

The Scourge of Damascus

A Story of the East...

By SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

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INTRODUCTION.

Horam, King of Damascus, then at its glory as the zenith city of the east, bemoaned the coming of old age without prospective heir to the throne. In his younger days he had loved Helen, his queen, but fearing that she was disloyal to him had her cast into the black, swift flowing Phorpar. At the time the story opens Ulin, the daughter of Aboul Cassem, the king's prime minister, three times dreams that she has become the wife of the king and that a son being born to them is heir to the throne. Cassem tells the story to the king. The latter having long admired the many charms of Ulin, seeks an interview with her and on the sixth day following they are to be married. He thereupon abolishes his harem. Within the week Albia, the pretty slave maid-in-waiting to Ulin, tells the story of the tragic fate of Helen. The story makes a deep impression and preys upon the mind of the bride-to-be. But her father urges her on and she now deems it a sacred duty to become the queen. On the morning set for the wedding Ulin's mother dies. According to the laws of Damascus she must go into mourning retirement for thirty days. Horam agrees with her father that she shall pass the period of mourning in a secluded palace in the beautiful Valley of Lycianus. This valley is the sole possession of the king and can only be reached by one passage through a mighty mountain, capable of admitting but one person at a time. Thither Ulin goes with Albia, where they are placed under the protection of the attendants by the king and Ulin's father. Six days after their entering Horam returns unexpectedly. Ulin acting on the suggestion of Albia, treats him kindly.

CHAPTER I.

Julian the Scourge.

She asked if her father had come. "No, my sweet lady," returned Horam. "He was busy. It may appear unseemly for me to come hither alone; but my great love and my deep solicitude for your welfare, must be my excuse. I hope you have found it pleasant here."

The maiden said she could not have asked for a more pleasant place of abode.

The king was charmed by her smiling speech—so different from what she had ever before given him—and he fondly believed that she was delighted with his presence.

Ulin, fearing that the least sign of coldness or reserve might excite the jealousy of the grey-headed monarch, and bring down upon her some terrible evil, exerted all her powers of pleasantness, and wore the smile upon her face while a pang was in her bosom.

But Horam's visit was destined to be cut short. While he was, for the sixth time making excuses for his visit the door of the apartment was unceremoniously opened and a black entered—not one of those who had been on guard in the valley but a stranger to Ulin, covered with sweat and dust, as though he had been riding hard and fast.

"Ha!" cried the king, starting to his feet. "How now, Sadak? What is the meaning of this?"

"Pardon, sire. I knew not that you were thus engaged. They only told me that you were here and I stopped to inquire no further."

"Not that—not that Sadak. Why have you come from Damascus in such hot haste?"

"I came to inform you sire that Julian the Scourge of Damascus is approaching our city!"

"Death and devastation!" cried Horam starting back with alarm. "How know you this?"

"We heard from him by way of a merchant who was in a caravan that he had robbed."

"What caravan?"

"The caravan from Tadmoor, with the riches which were on their way from Bassora."

"Those riches were mine," said Horam.

"Aye, sire; and Julian took them— took all that belonged to you, but spared the poorer merchants. But that is not the worst. He sends word that he will lay Damascus in ashes. Aboul Cassem bade me hasten hither and give you warning."

The king was fairly beside himself with fear and rage. The name of Julian was a terror to him, and at the sound thereof he trembled exceedingly. And he seemed to fear more than the mere physical prowess of the Scourge. There was a mystic quality in his fear—a nameless dread of the avenger.

"Where is the demon now?" he asked, after he had gazed awhile in silence upon the messenger.

"He is not far from the city, sire. Somewhere to the eastward, we think. Your journey back, if you make haste, will be safe."

"I will return," cried the monarch, smiting his fists together; "and I will bring out an army and sweep this terrible Scourge from off the face of the earth!"

He bade Sadak go and make ready for the start, and then he turned to Ulin.

"You will be safe here, sweet one; and it will not be long before our happiness shall be complete."

His words of parting were few, for he was much excited, and his voice trembled as he spoke. He turned back once after he had reached the door, as though he would say something, but finally went away without giving the intended speech. From a window

Ulin watched the royal cavalcade until it had disappeared within the narrow pass, and when the last man had gone from her sight she turned to her companion.

"Albia, what is it about this terrible robber—this Scourge of Damascus? I have heard something about him. I heard my father once speak of him; but my little knowledge of the world did not lead me to be inquisitive. Do you know anything about him?"

"I have heard a great deal of him, my lady. He has been a terror to Damascus for a great many years."

"How many years, Albia? I was thinking that my father said he had not been long known in this section."

"I may be mistaken," said Albia, trying to recollect herself. "I know that he is a terrible Scourge, and that men fear him; but I do not know how many years he has been so. It may not be so many as I thought."

