

The Scourge of Damascus

A Story of the East...
By SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

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CHAPTER VI.

It was near noon, and the king of Damascus was in his chamber with Aboul Cassem. They were talking about the approaching marriage.

"In three days more," said Horam. "I shall claim her for my bride."

"In truth, sire, it is as you have said," replied the minister. He spoke not with the enthusiasm of appreciation, but as one who would not dispute his king. "I trust, sire, your hopes may find their fruition. I pray that Ulin may bear to thee a son, and thus make bright and promising the evening of your life."

"Good Aboul, I trust in thy words. Ha! what now? Whom have we here?"

"Sire," spoke a page, "the Israelite, Judah is without, and would speak with thee."

"How!" cried the king. "Is it the Judah whom I sent from the Valley of Lycianus?"

"The same, sire."

"Then send him to me at once. By my life, Aboul, he cannot have accomplished his mission so soon. I dare not hope so."

"Let us hope for the best," suggested the minister; and before further remark could be made Judah stood in the royal presence.

"Ha, Judah—do I see thee back so soon? Have you come to bring me word of failure?"

"Nay, sire," replied the Israelite. "I have come to bring the robber chieftain to Damascus."

"Have you taken him?"

"Yes, sire."

"Alive?"

"Yes, sire."

"And have him here?"

"Ready to be brought before you at any time."

"He is bound?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then bring him at once. By the host of Pluto, I would see the fellow. But—hold. He is guarded?"

"Yes, sire. Osmir and Selim are with him."

"Are they all?"

"It needs no more. The prisoner is securely bound, and can offer no resistance."

"Then let him come."

"Ye gods!" uttered Horam, turning to his minister, after Judah had gone, "what manner of man shall we behold?"

"I cannot guess, sire."

"A giant, I think—as ugly as a Cyclops. But he is bound, Aboul—he is bound."

In a little while the door opened, and Judah entered, followed by Osmir and Selim, who led a bound man between them.

"Sire," spoke the Israelite, "this is the prisoner."

"But where is Julian?" demanded Horam.

"This is Julian."

"This?" cried the monarch, taking a step forward, and gazing into the face of the bound man before him. "This?" he repeated, in a lower tone, advancing another step, and gazing more earnestly upon the bold, open, youthful face. "This is not Julian."

"This is he who hath commanded the robber band," said Judah.

"Aye—and I am he whom you have called the Scourge of Damascus," spoke the prisoner, standing proudly erect, and gazing full into the face of the king. "I am Julian, the enemy of Horam, and the avenger of wrongs done years ago."

The monarch, as he gazed more intently upon those features, and as the tones of that voice fell upon his ear, seemed startled by the memory of some old dream. And Aboul Cassem was not entirely uninterested. The old minister gazed as fixedly and as earnestly upon the face of the young chieftain as did his royal master; and he, too, seemed puzzled and perplexed.

"Who are you?" asked Horam.

"I am Julian, the Scourge."

"But what else?"

"You should know what else, most mighty king. I have tried to make myself felt by you."

"But," urged Horam, taking no notice of the robber's tone, "why have you sought to harm me? Who are you that can have cause for such enmity?"

"I am one who knows the bitterness of deepest wrong," replied Julian. "Fatherless and motherless came I from the feeble steps of childhood; and I know that Horam was the murderer of my parents."

"Ha!" cried the king, with a start. "Who were your parents?"

"I will not speak their names in your presence."

"Beware, robber! I may compel you to answer."

"If you have power to extract answers from dead men, you may force answers from me."

"By the gods, thou art insolent."

"Then bind my tongue, as these slaves have bound my arms."

"No," said Horam, struggling with his passion. "I have another plan. The secret which you will not speak to me you shall never speak. You shall follow your parents with all possible speed. Judah!"

"I am here, sire."

"You know the deepest, darkest dungeon, where the most dreaded prisoners are confined?"

is horrible! Dear Albia, I know not what to do."

"Have you told me all?" whispered the bondmaid, winding her arm about her mistress' neck, and kissing her upon the brow.

