

The Scourge of Damascus

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

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CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

"I remember," pursued Ulin. "It all comes to me now. I bathed his bruised head, and bound up his wounds, while you brought the cordial which my mother provided."

"So it was, my lady. I have seen the slave since—have seen him several times—he has brought messages to your father—and I know that his gratitude is strong. If Osmir has any power to open the prison door, and I can find him, there may be some hope."

"But can you find him?" asked the princess. She spoke eagerly, and no longer sought to conceal the real cause of her anxiety.

"I can try," returned the attendant; "and even here we have a fortunate help. Shubal, who has been so long your servant, is a near friend to Osmir. I will take Shubal with me, and we may find the man we seek. Shall I not leave at once?"

"Yes, Albia. Go at once. Be careful, for all may depend on the secrecy of your movements. I have entered upon this matter, and I will now give all my energies to its consummation. Go—and bring me answer as quickly as you can."

The bondmaid left the apartment, and when Ulin was once more alone, she started to her feet, and moved to the window. The flush was back upon her cheek, and the sparkle was in her eye. Her pure blood was circulating with new power, as, for the time, she forgot the king in the memory of the youthful chieftain.

In less than an hour Albia returned, and the beam upon her face told very plainly that she had not been entirely disappointed.

"My good mistress," she said, "Shubal has served us well. I found him without difficulty, and he at once went alone in search of Osmir. He found him at the royal palace, and has brought him hither."

"Brought Osmir?"

"Yes."

"And what does he say?"

"I have not spoken to him of Julian. I thought you had better do that. You may have more influence."

"Very well—bring him up at once. I will shrink from nothing now."

"In a little while the tall, dark form glided within the chamber of the princess. He bowed low as he entered, and when he saw the lady Ulin, he sank down upon his knee."

"Noble lady," he said, "Albia informed me that I can be of service to you. Once you served me, and my life has been yours ever since. Command me."

At first Ulin had been startled by the appearance of the powerful black within her chamber; but when she remembered the service she had done him, and when she saw how gently the beams of gratitude fell upon her from his brown eyes, she regained her confidence.

"I will not command you, Osmir; I can only ask you to assist me. You may be able to serve me, and you may not be able. But I will not detain you with useless words. You do not yet know what I seek?"

"I do not, lady."

"You helped to bring the robber chieftain to Damascus?"

"Ha—who told you that?" He was not startled with fear; but he rather seemed to wonder how the princess had gained the information.

"Do you know a man named Hobaddan?"

"Yes, lady. He is second in command of the robber band."

"He has been here, Osmir, and he has induced me to use my influence towards gaining freedom for his chieftain. I may not explain to you, but nevertheless I am willing to confess that I do much desire to free this Julian from the power of the king. Can you help me?"

He bowed his head, and pretty soon arose to his feet.

"Lady," he said, "I did help in the capture of the young chieftain; but when I came to know him I would rather have served him had it been in my power. I found him a generous, honorable man and I learned to love him; but I was bound by an oath to the will of Judah, and I could not disobey. I wish I could save him now."

"Can you do it, Osmir? I do not wish that the king should kill him. We thought you might have access to his dungeon—that you might, at some time, be set to guard him."

"So it is, lady; but I am not to be on the guard again until daylight."

"And to-morrow may be the last!" uttered the princess, painfully. "If you cannot help us our hope has an end."

Osmir moved back and leaned against the wall, with his head upon his hand.

"Lady," he said, after much thought, "I have one source of hope. My companion, Selim—he who was with me in the work of capture—stands watch over the chieftain's dungeon at midnight. Selim may help me. If he will, Julian may be saved. I will hasten away at once, and exert this only influence I possess."

"And when can I know the result?" asked Ulin.

"Within two hours past midnight," said Osmir. "That is," he added, "if I have any result to bring. If I do not succeed, I may not return at all."

"At two hours past midnight," pursued Ulin, "Hobaddan is to be in my garden. You can meet him there."

Ulin started the guard, after a moment's reflection, "If I succeed, I shall not fear to meet the lieutenant. If I am not in the garden at the time appointed, or very near that time, you may know that I have done all that lay in my power. Have you more to say?"

"No, good Osmir. Go to the work, and do the best you can."