"But who is he? Where did he come from?"

"Ah, there is a mystery, my dear mistress. Nobody knows where he came from; but it is said that he is one whose family has suffered some great calamity at the hands of Horam. He is alone in the world, so far as relatives are concerned, and Horam hath done it; and so he comes to seek vengeance. He has a large body of bold men under him, and twice has he met and overcome the forces which the king had sent out to capture him. He does not rob as common robbers do. He never troubles the poor, or those of the middle class; but the rulers and princes of Damascus he causes to suffer."

"Did you ever see him, Albia?"

"Mercy! no. I would not see him for the world. He must be terrible to look upon. I have heard one of your father's officers say that he could strike a blow with his fist to fell an ox, and that before the lightning of his eye brave men shrank in terror. O, I should be afraid to see him."

"It seems to me that I should like to see such a man," said Ulin, in a musing tone. "I have never seen such men. The man whose arm can strike down an ox, and whose eye flashes forth such power, could not harm a helpless maiden."

"Upon my life, you have a curious taste," Albia returned.

"Because," added Ulin, with a smile, "I never had my taste cultivated. Still, in all seriousness, it does seem to me that I should love to lean upon a strong, bold man. If I were to love a man with my whole heart, I should like him to be so strong and so powerful and so brave, that his very presence would be protection to me. Is that very strange?"

"It is so strange," replied the slave, significantly, "that I fancy the king would feel new cause for jealousy if he should hear you say so."

"When I am the king's wife I shall be true to him, and I shall honor and respect him. I will love him if I can. But, Albia, there is no need of saying more. We will have our dinner, and then we will walk out into the garden."

Suddenly a messenger appears asking for assistance from the guard. With 50 stalwart guards he hurries toward the gates.

"What can it be?" cried the princess, in alarm.

But Albia could not imagine. She could only beg of her mistress to take courage, and hope for no evil.

Ere long, however, another messenger came to the palace, who made his way to the room where the princess was sitting. He trembled with excitement.

"How now, Aswad?" demanded Ulin. "What is the meaning of all this disturbance?"

"Alas, my lady, an enemy is at our gates. The terrible Scourge of Damascus demands entrance into the valley."

"What does he seek?"

"I dare not tell you?"

"What seeks he?" cried the princess, authoritatively. "If there is danger, I would know what it is."

"There may not be danger for you, lady. We may beat the robber off. We will do so if we can."

"But the king told me that a handful of determined men could hold that pass against a thousand."

"But these are not ordinary men. This Julian is a very demon, and I verily believe that he hath more than human power. Still we will do the best that we can."

"You have not told me what he seeks. Answer me that question—answer it without further hesitation."

"He seeks the maiden whom the king is to take for a wife."

"Seeks me?" uttered the princess, with a start.

"Yes, my lady. Such is his avowal."

"In mercy's name, good Aswad, protect me. Let not that dreadful robber gain access to the valley."

"Hurry, hurry!" cried Albia. "Away to your companions, and bid them strain every nerve. If they suffer the Scourge of Damascus to gain passage hither they know what the wrath of the king must be."

"Powers of heaven!" cried Ulin with clasped hands and quivering frame "the demon must not find us."

"You are not so anxious to see him as you were" remarked Albia. "I thought your whim was a strange one."

"Speak not of that!" said Ulin quickly and severely. "I meant not that I would have him come to seek me. O Albia, what can he want?"

"Indeed, my mistress, I dare not

think. But let us look in another direction. If he does not find us, we care not why he comes. Ha! See! Here comes Aswad again. He looks frightened."

Aswad entered the chamber with trembling step and seemed afraid to speak; but the demand of the princess opened his lips.

"Lady, I fear that the robber will prevail against us. He is accompanied by fierce, furious men, who fight like lions, and his own sword is irresistible. His body is covered with scales of finest steel and the blows of our men fall harmless upon him."

"But the dreadful man has not yet broken through?" said Ulin eagerly.

"No, lady. Our brave men fight as well as they can."

"Has the robber entered the pass?"

"Not far."

"Then you may hold him at bay yet, O Aswad, if you would be blessed forevermore let not the Scourge gain the valley!"

"We will do our best, lady; but you must be prepared for the worst. If we are finally overcome you must hide yourself."

"Where? Where can we hide?" asked Albia.

"In the palace or somewhere in the gardens; or upon the mountains."

"There is no hiding place which a keen eye would not detect. I have looked in every direction. So, Aswad, save us by your stout arms."

"I fear the demons will prevail," said Ulin, in a tone of breathless suspense.

"I dare not hope otherwise," returned Albia.

"If they do come, we must find some place in which to hide."

"Alas, my dear mistress, there is no such place. If we go up among the rocks, we not only run the risk of being easily found, but we run the greater risk of starving."

