

The Amir's Move

NARRATIVE OF
CAPTAIN ADAMS
"Detective-Diplomat"

By H. M. EGBERT

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VII.

I SHALL always remember the 10th day of March, 1905, because of two remarkable incidents that happened to me on that date.

I had returned from a mission to a foreign court, which I had accomplished to the great satisfaction of his majesty, King Edward VII., and was awaiting a new summons in my chambers in Half Moon street, Piccadilly. For this reason I did not venture to go far from home, but contented myself with a short walk every afternoon. On the date I have mentioned I was walking homeward about three o'clock in the afternoon when I noticed a crowd collected around a shop window. Pushing my way to the front, from curiosity, I perceived that they were watching a mechanical figure, decked out in Indian costume and turban, around whose neck hung a card on which was printed an invitation to all and sundry to play chess with the automaton.

Having always prided myself on my chess playing, and having acquired something of a reputation at the game when stationed with my regiment in India, its home and where it best flourishes, I stepped within and sat down at the board opposite the figure, which was, of course, as I well knew, merely an automaton manipulated with wires by a player somewhere in the basement of the building. Hardly had three moves been exchanged before I perceived that I was matched against a player of no mean ability. The game was a hard one, but, just as I was confident that I had my adversary at my mercy, by a totally unexpected move he corralled my queen and took her with his bishop, placing me in a position of hopeless inferiority.

Piqued at this unexpected ending, I resigned the game and set up the pieces afresh. The same thing happened. Again the game went my way; again my queen was hemmed in and taken by the bishop of the automaton. And a third time the same thing occurred, nor could I discern in what way I placed my piece in jeopardy.

I had been so intent upon the game that, when I arose to go, I found a couple of hours had elapsed. Evening was approaching and Piccadilly lay under a dense white fog. As I passed out of the door a colored attendant, with a salaman, handed me a piece of cardboard on which was written the unsigned message:

"I will play you again!"

That suited me, but for the present I must get home to see whether any message had arrived for me from the foreign office. I had groped my way through the fog as far as what I thought was the Green park, when a momentary lifting disclosed to me the name of a street totally unfamiliar set into the wall of an old garden. I had evidently taken some wrong turn and wandered into what I conjectured was the neighborhood of the Tottenham Court road district, or some portion of Bloomsbury. While I was debating my next move I was startled to hear a woman's voice whisper into my ear, in a manner betokening extreme agitation:

"Do you understand French, monsieur?"

At my affirmative answer she appeared out of the fog and clasped me by the arm. She was of an Oriental cast of features—Greek or Syrian, I should have guessed—but her French was precise and idiomatic. Her first words revealed her status.

"My mistress is sorely in need," she whispered. "Will you help her?"

"What am I to do?" I rejoined, scrutinizing her carefully.

"She has been kidnapped. She is kept in this house; she has been there for days. Tonight she may escape before the prince returns from St. James' palace if some one will help her, show her where to go. Ah, monsieur will assist; he is a gentleman! Our need is desperate."

My curiosity had almost overcome my prudence when the woman fairly dragged me through the gate of the garden, across a tiled pavement, and into the fog-bound recesses of an ancient house, apparently unfurnished, up several flights of stairs, until we stood before a door on the top story. She knocked twice and waited; suddenly the door was flung open from within, disclosing a light so dazzling that my eyes, accustomed to the obscurity of the dim street, were for a moment half blinded.

A woman stood before me, of the same cast of features as the maid, but of an haughty air of one born to command, which quickly demonstrated to me their relative positions. As she stood in the entrance of the brilliantly lighted room, which was richly carpeted and furnished with wonderful hangings of the silkiest texture, and furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, she appeared to have been struggling with that bane of civilized life—packing a portmanteau. Odd garments and toilet articles lay scattered over the floor.

She cast a searching glance at me over her light gauze veil, which only enhanced the beauty of her features.

"This gentleman speaks French.

God sent him—by a miracle. He will assist!" exclaimed the maid.