"Have I not told you enough?" returned Ulin, covering her face with her hands.

"Not if there is more to tell, dear lady. You have trusted me this far—trust me with all. You have told me that you dread the king; and I do not wonder at this. You cannot have forgotten that I spoke against the union from the first. It seemed to me unnatural. But, lady, there is something more."

"Nothing more which I dare to tell, Albia. Nay—do not ask me. I have told you all that I can tell. And now I ask you—what can I do? The fatal hour is nigh at hand in the which I have promised to give myself to the king."

"There is one thing you can do, my mistress—one thing alone, which I can see."

"Speak, Albia."

"You can flee."

"Flee!" repeated Ulin, in a startled whisper.

"There is but one other course open to you."

"And that—"

"Marriage with the king."

"Oh, Albia, this is dreadful! That same thought of flight has entered my mind before; but can I leave my father?"

"If you become the king's wife, you must leave him. Think of it, lady."

"But whither can I flee?"

"I have thought of that," said the bondmaid, "and I think I know where you could find safety. Some miles from Damascus, among the hills where the Pharpar winds its water in a murmuring channel, lives an old hermit, named Ben Hadad. His home is in a cave which the hand of nature has fashioned in the solid rock; and his life is given to deeds of charity and good will. I have seen him, and I know that he is good and kind."

"And how came you to know this old man?" asked the princess, with some surprise.

"I know him through an old woman named Ezabel, who has been often in the city, and who was well acquainted with your mother. This Ezabel used to come often to our house, and once Ben Hadad came with her—a white-haired old man, whose just and temperate life is lengthening out far beyond the span of years usually allotted to man. Your mother gave him money to be expended in charity; and he told her, if she ever could find use for his aid, it should be freely given. I know that he will befriend you. If you wish to flee, I will go with you, and to the last of my strength and my life I will help and sustain you. Think of it, my mistress."

"I will think of it, Albia, and on the morrow my mind shall be made up. You may retire now. It is late, and we both need rest."

(To be continued.)

Good Enough for Him.

Two brothers recently visited the offices of a firm of American machine agents in London. One was at the head of an important English manufacturing firm, the second was an engineer who had lived in Pennsylvania for some years. The latter pointed out to his brother machine after machine that he ought to have. "You know, Tom," he at last declared emphatically, "if I were in your place I'd throw every bit of your old machinery on the scrap heap and have an up-to-date plant right through. You'd double your output and halve your expenses."

"Tom" listened carefully and put his hand to his chin in reflective fashion. "Well, Dick," he said at length, "you may be right. I won't say that you're not. But why should I change? The old machines were good enough for father, and they were good enough for grandfather, so I am thinking they're good enough for me."

Centuries of Imprisonment.

To be sentenced to imprisonment for the term of one's natural life is hard enough, but to be consigned to a dungeon cell for a couple of thousands years is indeed harrowing. Yet foreign judges not infrequently impose sentences of several centuries without it being considered anything remarkable. Not long ago an Italian adventurer was convicted of 63 distinct forgeries. He was sentenced in each case, with the result that he will be free in the year 2089. A couple of years ago a young man was arrested in Vienna, who, upon his own showing, should have been sentenced to 2,500 years' imprisonment. A total of 400 charges was brought against him, and he was convicted and sentenced on all of them. But the judge was a merciful man and in passing sentence he threw off 1,000 years in consideration of the man's youth.

Flower of England.

The flower of England is the rose, and this choice dates back to the Wars of the Roses, when that branch of the royal family known as the house of Lancaster chose a red rose for its badge, and the rival branch, the house of York, had a white rose. Previous to that date the badge of the English royal family, the Plantagenets, was a sprig of broom, from which indeed they took their surname, as the founder of the family—Fulke Martel, the earl of Anjou, having explained a crime by a pilgrimage to Palestine, and being scourged there with broom-twigs, ever afterward.

HE IS REMINISCENT.

SOME FOURTH OF JULY TALK BY UNCLE SAM.

