader, who then came up to Ibn Asl, evidently repeating the information. I had been thinking that these Negroes must be deceived, or they would not be with their arch-enemy, proceeding against their own kindred, and I had been puzzling over the problem of how I could let them know the truth. Hoping that this might be my chance, I summoned up the few Djangeh words I knew and cried in the tongue: "Ibn Asl anadsch rehn, badd ginu Scheik kador, Scheik and wirt, afod rahn —"

These words, which mean: "Ibn Asl is a wretch; he will murder your chief; the chief is with us as our friend," were all I could utter. Ibn Asl seized my "schebah," pulling it so hard that I fell, and cried in a fury: "Silence, dog! You miserable liar! Shall I stop your mouth with my whip?" He drew his hippopotamus hide whip from his girdle, and as I started to rise struck me such a blow that I fell again. Then he bade the Djangeh withdraw, and as he obeyed I saw by the expression of his face that I had failed. He had not understood my words in the sense I had intended to convey.

"If you attempt again to speak to a Djangeh I will gag you," growled Ibn Asl as I rose to my feet. I knew that he would keep his word, and as, aside from the pain, it would only make matters worse if I were gagged, I resolved not to risk it.

We passed through the woods in half an hour, and held our way until about eight o'clock in the evening; then

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we halted to await the spies who had gone on ahead. I felt sure we were near the doomed village.

The oxen were made fast, but everything was done with scarcely a sound; fire was not made, and it was perfectly dark; but the rattle of chains and weapons told me they were preparing to attack. I tortured my brain trying to discover a means of warning these poor Negroes. I could not get to them, but I thought if we were near enough to them for Ibn Asl to use such precautions my voice might reach them. I raised my hands painfully to my mouth, took a deep breath, and shouted three times; to my surprise our guards offered no objections, but one of them burst into scornful laughter and said: "You fool! do you think Ibn Asl did not foresee that? He knows you, and that you would try to warn these black curs; that is why he has left you here. The village is an hour away, so yell in heaven's name, if you like it. I warn you it is the last thing you will do in this world."

I was silent, trying to find some comfort in the thought that at least I had done my best. And then we waited. It must have been ten or eleven o'clock, when suddenly the heavens glowed red toward the south.

"Hamdulillah, it has begun!" cried the last speaker joyously. "The rats will be smoked out."

"Will you burn them?" I cried in horror.

"Burn them?" he laughed scornfully. "Don't you know anything about slave captures?"

"I am no hunter of men."

"Then I will describe it."

"Be silent with your descriptions!"

"You must hear it; it is not for you to command silence. When I will speak, I will speak, and of what I please. You know all Negro villages are surrounded by thorn hedges; these thorns are dry, and burn well. When we have surrounded the village we light the hedge in several places. In a few minutes it is burning everywhere; the sparks fly on the huts, and the thatched reed roofs catch instantly. The Negroes wake up and try to save themselves. The children and old people are too weak to do so, so they burn up; but the strong ones run out, and as it is just these whom we wish to capture, we grab them as they break through the burning hedges, for it is dark outside the fire, and they cannot see us. The first thing they know they are chained, and if they resist we stab them."

"Be quiet!" cried Ben Nil. "You are not men, but devils!"

"You are right," laughed the other. "You will soon learn that we are devils. You will be worse off than the Negroes we capture. They have nothing to complain of; whether they are burned, or shot, or stabbed, their death is quick."

Another hour passed, while the fire lighted even to the spot where we were waiting; then came two "Asaker" from Ibn Asl, and said to the three who were guarding us: "Ibn Asl will show these captive dogs what a capture we have made. Follow us to Fagoda."

Obedient to this order we were taken to the scene of what proved to be Ibn Asl's last crime, where he was waiting our coming, seated on a rug, unmoved in the midst of the desolation. The village burned no longer, but the hunters of men had kindled a great fire and sat around it with their prey, men and beasts, for the Pagoda dwellers had been rich in herds.