"Mademoiselle can rely upon my service to any extent," I answered.

The woman's attitude, which had been of measured hostility, suddenly altered.

"I believe you," she cried. "I do not care who you are. There is five minutes yet before we need start. Sit down; I will be brief. If at the end of my narrative you decide that I am not worthy of aid—"

"It is not necessary to tell me," I protested.

She flushed. "But I do not choose to be a beggar under false pretenses," she cried. "I am the Princess Khadijah Kassim. I see the name conveys no meaning to you—"

"On the contrary," I answered, "the name of Khadijah Kassim's father was famous in the Punjab."

"You have been in India?" she cried.

"I was an officer in the Indian army."

"Nothing could be better. Listen, then, and I will be as speedy as possible. When my father was old he foresaw that upon his death, since he had no son, Prince Rakkim Khan would seize upon the throne of Beluchistan. The prince demanded my hand in marriage in order to obtain the throne with me. To avoid him, my father sent me to Paris to be educated, together with my maid here, in a convent. There we spent five years together. Meanwhile he begged the British government to declare a protectorate over his kingdom and to acknowledge me as his heir. The negotiations dragged. My father died suddenly last November. Rakkim Khan sent troops into Beluchistan and seized the throne. Then, having secured his position, he came boldly to London to justify himself with the British government. You have heard he was here?"

The papers had been full of the visit of this eastern prince; had vied with one another in publishing stories of his magnificence, his cruelty, his chivalry, his eccentricities—above all, his passion for chess. Only that day, I knew, he had had an interview with the king.

"On the way he sent envoys to Paris. They presented forged credentials from my father, of whose death I was unaware. I went with them; they delivered me into the prince's hands in this house, to which I came expecting to meet my father. He holds me here in captivity and every day he plagues me to marry him, to place his right to the throne beyond dispute. And his old abbot disputes with me upon the duties of our religion, showing how a woman may have no say against such a suitor."

I had heard of the abbot too, the fanatical Mullah of Setstan, who had much the same rank among the Mohammedan hierarchy as a bishop holds with us.

"This afternoon, in the fog, I learned that a way of escape lay open. The slave who guards me accompanied his master. The prince was overture of me. Help me to fly to my own country and I will reward you richly."

"When will the prince return?" I asked.

"At any moment," she replied, wringing her hands.

Yet she remained there helplessly and seemed to make no effort to escape. It would have been inexplicable in a European; but I understood how far divorced is the life of an oriental lady from all action. Accustomed to have their every move anticipated by a host of slaves, in moments of peril, when they have to shift for themselves, they seem to be affected by a sort of paralysis.

"Come, then," I exclaimed impatiently. I snatched up a fur traveling cloak which I perceived lying upon a chair, and wrapped it around her. She turned to her grip, in which she had been trying to pack some foolish and unnecessary articles; a big doll, sweetmeats, a dog collar studded with pearls. I took the portmanteau from her by force. "There is no time for it!" I said. "This way!" And I fairly hustled the two women into the corridor and, taking each by one arm, descended the stairs with them. At the bottom the maid seemed to take courage; she released herself and, running ahead, opened the door which communicated with the garden. It was night, and the fog was clearing; stars shone faintly through the moving wrack. A carriage rolled up to the entrance and stopped. We ran down the garden and pulled at the gate which led into the street. It swung back and, blocking the entrance, I saw Rakkim Khan himself and the Mullah, in his green turban.

An evil smile swept across the prince's features. He understood the situation perfectly. "Twice in one day!" I heard him mutter in Punjabi, though I did not understand the significance of the phrase. For one moment he stood as though paralyzed with rage; then he whipped a short sword from under his cloak. That moment of delay saved my life. I leaped upon him, caught his sword belt as he tugged at the scabbard, and closed my hand upon the hilt. We

wrestled for the weapon together, the prince's face livid with rage and fear. "Fly!" I cried in French to the woman; but neither stirred. Rooted to the spot, apparently, with terror, they had not even strength to scream. I felt that I was the prince's master. Gradually I overcame his resistance. In another instant I should have had him at my mercy when a shower of sparks flew up before my eyes. Then a dark cloud seemed to close over my brain and blot out the impressions of the senses.

