

THE AMBASSADOR'S PIGEONS.

BY ROBERT BARR.

Author of "In the Midst of Alarms," "Luke Sharp Papers," Etc., Etc.

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Haizidin, the ambassador, stood at the door of his tent and gazed down upon the famous city of Baalbek, seeing it now for the first time. The night before he had camped on the heights to the south of Baalbek and had sent forward to that city messengers to the prince, carrying greetings and acquainting him with the fact that an embassy from the governor of Damascus awaited permission to enter the gates. The sun had not yet risen, but the splendor in the east lighting the sky with wondrous colorings of gold and crimson, and green and blue, the scene was indeed a magnificent one. The inhabitants of Baalbek still worshipped. The temples and palaces of the city took their tints from the flaming sky and Haizidin, the ambassador, thought he had never seen anything so beautiful, notwithstanding the eulogy Mahomet himself had pronounced upon his own metropolis of Damascus.

The great city lay in silence, but the moment the rim of the sun appeared above the horizon the silence was broken by a faint sound of chanting from that ornate temple, seemingly of carved ivory, which had been upon the city since the days of Heliopolis. The temple of the Sun towered over all other buildings in the place, and as if the day god claimed his own, the sun shone about his feet rays upon the temple, striking from it instantly all color, leaving its towers a dazzling white, as if they were fashioned from the pure snows of distant Lebanon. The sun shone as a main-spring of activity, as well as an object of adoration, for before it had been many minutes above the horizon the ambassador saw emerging from the newly opened gate the mounted escort that was to act as his escort into the city; so, turning, he gave a quick command which caused the men and horses and brought his return into line to receive their hosts.

The officer sent by the prince of Baalbek to welcome the ambassador and conduct him into the city greeted the visitor with that deferential ceremony so beloved of the eastern people, and together they marched down the hill to the gates, the followers of the one mingling fraternally with the followers of the other. As if the duties of the wonderful temples they were approaching were the family of man's foresight, a thoughtful remark made by one of the least in the ambassador's retinue, made to one of the least men who followed him, was heard by the ambassador, and he turned to the ambassador and, having nothing else to say:

"How long has it taken you from Damascus to Baalbek?" Then the ambassador answered: "We have done the journey in three days; it might have taken us but two, or perhaps it could have been accomplished in one, but, there being no necessity for speed, we traveled leisurely." Then the general, remaining silent, said to himself: "What has he lied—rumor or the ambassador?" He cast his eyes over the animals that accompanied him, and saw that they indeed were of the same breed, and perhaps of irregular and improper food. Prince Imael himself received Haizidin, ambassador of Omar, governor of Damascus, at the gates of Baalbek, and the splendor of that reception was worthy of him who gave it, but the general found opportunity to whisper in the ear of the prince:

"The ambassador says he was here three days coming, but a follower of his told a follower of mine that they have been a month on the road, wandering among the mountains." Suspicion is ever latent in the eastern mind, and the prince was quick to see a possible meaning for this wandering among the mountains.

"It might well be that the party was seeking a route to one of the unknown by which warriors from Damascus might fall upon Baalbek, yet if this were the case why did you return directly to Damascus rather than return directly to the walls of Baalbek. It seemed to Prince Imael that this would have been the more crafty method to pursue, for, as it was, the messengers had returned to Damascus to report the result of their mountain excursion, he had the whole party practically prisoners within the walls of his city, and he could easily waylay any envoy sent by the ambassador to his chief in Damascus. The prince, however, showed nothing in his manner of what was passing through his mind, but at the last moment he changed the program he had laid out for the reception of the ambassador. Preparation had been made for a great public breakfast, for Haizidin was famed throughout the east, not only as a diplomatist, but also as a physician and a man of science. The prince now gave orders that his officers were to entertain the retinue of the ambassador at the public breakfast, while he bestowed upon the ambassador the exceptional honor of making him a private table, thus giving Haizidin of Damascus no opportunity to confer with his followers after they had entered the gates of Baalbek.

It was impossible for Haizidin to demur, so he could but bow low and accept the hospitality which Imael, prince of Baalbek, had so graciously bestowed upon him. The prince's manner was so genial and friendly that the physician, Haizidin, soon saw he had an easy man to deal with, and he suspected no sinister motive beneath the cordiality of the prince.

The red wings of Lebanon are strong and high, and Haizidin, prince of Baalbek, guest, urging that his three days' journey had been fatiguing. The ambassador had asked that his own servant might wait upon him, but the prince would not hear of it, and said that those should serve him who were not themselves the first nobles in Baalbek.