But the human beings! It is forbidden to shed blood, but if my hands had been free the glimpse I had of the scene before me as I came up would have been Ibn Asl's last moment on earth, and rightly so, for the liberation of his victims. They lay between two fires, the unfortunate creatures who but a short time before had been sleeping unsuspecting of their doom. The men had been separated from the women, and they, in turn, from the children. Between their ranks guards with whips marched up and down; the prisoners were bound, but if one of them moved ever so slightly, he was struck a blow that took off the skin. I turned away, sickened, as did Ben Nil and Selim. Ibn Asl rose and went over to the children, feeling their little limbs to select the strongest of them. He saw our disgust and said: "The dogs will not look at what they see, eh? Bind them to a stake in view of it all, and if they close their eyes whip them until they open them again." This order was carried out; there was no need of the whip to keep my eyes open — horror prevented me from closing them an instant on the scene before me. Ibn Asl continued his examination of the children; those whom he found strong enough to be transported to a distance remained where they were; the others were carried to one side and thrown down. When the examination was ended I heard a command given, and some of his followers went over to the rejected children; knives flashed; I shrieked aloud with the agonized mothers, closed my eyes, and when I opened them not a child of them all still lived.

I was insane with rage; my body trembled, and I tugged madly on my chains, but in vain. But all was not yet

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finished; the examination of the young men and girls followed, and those who were found unfit for his purposes Ibn Asl had slain on the spot without wasting time on separating them from their fellows.

When the work was done the chains and "schebahs" were brought and the poor wretches destined for market were made ready for their transport.

Ibn Asl, his task performed, came over to me, grinning diabolically, and asked: "How do you like it? Don't you think we have made a good haul?"

I mastered myself sufficiently to reply calmly: "A truly splendid haul; I should estimate its value very highly, aside from the herds; I congratulate you."

If the scene had been a different one, the expression on his face would have been funny as he stepped backward a little in surprise, staring at me and saying: "You congratulate me? Allah surely works wonders! Are you mad with pity for these Diggers? Are you transformed? Are you ready to become a slave-captor?"

"Yes, I too, mean to capture human beings, and I tell you frankly they are you and your white 'Asaker!'"

He burst into laughter. "I and my white 'Asaker!'" he cried. Then, as I continued to look steadily at him he stooped and carefully examined my shackles; then he rose and laughed again. "You almost made me believe you had got loose," he said, "and were hoping to get away, but I see you have not, so I suppose you are really mad."

"I am in full possession of my senses," I said. "But I know, as there is justice in heaven, that to-night's work has sealed your doom. Ibn Asl, as sure as the sun shall rise tomorrow, so surely will I get you into my hands, and you shall pay with the last drop of your blood for the blood of the victims of your greed and cruelty, the shedding of which you have made me the witness to-night."

He drew his knife and plunged toward me; paused, laughed, though his voice shook, and put the knife back into his girdle. "No," he said; "I see your trick to provoke me into giving you a quick death, now that hope has left you, and you have seen what you are to suffer. But you shall not succeed; you shall live a little longer for the tortures destined you."

"It is kismet, as you would say; it is the will of God, as I know," I said.

"Ibn Asl, your hour is near; never again shall you dye the earth with innocent blood. I am your prisoner, but I shall be your victims' avenger."

He struck me in the face with his whip, but walked away without another word.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE TASK FULFILLED

WE spent the night in that scene of misery, but I turned my back toward the spot where the worst of the crimes had been enacted and strove to close my ears to the groans of the survivors, whose wretchedness I was powerless to relieve.

Early in the morning we were roused — not from sleep, for none of our little party had slept a moment — but from so-called rest, to resume our journey.

I was bound on an ox which unmistakably was a pack ox, for its pace jarred and shook me inexpressibly; I could not guide the beast into the smoothest places, because the heavy "schebah" was still around my neck, and I had to hold it up with both hands. My ox was tied to the one Ibn Asl rode, and every jerk his animal gave was torture to me. Ben Nil and Selim followed immediately behind me, and after them came part of the white "Asaker," the rest having preceded us.