Tell How His Managers, from Washington to McKinley, Have Invariably Succeeded with Protection Laws and Failed with Free Trade.

It will be conceded by all that the Fourth of July was a most appropriate day for a good talk with Uncle Sam. The hearty and hale old gentleman has been too busy of late to grant an interview to any one, but a representative of the American Economist begged an interview on the Fourth, and it was granted. I found him surrounded by a nifty pack of boys with their freerackers and pistols.

"Don't you mind the noise?" I asked.

"Bless you, no," he replied. "They can't make too much noise on my birthday. This is the one hundred and twenty-sixth Fourth of July I've celebrated, and in three different centuries."

"There have been most wonderful changes since your first celebration," I remarked.

"Well, I should say so. Sometimes I can hardly realize it. But it has all come about so gradually and so naturally that I have been ready for anything. I get reminiscent on a day like this and can't help going back and making comparisons. Just think of it, there is not a person living that was alive on that Fourth of July when the old liberty bell rang out in Philadelphia. Those were stirring times, I tell you. During the Revolution from 1776 to 1781 and during the Confederation from 1781 to 1789 I was an unruly kid, like a boat without a rudder, but in 1789 I got into long pants, and my manager whom the people selected for me was one of the greatest men that ever lived. I realize more and more what a general, what a statesman, what a president Washington was."

"Perhaps my most important birthday anniversary was the Fourth of July, 1789. It was on that day, you know, that my congress passed its first bill, and Washington signed it the same day—a Protective Tariff bill. How well I remember the preamble to that law:

"Whereas, it is necessary for the support of the government, for the discharge of the debt of the United States, and for the encouragement and protection of manufactures, that duties be laid on imported goods, etc.; therefore, be it enacted, etc."

"And how well it worked! All my early managers praised the act, and called attention repeatedly to its splendid results. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe were all good Protectionists. And there was no material change in the law till 1812, when the duties were nearly doubled to provide money to carry on my second war with Great Britain. Then came the Tariff of 1816, and with it widespread ruin."

"But I thought the Tariff of 1816 was a Protective Tariff," I ventured to remark.

"It was intended to be Protective, but it was not. I have always found that a Tariff that is not Protective enough is not Protective at all. It's either one thing or the other. There is no such thing as high and low Protection. It's either Protection or no Protection."

"Well, the people got pretty tired of the first Free Trade period, but, after all, it was, perhaps, a good lesson, for in 1824 the boys gave me a Tariff that was a Tariff. My, how things did hum! It was such a success that in 1828 the boys increased the duties. Andy Jackson, who was my manager in 1832, said we were the happiest and most prosperous country in the world. Wish he could see us now!"

"Why was such an effective Tariff so soon repealed, Uncle Sam?" I asked.

"Why? Just because a lot of the boys down South got a notion they wanted to go it alone. I wasn't going to have that, so the whole thing was compromised in 1833, and good times flew out of the window. You've read of those times, of course, and I don't need to say anything about it. It was awful, and it got worse every year. Why horses only fetched 50 cents, and cows less. I remember the boys had so little money they would tear a bill into halves, quarters and eighths, so there would be enough to do business with. That lasted till 1840, when the people gave me William Henry Harrison for a manager and a Protective Congress. In 1842 Protection began again to bring prosperity, and in 1846 my manager, Polk, although he was a Free Trader, had to acknowledge that in resources and wealth and the happy condition of the people and in progress and greatness we were ahead of all other nations."

"But there was trouble ahead. I don't want to say anything against any of my boys, but some of them down South were headstrong. The question of slavery began to bother me, too. Well, in 1844 the people elected Polk for manager, and with him a fellow by the name of Dallas, and I must admit that there was a little double dealing during that campaign. It's all past and gone now, but it brought Free-Trade again, and Free-Trade brought hard times. I don't like to think of those times from 1846 to 1860. If it hadn't been for the gold discovery in California and the famine abroad I don't know what we would have done. As it was we had to send our gold to Europe about as fast as we could get it. The old people can remember those times. They were awful, awful, awful."