You represent Omar, governor of Damascus, son of King Ayoub, and as such I receive you on terms of equality with myself. The ambassador, at first confounded with a lavishness that was most unusual, gradually overcame his diffidence and became warm with the wine and so failed to notice that the prince himself remained cool and drank sparingly. At last the head of Haizidin sank on his breast, and he reclined at full length on the couch he occupied, falling into a drunken stupor, for indeed he was deeply fatigued and had spent the night before sleepless. As the clock fell away from him it left exposed a small wicker cage attached to his girdle, containing four pigeons, large enough to hold them, and here the prince saw the ambassador's swift messengers to Damascus. Let loose from the walls of Baalbek and flying direct, the birds would, in a few hours, be in the hands of the governor of Damascus. Haizidin then was spy as well as ambassador. The prince also possessed carrier pigeons, and used them as a means of communication between his armies at Tripoli and at Antioch, so he was not ignorant of their consequence. The fact that the ambassador himself carried his small cage under his cloak attached to his girdle showed the great importance that was attached to these messenger birds. Prince Imael, however, had entrusted them to one of his subordinates.

"Bring me," said the prince to his general, "four of my own pigeons. Do not disturb the messenger attached to the girdle when you open the cage, but take the ambassador's out and substitute four of my own. Keep these pigeons of Damascus separate from other birds, and use them in communicating with the governor of Damascus." The general, quick to see the scheme which was in the prince's mind, brought four Baalbek pigeons, identical with the others in size and color. He brought with him also a cage into which the Damascus pigeons were put, and thus the treasurer was made without the knowledge of the slumbering ambassador. His cloak was arranged about him so that it concealed the cage attached to the girdle, and then the ambassador's own servants were sent for and he was conducted to the banquet table.

When Haizidin awoke he found himself in a sumptuous room of the palace. He had but a hazy remembrance of the latter part of the meal which he ate, and his first thought was with a thrill of fear toward the cage which had been under his cloak; finding, however, that this was intact, he was much relieved, and he could not but be gratified in his cups he had not bobbed anything of his mission which might arouse suspicion in the mind of the prince. His first meeting with the prince, and his first thought, was with a thrill of fear toward the cage which had been under his cloak; finding, however, that this was intact, he was much relieved, and he could not but be gratified in his cups he had not bobbed anything of his mission which might arouse suspicion in the mind of the prince.

long, level promenade of his roof, vent questioning the south. A full moon shone down on the silent city, and in that clear air the plain outside the walls and the nearer hills were distinctly visible. It was a beautiful sight. There was no sign of an approaching army. Baalbek lay like a city of the dead, the splendid architecture of its countless temples gleaming ghostlike, cold, white and unreal in the pure radiance of the moon. Occasionally the ambassador paused in his walk and leaned on the parapet. He had become vaguely uneasy, wondering why Damascus delayed, and there crept over him that sensation of dumb fear which comes to a man in the middle of the night, and leaves him with the breaking of day. He realized keenly the extreme peril of his own position, imprisoned, and at the mercy of his enemy, should the treasury be discovered. And now as he leaned over the parapet in the breathless stillness his alert ear missed an unaccountable murmur of the night. Baalbek was lulled to sleep by an ever present tinkle of running water, the most delicious sound that can soothe an eastern ear, accustomed as it is to the scholastic silence of the arid, rainless desert.

The little river which entered Baalbek first flowed past the palace of the prince, then to the homes of the nobles and the priests, then to the barracks, and finally to the sea. It was a beautiful sight. There was no sign of an approaching army. Baalbek lay like a city of the dead, the splendid architecture of its countless temples gleaming ghostlike, cold, white and unreal in the pure radiance of the moon. Occasionally the ambassador paused in his walk and leaned on the parapet. He had become vaguely uneasy, wondering why Damascus delayed, and there crept over him that sensation of dumb fear which comes to a man in the middle of the night, and leaves him with the breaking of day. He realized keenly the extreme peril of his own position, imprisoned, and at the mercy of his enemy, should the treasury be discovered. And now as he leaned over the parapet in the breathless stillness his alert ear missed an unaccountable murmur of the night. Baalbek was lulled to sleep by an ever present tinkle of running water, the most delicious sound that can soothe an eastern ear, accustomed as it is to the scholastic silence of the arid, rainless desert.

downward on the moonlit street, he saw no reflecting glitter of the current, and realized with a leap of the heart that the stream had run dry. The ambassador was quick to understand the meaning of this sudden drying of the stream. Notwithstanding his vigilance, the soldiers of Damascus had stolen upon the city, unperceived by him, and had already diverted the water course. Instantly his thoughts turned toward his own escape. In the morning the fact of the invasion would be revealed, and his life would lie at the mercy of the exasperated ruler. To flee from Baalbek in the night he knew to be no easy task, all the gates were closed, and one of them would be opened before daybreak, except through the intervention of the prince himself. To spring from even the lowest part of the wall would be to meet instant death. He saw that the natural ingenuity of the man came to his rescue. That which gave him warning would also provide an avenue of safety.