"I would rather starve than fall into the dread Julian's hands," said Ulin.

"It would be a terrible death to starve upon those bleak rocks!" returned Albia, with a shudder. "But I will share your fate, my mistress, let it be what it may."

"And would not death by starvation be preferable to the fate which must meet us if that monster captures us? O, Albia, I cannot think of it."

Before the slave could reply they saw Aswad again coming toward them; but he did not enter the palace. He struck off into a path that led to the westward, and fled with all his might. Directly afterwards a score of the guards came rushing from the pass, and when they had gained their open space, they threw down their swords and sank upon their knees.

"What means that?" cried Ulin. "Are they killed?"

"No," answered Albia. "They are overcome, and have surrendered. See! there come the victors!"

"Let us flee!" exclaimed the princess, starting to her feet. "O, we must find some place of refuge!"

Albia was more thoughtful. She saw very plainly that flight would be useless.

"My dear mistress," she said, taking Ulin's hand. "We must hope for the best. If we leave the palace, we shall be overtaken at once; for the way to the mountains lies only through the park of fountains. If we flee to the garden in the rear, we shall be surely found, and it may be worse for us in the end. If this dreadful Julian has the least spark of humanity in his bosom, he will respect you more in your own chamber than he would if he found you hiding in the garden."

"Spirits of mercy defend us!" ejaculated the princess, clasping her hands upon her bosom, and sinking back in her seat. "O, Albia, Albia, the presence of the king would now be a blessing!"

The faithful slave crept close to her mistress, and tried to speak words of comfort; but her own fears were too deep and intense to permit comforting power to her words. She could not be calm in view of the coming of that dreadful man, at the sound of whose name even the monarchs trembled.

(To be continued.)

Dress in the Senate.

It is not always safe to judge a man by his clothes, but dress goes a long way in certain localities. If any one doubts our democracy let him spend a day in the gallery of the United States Senate, the least dignified "Upper House" of legislation in the world. "Befo' de wah" all members were clean shaven, wore black frocks and high stocks, beavers, peg-top trousers, and a solemn air of public importance privately expressed. They believed in their hearts that they were statesmen, and the world acknowledged them as such. Dignity was their chief quality, pride their most cherished possession. The old-timers, like Morgan, Teller, Cockrell, Berry, Proctor and Daniel, still wear their before-the-war clothes, dignity and pride, but the post-bellum regiment of politicians is uniformed in the sack suit or the cutaway.—New York Press.

The West Point of Mexico.

In Mexico experience has conclusively shown that officers and even soldiers cannot be improvised, and the very first care of General Diaz has been to establish a good school for instructing scientific officers. The military school of Chapultepec in its actual condition is the fruit of his efforts. Many foreign officers of different nationalities have visited that establishment and believe that it ranks among the first in the comprehensiveness and perfection of military instruction there imparted and in the severe but just discipline to which the cadets are subjected.—National Geographic Magazine.

Not all are asleep who have their eyes shut.

CASE OF BABCOCK.

TRUSTED BY ONE PARTY WHILE SERVING ANOTHER.

Author of a Plan Whose Provisions Are in Conflict with Business Judgment, Economic Sanity and the Principles of the Republican Platform.

Mr. Babcock of Wisconsin enjoys the unique distinction of being a conspicuous member of one political party while at the same time actively engaged in promoting the prospects and furthering the fortunes of another political party. This gentleman is the representative in Congress of a district composed largely of Republican voters, he is a member of the House Committee on Ways and Means and he is also the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee. While occupying this relation to his constituents and to the Republican party as a whole Mr. Babcock has succeeded in gaining the fervent regard of the enemies of his party. As a matter of fact he disputes with the New England Free-Trade League the priority of invention in connection with the formation of a plan whose success involves the overthrow of the Republican party. It often happens that one man is able to obtain a patent on another man's invention. Be that as it may, Mr. Babcock seems to have the best of the situation, for even though the New England Free-Trade League may have originated the idea, the Wisconsin Congressman was clearly the first to get a patent on it.

We refer to the bill which Mr. Babcock, a Republican congressman, a Republican member of the ways and means committee, and the chairman of the National Republican Congressional committee, has introduced and proposes to urge for passage proposing to repeal all protective duties on foreign made articles entering into competition with trust made articles in the United States. With loud acclaim the Democrats and Free-Traders have hailed Mr. Babcock as a statesman after their own hearts. Why should they not? Has he not earned their gratitude and their admiration? What more could he do to entitle himself to honorary membership in the Cobden club? He stands sponsor for a legislative measure which embodies the Cobdenite contention that "Protection is robbery" and that "the tariff is the mother of trusts." He has adopted this view as his own, and with all the zeal of a new convert he avows his intention to press for the repeal of all duties that afford protection to articles produced by domestic trusts. Considering that such a revision of the tariff would take away protection from nearly every industry in the country, and that while it would not smash a single trust it would wreck thousands of independent industrial establishments not identified with any trust, Congressman Babcock is clearly entitled to all the free-trade adulation that is now being poured out upon him.