When I opened my eyes a policeman was shaking me. He helped me to my feet, not unkindly, believing that I had inhaled too freely, and so he followed them. So long as they were in Europe I should be powerless; when they reached the no man's lands of Asia it would be different. For it was clear that, in order to avoid the British ships of war cruising in the Persian gulf, they would be compelled to make the overland journey across the Arabian deserts and through Mesopotamia.

My first admonition that they knew I was in pursuit came to me when I occupied the suite in the hotel at Belgrade, which they had evacuated 12 hours before. The room I slept in was the princess'. Pinned to the cover of the dressing table was a hasty scribble in French:

"Help me, monsieur. When once we have reached the desert I shall be in his power and forced to marry him. Mon Dieu! I hate him more each moment. I shall stab myself to the heart rather than wed him."

It was not my intention to attack the prince and his retinue single-handed. I had been busy sending out telegraphic dispatches; a detachment of jacksies from the British squadron was to be placed at my disposal as soon as they crossed the Dardanelles and moved upon Damascus. This was the starting point of the caravan journey, and we were to come upon them in a pass of the Taurus range, between Damascus and the sea.

In the hotel at Constantinople I found another note, left in the hands of the dragoman, for "the gentleman who should arrive from England on the morrow."

"I have abandoned hope," it read. "I have secured a loaded pistol. I swear that, unless you rescue me soon, I shall blow out my brains."

A British cruiser was in Constantinople.

While the prince was embarking to cross to the Asiatic shore upon a leaking Turkish gunboat, I was selecting my company from among the seamen for the enterprise of staying his progress. I selected 15 veterans of little eastern wars. On the following morning we landed at Aleppo and proceeded inland toward our destination, disguised as tourists, since, under international law, our act was invasion of friendly territory.

Upon the second morning, encamped in the pass of the Taurus, we had word from our scouts that a caravan was approaching. The pass was the only entrance to Damascus through the mountains; once they gained this, nothing could bar their progress.

I placed my men in advantageous positions behind rocks; then, as the long line of mules and camels came into sight, rode down with a white flag to greet them. An elderly Turk came out to me.

"You have with you," I said, in French, "a prince and a princess whom we are seeking. Give them to us and go your way in peace, brother."

"We are but merchants," he quavered, his white beard rising and falling in agitation. "We carry goods to Damascus. Moreover, there is no woman in this caravan. Come and see for yourself."

"It is well," I answered. "But remember, at the least treachery, I have men hidden behind those rocks who will shoot you down mercilessly."

We rode down the line, past the halted camels and the mules, which, released from their harness, were rolling ecstatically in the dust of the road. Upon the ground near by were well-packed bales of cottons, silks, carpets and other eastern wares. There were some sleek horses at a picket line; there were Armenian merchants, Turkish guards, and negro or Abyssinian slaves; but there was no sign

yesterday for Calais. If only we had known he had her with him—"

That was all the instructions that I received. How was I to rescue this helpless lady when her very whereabouts were unknown? I soon reflected, however, that it would be impossible for the prince, traveling with his retinue, to keep his progress secret from the police of the countries which he passed through. Accordingly I got into telegraphic communication with several continental capitals, and soon ascertained that he had landed at Calais that morning and taken train for the German border.

There was only one thing to do; to stick doggedly upon their trail and follow them. So long as they were in Europe I should be powerless; when they reached the no man's lands of Asia it would be different. For it was clear that, in order to avoid the British ships of war cruising in the Persian gulf, they would be compelled to make the overland journey across the Arabian deserts and through Mesopotamia.

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of a woman in the caravan, or of Prince Rakkim Khan.

"Will your highness not rest in the shade and partake of coffee?" the old Turk asked.