When they had handcuffed me I had tried to make my hands as large as possible on the slender chance of getting them through the iron later, but in the meantime they had swollen so dreadfully and were in such a condition from sweat and blood that there was no hope of drawing them out of the handcuffs. My only chance lay in getting them into water. Oh! for an hour in the blessed, cooling waves which were flowing freely over the green world, so far beyond my reach!

The sun had not risen, nor the last stars disappeared as we set forth, and we proceeded at such a pace that it was clear that Ibn Asl intended swooping down on Wagunda and surprising it before the time when the Reis Effendina calculated that he could get there.

We stopped to rest the oxen and let them graze at what must have been about the hour that my friends at home were eating their comfortable breakfasts. Ben Nil was laid beside me, and he whispered: "Effendi, this time it is the end of us; don't you think so? Or is there a spark of hope alive in you still?"

"A spark? I haven't lost an iota of hope," I said.

"Ah, it is a blessed word," sighed the young fellow, "but I am afraid it has been stricken from our books."

"It is down in my book, as long as I live; fastenings can be broken; and a 'schebah,' too, though it is a strong thing, is not indestructible."

"How do you think you can do it?"

"You will learn later; I don't dare tell you, for we might be overheard. Let us be silent now, for I must collect my thoughts while I am not racked by the ox, and all my attention concentrated on whether he is going to stumble and break his neck, and my own." I was in earnest in saying this, for there was imminent danger of its happening; if I fell with the long and heavy "schebah" around my neck it was not in the least unlikely that I should be killed.

Not for long could I lie there and plan escape; we set out again as soon as possible, and rode all day in the same painful way as before. We halted for the mid-day rest beside a little stream, at which I looked longingly. When I was untied and taken from the ox my limbs were so benumbed from long binding and painful jolting that I could not use arms or legs and I fell in a helpless heap.

"Are you so bad as that already?" laughed Ibn Asl scornfully. "Will you still boast of your strength?"

"When did I ever boast of it?" I asked. "Do you imagine I suffer? I am rejoicing, rather, that you will not reach Wagunda in time."

My clothing was stiff with blood; it had come in great part from the arms and legs, and I knew that my weakness was but temporary, and that they would soon be able to serve me as well as ever, but I tried to increase my appearance of weakness, tactics which were not without result later.

We rested two hours this time and halted for the night on the border of a kind of prairie, where Ibn Asl pitched the tent which two pack oxen had carried for his use. Ben Nil and Selim were laid beside the camp fire, entrusted to the care of guards, but Ibn Asl said, as he examined my handcuffs and "schebah" carefully: "I will not leave this fellow outside; you must get into the tent where I can be sure of you."

Accordingly I was laid in the rear of Ibn Asl's own tent, my "schebah" made fast to its pole, and my feet tied together. Near the entrance where soft blankets were piled for Ibn Asl's bed, attendants set a jar of water for the night. This water could deliver me, and it took all the self-control I could muster to see it there beyond my reach,

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knowing this to be true. As Ibn Asl stretched out to sleep he said: "Do not dream of flight! I shall hear every movement; if you attempted to rise, the 'schebah' would shake the tent pole, if it did not pull it down, and a watcher sits outside who will not take his eyes off the tent." The villain was right, but if I could have reached his water jar he would have found out his mistake.

He dropped the tent curtains and lay down in perfect stillness, and I was as still as he. Sleep was out of the question; my brain whirled and ached with hard thinking, and my bed was too hard to rest on. While that water Jar still sat there I could not escape; I looked at it till I became half delirious and fell into something that resembled light sleep, from which I was shortly aroused by the voices of the guards waking the sleepers outside to another day of travel and pain.

We started at dawn and had gone but a little distance when a spy came up to Ibn Asl from the direction of Wagunda, saying: "I have succeeded beyond my hopes, my lord; I have listened to the talk of two white 'Asaker' of the Reis Effendina's whom I came upon in the woods where they had gone to shoot game."