But I'm too happy today to more than just recall them in passing.

"In 1860 the boys got back to Protection again, and with the exception of three years it has lasted till now, and I can tell you I never want to see Free-Trade again."

"How came the boys, as you call them, to pass a Free-Trade law in 1894, in the face of the success of the McKinley Tariff?"

"Oh, the people got restless, and then the election of 1892 was in some respects like that of 1844. Then it was 'Polk, Texas and Free-Trade' in the South, and 'Polk, Dallas and the Tariff of 1842' in the North. Well, they worked Cleveland the same way, and then, though I suppose I ought not to say it, the Democrats did some pretty tall lying in 1892. Why, the McKinley law was the best Tariff law we'd ever had, and everybody was prosperous and happy. But the people gave me Cleveland again for a manager. He had not done much harm the first time I tried him, though I discharged him because I found a better man in Ben Harrison. But, what was worse, they gave me a Democratic, Populist, Mugwump, Free-Trade Congress, and then things began to go to the demdition bowwows. Gosh, all hemlock! but things did change fast. I lost \$10,000,000,000 in twenty-four hours, and things went from bad to worse, till in 1896 the people gave me Bill McKinley for a manager, and I've kept him ever since. Renewed the contract last March for four years. So you're sure of three more happy July Fourths."

"Well, Uncle, this little Tariff history is all very interesting, and now I want to ask one or two questions."

"Well, fire away."

"Who do you consider has been your best 'manager,' as you call the president?"

"Well, now, that's a hard question to answer. Washington and Lincoln were great men and had great questions to solve, but let me tell you, I like Bill McKinley about as well as any of 'em. He ain't quite as obstreperous as Andy Jackson, and he don't weigh as much in pounds as Cleveland, but he's a mighty good man. He's a safe, level-headed man, and that's what the people like."

"The Free-Traders say he is a little shaky on the Tariff," I hinted.

"What! Bill McKinley shaky on the Tariff? Don't you believe it for a second. He's more of a Protectionist than he was in 1890, and he was a mighty good one then."

"It was sad about Dingley, though. How I wish he could be here today and see what his bill has done for me. How he would rejoice over the exports and the balance of trade, the surplus, the bank clearings, the railroad business and the immense earnings of the people. The McKinley bill was a good one, but the Dingley law has proved to be the best Tariff law the boys ever passed."

"Still," I said, "the papers say that parts of it may be repealed and that the Tariff will soon be removed from so-called trust made articles, and with the help of Republicans, too."

"Don't let it worry you, my boy. It won't happen for four years, anyway. I acknowledge the people get restless sometimes, and, contrary like, but there ain't no signs of it this year. They won't forget that Gorman-Wilson abortion, and they will be slow to give up their jobs again. Why, just think of it, my people are earning from \$20,000,000,000 to \$30,000,000,000 a year, from \$66,000,000 to \$100,000,000 a day, and that is not our total income either. That's too great a snap to throw away. You don't hear any one complaining, do you? There's plenty of work, good prices and plenty of money to pay the price. No; the Free-Traders are just filling space. I'm sorry to admit it, but there are always some fault-finders and malcontents in my big family. Always black sheep in every flock. But it's a great people, a great country and a great day!"

And Uncle Sam went off with a bunch of fireworks in one hand and patting the Eagle with the other.

F. C.

UNCLE SAM REMINISCENT.

"I'm sorry to admit it," said Uncle Sam, "but there are always some fault-finders and malcontents in my family; always black sheep in every flock. But it's a great people, a great country, a great day."

Happy Vacation Days.

These are the very happiest vacation days the American people have ever known. Few indeed are those who cannot plan a joyful trip to the seashore or mountain with well filled purse, thanks to Protection and full employment at high wages.

A man will resent being told he is a fool no matter how often he may so designate himself.

ENGLISH CLERGYMEN POOR.

Benefices Said to Be Worth Less Than \$750 a Year.