The stream, conveyed to the city by a lofty aqueduct, penetrated to the reservoir, a tunnel cut in the solid stone, just large enough to receive its volume. The tunnel was not far from the palace, and the ambassador, with his hands and knees thrust through a hole outside, walked up to the top of the viaduct, along the empty bed of the river, until he reached the point where the water had been diverted, and there found his escape. Wasting not a thought on the jeopardy in which he left his own followers, he hurriedly retraced his steps, and then bent only on his own safety, he left his house silently and hurried, deep in the shadow, along the obscure side of the street, until he reached the gate of the palace, and that done, his path to the invading army was clear. But before he reached the palace of the prince, there remained for him another surprising surprise.

"Coming to a broad thoroughfare leading to the square in which stood the temple of life, he was amazed to see at his feet, flowing rapidly, the full life of the reservoir, falling into dancing discs of light the reflection of the full moon on its surface, gurgling softly to the square. The fugitive stood motionless and panic-stricken on the margin of this transparent flood. He knew that his retreat had been cut off. What had happened? Perhaps a strong current had swept away the impediment which he had against it by the invaders, and thus had resumed its course to the city. Perhaps a little time in hermitic life, and the ambassador, recovering to a measure of self-possession, resolved to see whether or not it would lead him to his own palace.

Crossing the wide thoroughfare into the shadow beyond, he followed it toward the square, keeping his eye on the stream that flowed in the moonlight. The rivulet flowed directly across the square to the temple of life; there, sweeping in a semi-circle, it rounded the huge building, it resumed its straight course. The ambassador hesitated before crossing the stream, and at that moment a reflection showed him that no suspicion could possibly attach to his movements in this direction, for the temple of life was the only sacred edifice in the city.

The temple of life consisted of a huge dome, which was supported by a double circle of pillars, and beneath this dome had been created a gigantic market and square. Here the god of life, who stood motionless with outstretched arms, as if invoking a blessing upon the city. A circular opening at the top of the dome allowed the rays of the moon to penetrate and illuminate the head of the statue. Against the white polished surface of the broad marble slab which lay the foot of the statue, the ambassador saw the dark forms of several prostrate figures, and knew that each was there to beg of the sightless statue life for some friend lying at the altar. He saw that the temple of life was always open, and supplicants prostrated themselves within it at any hour of the night or day. He saw, being this, and knowing that it was the resort of high and low alike, for death respects not rank, Haizidin, with gathering confidence, entered the market square, at the edge of the great circular temple he stopped, meeting there his third surprise. He saw that the stream was not deflected around the lower rim of the edifice, but that a stone had been swung at right angles with the lower step, cutting off the flow of the stream to the left, and allowing its waters to penetrate the lower part of the temple. Listening, the ambassador heard the low, muffled roar of pouring water, and instantly his quick mind jumped to an accurate conclusion. Underneath the temple was a gigantic tank for the storage of water, and it was being filled during the night. Did the authorities of Baalbek expect that he and were they thus preparing for it? Or was the filling of the tank an ordinary function performed periodically to keep the water sweet? The prince saw that the given must for an accurate answer to these questions, but he knew not whom to ask.

Entering the temple, he prostrated himself on the marble slab and remained there for a few moments, hoping that, if his presence had been observed, this action would provide excuse for his nocturnal wanderings. Rising, he crossed against the broad square, and hurried up the street which he had entered. This street led to the northern gate, whose dark arch he saw at the end of it, and just as he was about to turn down a lane which led to his palace he found himself confronted with a fourth problem. One leaf of the ponderous gate swung inward, and through the opening he caught a glimpse of the moonlit country beyond. Knowing that the gates were never opened at night, except through the direct order of the prince, he guessed for a moment and then saw a man on horseback and then saw a man on horseback and then saw a man on horseback.

"Come at once," it said, "Baalbek is unprotected, and the prince has gone on a hunting expedition. March through the pass near El-Zait, and you will find me because it is the longer route. The armies of Baalbek are at Tripoli and at Antioch, and the city is without even a garrison. The coming day will be open awaiting your march." Days passed and the ambassador paced the roof of his house, looking in vain toward the south. The sun shined brightly, and he and haggard. To the kindly inquiries of the prince regarding his health he replied that there was nothing amiss.