I refused. Weary and dispirited, I turned away. Had they passed us or evaded us? And then, just when all was blackest, my foot struck against something half hidden beneath a bale of goods. It was the dog collar that I had seen in the apartment in London; there was no mistaking it. I sprang upon the old Turk and grasped him by the throat.

"You lying scoundrel, which way have they gone?" I cried, shaking him back and forth till his false teeth rattled in their setting.

He gurgled feebly. I released him, and he pointed feebly with shaking finger down the road by which they had come.

"They had ridden on horseback—all three," he stammered. "The prince and she and the priest. They will cross the mountains by the footroad five miles away. Curses on him for disturbing the progress of us merchants; we have been in mortal fear of him and his heretic priest, the Persian."

I cast my eye along the line of picketed beasts, evidently the stable which Rakkim had abandoned when he discovered us awaiting him. I must select the best and ride swiftly. Once over the Taurus, he could enlist unlimited aid among the Damascenes. I picked out two supple splendid beasts. Two minutes later they were bridled and saddled and I was following the sharp hoof-tracks into the mountains, as fast as I could pick them up.

Ten minutes afterward I saw them ascending a slope two miles away from me. They looked back, I think, for all halted, and the horses appeared to be turned in irresolution. Then they were off again, over the crest and away.

I rode each horse alternately, which gave my mounts an advantage of speed. Half an hour afterward and only the width of the valley divided us. Now I could see them plainly; I saw the green turban of the priest dark against the snows of the summit that rose in front of them. And then my heart leaped with joy. They could not cross that peak before I should be upon them. They had miscalculated the viability of the pass in early April, when every stream was a torrent and every path a morass. I hurried onward.

As my horses picked their way up the slope I saw the prince confer with his bishop. Then they deliberately turned back and rode toward me. Less than three hundred yards separated us now. I saw him spur his steed; he came toward me at a furious gallop; as he did so he pulled something from his breast and, an instant later, I heard the sound of the discharge and felt my horse give a mighty leap into the air as the bullet struck her. She bent at the knees, her head hung; I could scarcely spring clear of her before she toppled and fell, pierced through the heart. At the same instant the other steed broke from my hand and went plunging and rearing down the snowy slope. As I rose I felt in my pistol pocket for my weapon. It was not there. Whether the old Turk had robbed me or whether I had lost it I do not know, but at this crisis I was totally unarmed.

Meanwhile the prince had reined in his horse a hundred feet away in anticipation of an exchange of bullets. Then he perceived my dilemma and, with a furious cry, rode me down and encircled me in the abandonment of his triumph, pointing a pistol at my brain.

I had risen to my feet; I watched him silently, because there was nothing to say. At last he spoke.

"In London," he said, his voice trembling with rage, "the laws do not permit an injured husband, whatever his rank, to take the life of the violator of his home. But in Syria—eh, monsieur, why should you not die?"

I hardly understood the meaning of his harangue; I was thinking of my unfulfilled mission and the failure of my country's ends.

He raised the pistol, took deliberate aim—then lowered it as a scream rang through the hills. A moment later I saw the princess come galloping down toward us, the priest at her side, in vain attempting to restrain her.

"You shall not kill him," she exclaimed in French. "I lied to you. He was no lover of mine."

"What?" cried the prince. "Did I not find him at your side in the garden?"

She burst into tantalizing laughter. "It was but a scheme of my maid's," she cried. "I wanted to make you jealous, to see whether you wished to wed me for my kingdom or for myself. To that end I timed my appearance in the garden to be coincident with your return. To that end, also, I left those notes for the Englishman in each hotel we stayed at, of which you found all but two. And also I wished to put to the proof of experience the saying of the poet Hafiz, 'Outside of Persia there is neither loyalty nor love.'"

The prince appeared utterly discomfited.

"Will you swear upon the book of the prophet Jesus that you have not pursued us to win her love from me?" he cried.

"I have seen her but once," I answered. "That was in London, where her maid, approaching me in the street, invoked my aid in helping her to escape from her convent in Paris."