The lot of the clergy in the Church of England today is said to be so wretched that even younger sons have given up the career which for so many years was looked upon as their chief resource. It may easily be understood that this calling has ceased to appeal to them when the fact is known that out of about 14,000 benefices in the church, more than 7,000 are worth less than \$750 a year and that nearly all of them are decreasing in value. About 1,500 benefices are worth only \$500 a year and less than \$250 annually is the return from 300 livings which have been recently described as more nearly "starvings" to the unfortunates who are assigned to them. In the diocese of Peterborough there are sixty-one livings that are worth no more than \$225 a year, and this is not yet the worst as there are in Newcastle benefices that are valued at only \$125 a year. The wives of clergymen in these parishes are of course unable to employ servants and all the drudgery of household falls on their shoulders. The luxury of meat is denied to them except on alternate days and their children—of whom the number is nearly always in inverse ratio to the amount of the living—are prepared by education in the elementary schools, or by the teaching their parents can give them at odd times for their descent to a lower social sphere. These clergymen, as a rule come from good country families. Their wives are from the same class and are in few cases fitted by their training for a life of drudgery and hard work. The actual return for these livings is frequently much less than the figures quoted here since their value is dependent on the price of corn and this has declined until it many cases what used to be a living worth \$500 is now in reality not worth more than two-thirds of that sum.—New York Sun.

A Spelling Parrot.

Polly's cage, when at the seaside, hung upon a piazza where the little children were in the habit of studying aloud. The bird, apparently listening, would make an effort to repeat what she could catch. Then suddenly she would burst out with, "I'll spell f-l-y r-a-t" (a strong emphasis on the r), continuing with a low chuckle of satisfaction, and ending in a hearty and long-continued laugh at her success. The little ones joining in the chorus. She was very fond of the children. In the early morning, when her cage was opened to give her liberty, she would walk about for a time, climb the stairs to the children's room, and crawl into their beds before time for rising. Coffee was almost absolutely necessary to her existence. She would call early and steadily for it in the morning, adjusting her tones to the length of time spent in waiting—ordering, begging, beseeching, as the case might be, holding her cup meanwhile, to hasten matters. A very retiring, modest servant maid had been long in our employ. She had a follower named Thomas, who nightly paid his visit. It chanced one morning that Polly's coffee had been long delayed. A gentleman of the house coming to breakfast met the girl and made an inquiry regarding the meal. She turned to reply, facing the questioner, when Polly seeing her opportunity for revenge, took it, and, in a man's voice, called out: "Mary, how's Thomas?" The woman retreated in confusion, while Polly laughed an ugly, low laugh; but the coffee was forthcoming.—Our Animal Friends.

Wonders of the Wire.

It is not widely known that at the present time, between all important telephone centers of the United States, while the trunk wires are being used for transmitting speech, there are being sent over them simultaneously telegraphic messages without producing any interruption of the spoken words. Were it not for immediate laws of nature, which cannot be varied by man or corporation, one might be listening, and take off the telegraphic message thus traversing these very conductors. What a tantalizing prospect for the wiretappers! Although these telegraphic impulses actually traverse the coil of wire in the telephone held to the ear and actually speed along the identical copper conductor at that time conveying the voice currents, you hear neither dot nor dash of the telegraphic message.

Environments of Some Literary Folk.

Literary people are evidently not in need of holidays. So long as they have pens, ink and paper and access to a library, they can write their books anywhere, and many choose to write them in the quiet seclusion of a country house. Rider Haggard enjoys the seclusion of a Norfolk farm. George Meredith leads a reclusive life among the Surrey hills. G. A. Henty writes all his boys' books on board his eighty-ton yacht, and Dr. Gordon Stables has for his study a gypsy caravan, in which he wanders at will for a half of every year.

Street Car Tickets as Currency.

Portugal is suffering from a plethora of money just now. Not gold, of course, nor silver, but copper. So vast is the supply of this inferior metal that ordinary people are exceedingly chary of changing such few gold coins as they may come into their possession. The copper coinage is big and cumbersome, and it is also depreciated, so that, in order to avoid being burdened with it, it has become the custom, in larger cities at all events, to use street car tickets as currency.