"A messenger has just come in from Damascus, who says that Omar is in deadly peril, and he knows this, know this, and so I sent for you." "Of what nature is this peril?" asked the ambassador, turning pale.

"Of his enemies," echoed the ambassador. "He is in peril. Which one has been victorious?" "I have had no particulars, and perhaps the news may not be true," answered the prince soothingly, but he was not to be deceived. "May I question your messenger?"

"Assuredly. He has gone to the Temple of Life, and for some of his own kin, who are in danger. Let us go there together and find him." But the messenger had already left the temple, and the arrival of his master, and the two found the messenger in a state of empty. Standing near the edge of the slab before the mammoth statue, the prince said: "I will tell you more faithfully than any messenger whether your master shall live or die."

"I have not heard it, heretofore, but having heard it, not heretofore, I say, the ambassador stepped upon the stone. Instantly the marble turned under him, and falling, he clutched his polished surface in his hands, and he found himself hanging beneath. The air under his cloak bore him up and kept him from sinking. The reservoir into which the water had fallen proved to be as large as the temple itself, and in form, as was the edifice above it. Steps rose from the water in unbroken rings of stone, and the ambassador, seeing the edge of the huge tank in which he found himself, ascent by the steps was impossible, for upon the first three burned vigorously, and he was unable to push himself up. He was surrounded immediately by water, and beyond that by rising rings of flame, and he heard the sound of a great substance was Greek fire, for where it dripped into the water it still burned, floating on its surface. A moment later the prince appeared on the upper steps, outside the flaming circumference.

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the lines, it is nevertheless noticeable that no reasonable precautions are neglected. In America, as a whole, scarcely any provision is made for preventing this class of accidents.

In the state of Massachusetts alone there are about half as many deaths from this cause as in the whole of Great Britain and Ireland; and during the last fifteen years nearly one-half of the fatalities upon the railroads in that state have been of this class. By averaging the fatalities occurring in Great Britain and Germany, and comparing with the average for Massachusetts and Connecticut, the proportion is about as seven to one in favor of the foreign countries. Several classes of accidents are now almost unknown in Germany. Accidents to pedestrians at road crossings, or to passengers from crossing the tracks at stations, are hardly possible at the present time. Any one attempting to walk upon the track is sure to be stopped, and very severe penalties are imposed for any defiance of the orders of an employe.

In this connection a few broad comparisons are very significant. In the city of Buffalo, for instance, it was reported, a few years ago, that sixty-one fatalities occurred in the whole of that city during the year. In the whole of Germany for the previous five years, again, in the report of the terminal commission to the mayor and common council of Chicago, it was stated that over 200 people nearly one-half of the fatalities upon the city in 1891. This is nearly as many fatalities as occurred in the whole of Great Britain and Ireland from the same cause during the same year.

Generally speaking, the objections to grade-crossings were clearly foreseen in England, and the remedies were applied in the cities where the railways were established. In the country districts there are still a considerable number of grade-crossings. They are by no means so numerous, however, in the continental lines. Under the regulation of railways acts, 1888 and 1871, a penalty of 40 shillings is provided for the offense of entering or being upon a railway, except for the purpose of crossing the same at some authorized crossing. It is provided, however, that the offending party shall not have been warned by the agents of the company. This latter fact somewhat reduces the efficiency of the regulation, as it is often difficult to give satisfactory proof of warning.

The Board of Trade has made regulations and recommendations as to the arrangements at stations, and regarding the protection of grade-crossings where they exist. Platforms are to be not less than three feet above rail level, except in rare instances. Each passenger track is to have its separate platform, and stairs are to lead upon the principle that passengers should not be obliged to always unnecessary, to descend upon the tracks. The character of gates, and the manner of opening them, are prescribed. Private road crossings are also provided with gates; and under the law of 1845 a penalty is provided for persons who neglect to close gates after passing through, and a person using them after the gates are closed is held to be guilty of trespassing upon the tracks.

The comparative freedom from accidents of all classes on the English roads is due to much investigation by parliamentary commissions, many of the causes by these commissions being very suggestive and valuable. Among other tangible results of these investigations has been a marked decrease in railway casualties throughout Great Britain, as indicated by the statistics covering these matters.

Arnold's Bromo Celery cures headaches, 10c, 25c and 50c. All druggists.

Clock Company Assigns. BOSTON, April 27.—The E. Howard Clock and Watch Company, Samuel Little, president, has made an assignment for the benefit of creditors to F. E. Snow. Samuel Little and his associates have made individual assignments. Both are said to be on the paper of the clock company for large amounts. It is estimated that the liabilities of the watch company will reach \$500,000, with assets of \$400,000. The cause of the assignment is not known.