"What was their talk about?"

"Of you; they said you were not expected in less than five days, and they look for you from the opposite direction. They are led by the Reis Effendina, and they have not full confidence in him; they said they would rather have had the Effendi lead them, and so would the Bors who are with them."

"Do you hear your praise, Effendi?" asked Ibn Asl, turning to me. "I hope you will never betray the confidence reposed in you."

"Be sure that I will do my best for them," I replied.

"Your best is over," he sneered. Then, turning back to the spy, he said: "Did you hear anything else?"

"Nothing, except that they think our prisoners have returned from Wagunda by the way they came, and have no idea that they went toward Fagoda to get help."

"Very well; I am much pleased with your news. Move on, my men; we have not much farther to go, and will make the attack when it is least expected."

We moved on, but slowly, and I saw no way of giving the alarm to save Wagunda, nor even any way to save ourselves. If only I could speak with the Djangeh! They were of the same tribe as the people in Wagunda. Still, they had been equally related to the unhappy creatures in Pagoda whom they helped destroy. When these Negroes of the Sudan have seen blood they throw aside every natural feeling. I saw that Ben Nil was losing heart more and more at each mile, though he said not a word. Selim, however, lamented loudly enough for six, and though his cowardice and lack of spirit made me feel like choking him, I could not help seeing that it was not bad for us to have Ibn Asl believe that he was lowering our spirits and voicing the feelings we were too proud to utter.

To my surprise I found that we were not to proceed to Wagunda that night; we halted at twilight, which was more than twilight under the trees, and made a camp. The space in the woods which Ibn Asl had selected for his camp was rather long and narrow, so that our company stretched out into a thin line as they lay down to rest. One wing was made up of the white "Asaker," the other of the Djangeh, while Ibn Asl's tent stood between the two, rather to the white men's side, leaving the Negroes more space than they themselves occupied. I was deposited in Ibn Asl's tent as before; the oxen were tied behind the bushes.

Ibn Asl sat in the entrance of the tent, and one of the Djangeh brought him a jar of water, from which he drank, then set it carelessly behind him. A spy came to him with tidings which I could not catch, but I heard Ibn Asl say: "Good! we will attack after midnight. Let the guard be the same as yesterday, and call me about midnight. Give me my blankets." He received them, prepared his own bed, and in doing so set the water jar further back, lest he should stumble over it. Then he said to me: "Dog, this has been your last day; to-morrow the Reis Effendina will be in my hands, and then I will make you howl till you are heard the full length of the Nile."

"The Nile is a long river," I thought, "and it is a long lane that has no turn!" I did not answer; my whole attention was fastened on that jar, and I fairly trembled lest he should move it out of my reach, but no — I drew a long breath. He had lain down and forgotten it!

I waited to be sure that he was asleep fully an hour, which seemed to me like an eternity. Then I stretched out my feet, still tied together, to try to "fish" for that jar. I contrived to get one foot around it; then, drawing up my legs slowly, slowly, pulled toward me. At last I could reach it with my hands. It had a mouth big enough to get one hand in, and I chose the left one because ordinarily it is smaller than the right. The water was cool, and I let the hand sink down, taking care not to rattle the chains. There was no way of measuring time, but it may have

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been another hour before I took the hand out. As I felt it with my right one I found the skin wrinkled and knew the swelling had gone down. Holding the handcuff with my right hand, I began to pull — pull — "Hamdulillah!" I almost cried — it started; a little more — the hand was free!

Now, quick, and get my neck out of that accursed "schebah" — it was done! Now for the ropes that bound my feet! They had been tied in a noose; I pulled it out, and was once more in possession of all my limbs; only the handcuff and chain hung on my right hand, which, instead of being a drawback, could serve me as a weapon.