"Paris?" he cried. "Why, she came to London of her own accord, to discuss marriage with me, seeing that she had none to negotiate for her. Truly the ways and schemes of women are

past finding out." He turned and looked into my eyes with a piercing gaze.

"Why did you pursue us hither?" he asked.

"Why did you fly?" I answered.

"Why?" he repeated. "Because I feared the English government wished to steal my bride and give her to you. Perdition! She told me that. Malediction on women's pranks!"

"You had married her?" I cried in astonishment. "I pursued you in order to release her from her captivity and secure the throne of Beluchistan to her. Had you made known to my government that you had married her with her consent, we would have made a treaty with you."

The prince let his revolver fall.

"Allah give us domination over women!" he said softly. "Verily, their tricks are stronger than our right arms. Here this woman has set me at war with you and your nation, and all to gratify her pride and to test some saying of a dead and gone poet." He paused. A smile illumined his face. "Is not this reminiscent of our first encounter—the one before that in the garden?" he said.

"Our first encounter?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. For my bishop married us and, incidentally, destroyed the motive for your pursuit."

"Well?"

"Parbleu, friend, did I not take your queen with my bishop three times in succession on that same afternoon when we played chess together in the shop window?"

MOST LOYAL FRIEND OF MAN

Eloquent and Deserved Tribute Paid to This Inseparable and Faithful Companion.

Where can man find in the animal kingdom a truer friend, a closer companion, a more faithful guardian or a more efficient and braver ally than the dog?

Friendship in life may spring from many causes, and, under test, vanish like mist before the sun and wind, but the friendship of a dog can always be relied upon unless you yourself destroy it.

A dog will not bite the hand that gives it food and drink.

Can one imagine a closer friendship between animal and man than that existing between the lonely trapper and his faithful companion? What company they are to each other! Years of association have made communication an open book to them, the dog to the man, the man to the dog. A look, a nod, a gesture, a single word, and with a wag of the tail the dog understands and obeys.

And mindful of his good friend, the lone hunter sees to it that he goes not hungry if there's enough for one, yet not enough for two.

At the blazing campfire in the early hours of the night the trees have listened to many a one-sided conversation between man and dog, and not one sided either, for with eyes and wagging tail the dog replied. And when the master rolled himself in his blanket and went off to sleep, with his faithful dog curled up beside him, a sense of security, absolute, was his.

Let a prowler come within scenting distance of the camp and a low growl told the master to be alert and doing.

With what glee the dog trotted by its master's side when the rounds to traps were made! A rabbit, a squirrel, a hedgehog or a porcupine might entice him off the beaten path, but only for a moment. He had grown old in the service and understood that such game was not for such a staid dog as he.

Then the day comes when the decree of war has come upon our four-footed friend, for in the tussle with old Bruin it has been maimed to the death. With what care does the master lave and bind the wounds and how lovingly he beds and shelters his old companion. Nothing is neglected to make him comfortable and bring him back to strength and health. But it is no use. The old dog, refusing to eat, grows lank and wan, until, when too weak to raise its head, it can only look and feebly tap the ground with its grateful tail. And then comes the saddest duty of his life, to open the ground and hide away the last of a dog that was to him everything that man or woman might have been, but was not. A dog that never lied to him, that was always kind and willing, ever mindful of his master and faithful and loyal even unto death.

Put No Limit on Trust.

The late Meredith Townsend had an affection for Scotsmen as contributors to the Spectator, of which he was for so many years proprietor and co-editor. Mr. Townsend's liking for the Scots was based on an experience he had in Leith when a boy. He was on holiday, and had run short of money for his return to London. He boldly boarded a London passenger boat, intimating his desire to the captain to go south, explained who he was, and stated that he was without funds. Seemingly favorably impressed by the lad's tale and appearance, the captain, a Scot, said that would be all right, and showed him to a cabin. "But," said young Townsend, "this is a saloon. As things are, steerage would do all right." "Na, na, my manie," said the captain; "if I trust ye at all, I'll trust ye first class!"