Mr. Babcock has leaped into fame at one bound. So did Benedict Arnold, among others. There is fame and fame. But what about Mr. Babcock's relations with the Republican party? He is the representative elect of his district in the Fifty-seventh congress and cannot be unseated prior to March 4, 1903. He can, however, be omitted from the house committee on ways and means when the committee assignments are made next December, and he can fall of re-election as chairman of the National Republican Congressional committee. As the responsible author of a bill whose provisions are in direct conflict with the platform of the Republican party, as an avowed enemy to the policy of protection to American labor and industry, is he entitled to remain, ought he to be permitted to remain a pseudo-Republican member of the house ways and means committee? Should he be again honored and trusted with chairmanship of the National Republican Congressional committee? The obvious answer is No. To retain Mr. Babcock in either position would be to bestow a reward upon treachery and disloyalty. Babcock must go!

STOP AND THINK.

Blind Adherence to a Program Fraught with Mischievous and Disaster.

Like some other Republican newspapers which are carried off their feet by the proposition that the tariff should be removed from all articles which can be produced so cheaply as to enable American manufacturers to

Otherwise Employed.

It is early yet for the Democracy to begin "paramounting" an issue. Just now that party has about all it can do to keep the more enlightened and progressive element thereof from breaking into the Republican party.—Moweaqua (Ill.) "Republican."

An Inspiration.

It's not a campaign year, but nevertheless, take off your hat and give a long, loud "Hurrah for McKinley and his policy at home and abroad" and watch the eyes glisten and the cheeks flush. The wonderful success of the greatest living Republican and the magnificent manner in which he is conducting the affairs of the nation, is an inspiration and a source of continual gratification to the entire country.—Clinton (Mo.) "Republican."

FAITHFUL, WATCHFUL, ALERT

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successfully compete for the control of foreign markets, the St. Paul "Pioneer-Press" gives unqualified support to the Babcock programme of so revising the Dingley tariff law as to abolish protective duties on foreign products competing with the products of the iron and steel trust. Out-Heroding Herod, the "Pioneer-Press" is prepared to go much farther than the Babcock bill in the direction of tariff reform, for it urges that

"Every consideration of party policy demands that the Republican party should promptly deprive its enemies of a weapon which may easily become powerful and effective in their hands—that it shall completely dissociate the protective tariff from the trusts by the speedy abolishment of all duties on trust-made articles."

If this wholesale scheme of tariff revision were to be carried out the result would be to practically place the country on a free-trade basis, for there are very few industries which are not to some extent in the hands of trusts. Therefore, to repeal protective duties on all foreign articles competing with American trust-made articles would virtually involve the repeal of all protective duties. What, then, becomes of the concerns operating outside and independent of the trusts? There are some thousands of such concerns which are engaged in supplying the home demand and do little or nothing in the way of export business. For example, the woolen trust. Only a small proportion of the manufacturers of woolen textiles are incorporated into the American Woolen Company. Shall all these mills be deprived of protective duties merely for the sake of punishing a combination with which they are in no way connected? Shall the iron and steel producers outside of the big trust be forced to close down their mills and discharge their workmen in order that free-traders and tariff tinkers may make the gallery play of taking away from the billion-dollar trust the protection which it frankly states it does not need and does not want? That sort of claptrap would not disturb the billion-dollar trust a particle. As a matter of fact it would play into the hands of the big trust by driving a large number of non-trust concerns out of business. But how about the non-trust concerns in all the different lines of industrial production—concerns which employ a greater number of wage-earners than do the trusts? Republican newspapers of the "Pioneer-Press" stripe should think of these things before plunging heels-over-head into the anti-trust tariff reform puddle.

Remove the customs duties from iron and steel products and the battlefield of trade is at once broadened to include this country. It may be—probably is true—that the billion-dollar steel corporation would still be able to manufacture and sell its products at a reduced price, but it would be forced to turn on the smaller corporations. Transfer the scene of price-cutting to this country and the hundreds of iron and steel manufacturers who are now doing a profitable business would be forced to the wall, as they are not in a position to meet the cut. They might try to reduce wages, but workmen would object to that course. Strikes and lockouts would follow, capital would become timid again, the distrust would displace confidence in all financial and business circles.

By all means, bring out your "tariff reform" theory for another airing. Columns may be written in its support—books may be written to prove its soundness. But it never did work satisfactorily in this country and never will.—Milwaukee "Sentinel."

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