What next? Should I free Ben Nil and Selim? I dared not, for the risk was too great, but I did not mean to quit that tent without making Ibn Asl unable to do any more harm for a while. I crept up to him, holding my chains so that they should not rattle. He breathed quietly and heavily. He slept. Should I stab him with his own knife? No, I was not a murderer. I leaned over him, seized his throat, struck one blow on his temple — a half audible gurgle — and he was mine!

Now up and away with him! I took the knife and pistol from his girdle and rose. The guards sat before the tent; the knife was sharp, however, and I cut out the left side of the canvas, lifted Ibn Asl and passed out, not as quickly as it can be told, yet without making a noise. Fortunately I emerged from the tent near the shrubbery where the oxen were tied; I passed through among the animals, hidden by them from sight, and got away from the camp into the woods. The place was familiar to me, and I did not hesitate in selecting the spot where I would deposit my burden, and tie Ibn Asl fast until such time as I could return for him. I had the ropes with which my feet had been tied in my pocket, and with them, and my prisoner's own girdle and long head covering, I had no difficulty in making him secure. I also furnished him with a gag which I am sure gave him much satisfaction when he recovered consciousness, for it fitted beautifully, and what was more, kept him from crying out!

Having attended to these pleasant duties, I hurried as fast as I could run toward the village. It struck me that it would be good sport if I could finish the night's work without the aid of the Reis Effendina, proving to him that I was not quite useless, and I hoped to be able to do this with the aid of the Bors. So I went directly toward their part of the emir's camp, and while I was wondering how I could make them know what I had to tell them, I almost fell over the young interpreter who had accompanied us hither. I clapped my hand over his mouth to prevent the cry of surprise he was about to utter at the sight of me, and I told him the story of the past few days, ending with the request that he would help me secure his chief's aid in capturing Ibn Asl's camp, which any moment might awake to discover their leader's absence and fall upon Wagunda. He needed no urging, for he was furious over what I had told him, and I left him to go to his chief, while I waited for them at an appointed place.

He soon returned with his chief, and together we three crept back to Ibn Asl's camp. Our plan was for the chief to enter the Djangeh's quarters and persuade them to rise against their unnatural ally, which we were sure they would do when urged by one of their own race to follow him. There was but one danger, and that was that they might give the alarm before they recognized the intruder as the Bor chief.

We slipped softly through the bushes and entered the Djangeh camp. The men were sleeping the heavy sleep of utter weariness; the chief crept up to one of them, laid his hand over his mouth and whispered into his ear. The man started up, but lay down quietly at a word from the chief. A second and a third was awakened; then the chief said to me through the interpreter: "Go into the tent, Effendi; these men will awaken each other, and we will fall upon the sleeping 'Asaker.' It may not be necessary for you to take any part in their capture." I was glad to go and bring the good news of freedom to my anxious comrades, and crept over to the tent, in front of which they were lying. I drew Ibn Asl's heavy pistol, and, coming up behind, struck the guard keeping watch over them a blow that laid him senseless; then I hastened to Ben Nil. He was not asleep and he knew me instantly. "Effendi," he whispered, "are you free?"

"Yes; be still and wake no one." I cut the thongs that held him and pulled off his "schebah." He could not rise, but I helped him up and he whispered: "There to the right lie our weapons; give me mine; I can shoot in spite of my handcuffs."

"Not yet; come into the tent; the Djangeh might mix you up with the 'Asaker'."

"The Djangeh? What about them? How came they to —" I let him say no more, shoved him into the tent, went back and freed Selim, holding one hand over his mouth to prevent his speaking, and got him into the tent. None too soon done, for in an instant the Djangeh, who had by this time all learned that their chief was there, and that Ibn Asl would have murdered him, came creeping like black shadows to the tent to get the ropes and chains

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intended for the Wagunda Gohks, to have them ready to serve the same purpose in his regard. I ordered the Djangehs to appoint three of their number to each white "Askeri," and be ready to act all at the same time. They carried out the plan as well as any trained troops could have done. Noiseless as ghosts they glided in threes, each group to its appointed place, and at a signal seized their man, disarmed and bound him before he knew what had happened, and in a few moments the work was thoroughly and noiselessly done; not a single "Askeri" escaped.