Pure Cinch.

"My wife can't decide on a car." "This model is the last word in touring cars." "The last word, eh? Then she'll have it."

True Happiness.

Happiness consists in activity; such is the constitution of our nature; it is a running stream, and not a stagnant pool.—Good.



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upon my pillow convinced me that I had actually been the victim of an assault. I dressed leisurely. When I entered the next room, however, I found a dispatch requiring my presence at St. James' palace instantly. It had been there since the preceding evening.

Gulping down a measure of hot coffee, I sprang into a cab and was soon at the palace gates. I found that I had been expected on the preceding evening. Sir Francis (now baron) Knowles, his majesty's secretary, was inclined to lecture me in his usual fussy manner, but a sudden summons from his majesty sent him hurrying out. When he returned he brought the king with him. He greeted me cordially.

"Captain Adams," he said, "we have another mission for you, one peculiarly suited to your romantic temperament. We want you to go to Paris and take charge of a Persian princess."

"The devil!" I cried, forgetting to whom I spoke. "Rakkim Khan's got her!"

Thereupon I had to explain the events of the preceding evening. The king was very grave when I had concluded my story.

"If Rakkim Khan gets back to Beluchistan," he said, "he will lease a seaport to Germany in return for her protection, and so give her a foothold upon the Persian gulf littoral in revenge for our refusal to countenance his usurpation. You must follow them up at once and find means to set the prince free. Once freed, take her to Peshawar, upon the Beluchi border, where a regiment of British troops will be placed at your disposal to restore her to the throne. We cannot let Beluchistan fall into the prince's hands. But so long as the princess is in his power he holds her as a hostage, and all our efforts will be fruitless. The prince left England at midnight

While the prince was embarking to cross to the Asiatic shore upon a leaking Turkish gunboat, I was selecting my company from among the seamen for the enterprise of staying his progress. I selected 15 veterans of little eastern wars. On the following morning we landed at Aleppo and proceeded inland toward our destination, disguised as tourists, since, under international law, our act was invasion of friendly territory.

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Meanwhile the prince had reined in his horse a hundred feet away in anticipation of an exchange of bullets. Then he perceived my dilemma and, with a furious cry, rode me down and encircled me in the abandonment of his triumph, pointing a pistol at my brain.

I had risen to my feet; I watched him silently, because there was nothing to say. At last he spoke.

"In London," he said, his voice trembling with rage, "the laws do not permit an injured husband, whatever his rank, to take the life of the violator of his home. But in Syria—eh, monsieur, why should you not die?"

I hardly understood the meaning of his harangue; I was thinking of my unfulfilled mission and the failure of my country's ends.

He raised the pistol, took deliberate aim—then lowered it as a scream rang through the hills. A moment later I saw the princess come galloping down toward us, the priest at her side, in vain attempting to restrain her.

"You shall not kill him," she exclaimed in French. "I lied to you. He was no lover of mine."

"What?" cried the prince. "Did I not find him at your side in the garden?"

She burst into tantalizing laughter. "It was but a scheme of my maid's," she cried. "I wanted to make you jealous, to see whether you wished to wed me for my kingdom or for myself. To that end I timed my appearance in the garden to be coincident with your return. To that end, also, I left those notes for the Englishman in each hotel we stayed at, of which you found all but two. And also I wished to put to the proof of experience the saying of the poet Hafiz, 'Outside of Persia there is neither loyalty nor love.'"

The prince appeared utterly discomfited.

"Will you swear upon the book of the prophet Jesus that you have not pursued us to win her love from me?" he cried.

"I have seen her but once," I answered. "That was in London, where her maid, approaching me in the street, invoked my aid in helping her to escape from her convent in Paris."

"Paris?" he cried. "Why, she came to London of her own accord, to discuss marriage with me, seeing that she had none to negotiate for her. Truly the ways and schemes of women are

She cast a searching glance at me over her light gauze veil, which only enhanced the beauty of her features.

"This gentleman speaks French.