Comparison Between American and Other Countries. Mr. Franklin B. Locke contributes an article to the May Century on "Railway Accidents in Europe and America," in which he says: "With the casualties that are properly classified as due to grade-crossings are generally to be met in the same way, that is, to persons who attempt to cross or walk at grade upon the lines between the prescribed crossings. This class of accidents forms a large percentage of the total of deaths and injuries, and great care is taken by the foreign companies to protect the public in this particular. Fully one-third of all the accidents on the railroads in England belong to this class; and while it is generally regarded that these accidents are the result of carelessness, the part of those who take the risks of entering upon the lines, it is nevertheless noticeable that no reasonable precautions are neglected. In America, as a whole, scarcely any provision is made for preventing this class of accidents.

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"EAST, WEST, HOME IS BEST," IF KEPT GLEAN WITH SAPOLIO Pictures of the Navy and Cuba The Bee has arranged to supply its readers with a set of Portfolios which answer many important questions they have been asking themselves and their friends for sometime past. The Bee prints the news concerning Cuba, the Hawaiian Islands and the American Navy, but where is the reader that would not like to see these things as they really are. The set will comprise— Ten Portfolios of Photographic Reproductions presenting 160 views, accompanied by concise explanatory text. They furnish much valuable information about Arnold's Bromo Celery cures headaches, 10c, 25c and 50c. All druggists. Clock Company Assigns. BOSTON, April 27.—The E. Howard Clock and Watch Company, Samuel Little, president, has made an assignment for the benefit of creditors to F. E. Snow. Samuel Little and his associates have made individual assignments. Both are said to be on the paper of the clock company for large amounts. It is estimated that the liabilities of the watch company will reach \$500,000, with assets of \$400,000. The cause of the assignment is not known.

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WINE OF CARDUI FOR "WORN-OUT" WOMEN. ROBINSONVILLE, Miss., Nov. 2nd, 1897. By the use of Wine of Cardui I am now in better health than at any time since I became a woman. I suffered greatly for a long time. Had severe pains in both sides, and between the shoulders. When I would rise in the morning I was always weary. I could not go any more than a few rounds. I am now in good health, and can do my household work without difficulty. I don't get up in the morning feeling tired and worn out. Wine of Cardui is a great medicine. MRS. P. JONES. What a lot of "worn-out" women there are in the world! They go to bed tired, get little sleep, and rise unrefreshed in the morning. Life is a hard battle for them. It's a fight for existence against heavy odds after a woman commences to go down hill. Usually her trouble commences with some slight derangement or weakness in the organs that make her a woman. She neglects that, and the whole system is soon vitally affected. Her condition quickly becomes deplorable. How much better it is to seek relief at the first appearance of such trouble! If taken in time, Wine of Cardui will permanently cure ninety-nine out of every hundred cases of "female diseases". This medicine is a simple, pure, vegetable Wine, with no intoxicating qualities. It goes to the root of the trouble, and permanently builds up a woman's health. Every woman who is losing flesh and strength, especially if the menstrual organs are in any way affected, should take Wine of Cardui. LADIES' ADVISORY DEPARTMENT. For advice in all cases of female troubles, send for the Ladies' Advisory Department. The Ladies' Advisory Department, 1000 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.



HE CLUTCHED THE POLISHED SURFACE IN VAIN.



AS HIS CLOAK FELL AWAY, IT EXPOSED A CAGE CONTAINING FOUR PIGEONS.



MY MAMA I WASH WITH WOL SOAP.

HE CLUTCHED THE POLISHED SURFACE IN VAIN. It might well be that the party was seeking a route to one of the unknown by which warriors from Damascus might fall upon Baalbek, yet if this were the case why did you return directly to Damascus rather than return directly to the walls of Baalbek. It seemed to Prince Imael that this would have been the more crafty method to pursue, for, as it was, the messengers had returned to Damascus to report the result of their mountain excursion, he had the whole party practically prisoners within the walls of his city, and he could easily waylay any envoy sent by the ambassador to his chief in Damascus. The prince, however, showed nothing in his manner of what was passing through his mind, but at the last moment he changed the program he had laid out for the reception of the ambassador. Preparation had been made for a great public breakfast, for Haizidin was famed throughout the east, not only as a diplomatist, but also as a physician and a man of science. The prince now gave orders that his officers were to entertain the retinue of the ambassador at the public breakfast, while he bestowed upon the ambassador the exceptional honor of making him a private table, thus giving Haizidin of Damascus no opportunity to confer with his followers after they had entered the gates of Baalbek.