Then we lighted the fire, which we needed to see by, and sent the interpreter to invite the Reis Effendina to the little surprise party we had prepared for him. While we waited his coming, I sent a small band to bring in Ibn Asl under Ben Nil; they took with them for his use the "schebah" I had worn so painfully since my capture.

He wore this ornament when they led him in. I had not intended speaking to him, but he stopped before me with his eyes blazing with hatred, and cursed me so vehemently that I handed his own hippopotamus skin whip to Selim, whom I knew he despised as the coward he was, and bade him whip him into silence. Selim's long arms flew like a windmill, and he laid on with a relish born of his own sufferings and the delight of perfect security in beating the most daring and wicked wretch in all Africa. I must say I had never seen Selim do anything half as well.

While this was going on the Reis Effendina arrived. He came toward me with all his old cordiality; holding out both hands toward me he said: "Forgive me, Effendi; I have been unjust to you, and ungrateful; and now, but for you, I and all the village would have been destroyed. Forgive me and be my friend once more."

"With all my heart," I cried, for I really liked the worthy man. "It is for you now to sentence these prisoners captured here and carry out your office. My work is done."

"Set free, first of all, the poor wretches whom this beast has enslaved," said the Reis, turning to Aziz, his favorite. The order was at once executed, and, staggering under their loss of blood and the mental and bodily suffering they had endured, the poor victims from Fagoda fell at the emir's feet and at mine, kissing them and incoherently sobbing out their joy and gratitude.

"I have a present to make you," said the Reis, as he motioned to his men to help them rise. "I give Ibn Asl into your hands; deal with him and punish him as you see fit."

A howl of rage and triumph rent the night air at these words, while the Negroes sprang to their feet as though they had new life infused by them. They fell on Ibn Asl without the loss of a moment and he would have been torn limb from limb before our eyes had not the emir said: "One moment. This Effendi is not accustomed to the justice of the Sudan; lead the man away." All Ibn Asl's courage gave way before this awful sentence; trembling and jabbering incoherently in his terror, he clutched at my garments, asking me to intercede for him. Before I could reply the Reis Effendina interposed: "He will not ask mercy for you, and if he did it should not be granted. As you have dealt with these men, their children and helpless mothers, so shall they deal with you. Take him away."

Bending under his heavy "schebah," dragged, kicked and shoved along the ground Ibn Asl passed out of sight to his doom. I never knew how it met him; I never dared to ask. Knowing that it was dealt to him by Negro savages, whose homes he had destroyed, and whose dear ones he had slaughtered, I knew it must have come in a form which was horrible beyond imagination. Yet there was no denying that the Reis Effendina had contrived retribution that was just, and that no suffering one man could endure could equal the agony of the many he had murdered and sold into slavery. "Woe to him who does evil," was the emir's motto, and Ibn Asl had reaped as he had sown.

The Djangeh were pardoned for their part in the destruction of Pagoda, but the white "Asaker" were shot for their participation in crimes of which they understood the full extent.

I had had enough of life in the Sudan and longed for a glimpse of civilization once more. The Reis Effendina took me back to Cairo on his ship, the "Falcon," and we parted there with genuine regret on both sides.

The parting that cost me most, however, was from my true, brave Ben Nil, who was half heartbroken when the hour came. The Reis Effendina, who had good reason to know his value, promised me to take him into his immediate personal service, so the fine fellow prospered, as curious letters which have reached me since from that distant land and his hand have assured me.

As to Selim, he implored me to take him with me to my distant home in the West, and was much cast down at being refused. But not even his representations that I should have no one to protect me in that strange land, America, of which I spoke, if I left him behind, availed him, and I said good—by forever to the "greatest warrior,

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the greatest hero in the world" — and the greatest donkey — when I said good-by to Egypt and the Sudan and began the voyage which ended only when I set foot once more on my native soil.

The End.