He spoke a simple word of promise, and then turned from the apartment, Albia conducting him down, and guiding him out by a small door in the garden wall.

"Albia," he said, as he stood beneath the low arch—and his tone showed that he did not speak lightly—"your mistress does not dream of the danger I must undergo in this work; but I will be true to my promise, I will do all I can. If Selim will not join me, there is the end; but if he falls in with me, then we both put our lives at stake, and the prize may be won. I hope we shall succeed."

The bondmaid watched the retreating form until it was lost in the darkness, and then she closed the gate, and turned her steps back towards the house.

CHAPTER X.

In the Dungeon.

The robber chieftain had been placed in one of the most gloomy dungeons beneath the royal palace, his legs and arms loaded with chains, and his feet shackled to a bolt in the floor. How long he had been there he could not tell. Night and day were the same in the living tomb. Food and drink had been brought to him thrice, and a masked mute had been in to remove the tray. He had but one hope of escape, and even that was so feeble that it would not bear the entertainment. He thought if his followers should discover where he was, they might possibly dare to attempt his release; but when he came to weigh all the circumstances, he dared not think they would do it. In short, Julian had made up his mind that death was very near to him.

And what had he to live for? What, but revenge upon the King of Damascus? He had no parents—no relatives—nothing on earth of his own blood which he could claim. There might be living in the city some human being of his kin; but he did not know of such. He loved his brave fellows; but they could do without him. They were bold, stout men, and could look for themselves. What else was there? There were some poor families in the mountains—some friends upon the plain—and a few dependents near the river; but Hobaddan would care for them. What else was there?

The youthful chieftain bowed his head, and pressed his heavily laden hands upon his heart. There was one more—one whom he had hoped to see again in the coming time—one who had left an impression in his soul which had warmed and quickened his whole being. But why think of her? What could the beautiful daughter of Aboul Cassem be to him? In a few short days she would be the wife of his bitterest enemy.

This mused the prisoner, standing erect, with his manacled hands folded upon his bosom, when he was aroused from his reflections by the sound of creaking bolts, and in a few moments more the door of his dungeon was opened, and the rays of a lamp penetrated the place. Two men entered, closing the door after them; but the eyes of the chieftain were not yet used enough to the light to distinguish either their forms or features. Presently, however, as they addressed each other, he recognized the two blacks who had so fatally deceived him, and his first impulse was to raise his heavy chains and smite them down; but they were not near enough to be thus reached.

"Osmir—Selim," he said, "are you here?"

"Yes, my master," replied Osmir. "Have you come to kill me?"

"No."

"To bear me to the king?"

"What, then? You have the watch over me?"

"Yes."

"And the king fears not to trust you?"

"You see he does trust us."

"Ay—as I trusted you. O, you are two ungrateful villains. When you came to me in the forest, I believed your tale of woe, and took pity upon you; and I meant to be kind to you, and make your lot a pleasant one. I looked into your faces, and I thought you were honest. I did not trust you from your speech, but from your honest looks. However, it is past. And now what seek ye?"

"Good master," said Osmir, speaking earnestly, "before I tell you why we are now here, let me say to you that we are not without hearts, and that we have some store of honesty. When we went to your camp, we went in the service of another master, whom we were bound to serve. We had sworn that we would capture you if we could. But, sir, after we had seen you, and known you, we would have recanted had the thing been possible. We asked Judah to free us from the task, but he refused."

"Why do you tell me this story now?"

"That you may know the reason of our action."

"Your action speaks for itself. Look at these chains; and mark the fate to which I am doomed."

"I meant not the action of the past, good master; I alluded to action that was to come."

"Action to come?"

"Yes. Selim and I are here to speak of your release from this dungeon. Hold—let our words be few, for the time is short. We have promised that we would lead you forth from Horam's power if the thing were possible."

"Promised whom?" asked Julian.

The black hesitated. He knew not that he should use the name of the princess, so he finally answered:

"Hobaddan is in the city, and our promise has been sent to him. But—there is something more. If we lead you from this place, we do so in the face of great danger. We have planned for that, and have freely staked our lives in the work. But, if we succeed, and you are free, we can never more return to Damascus. If we go with you from this dungeon, we must go with you from the city, and remain with you."

Julian believed that the black was speaking truly and honestly.

"Certainly," he said, "if you lead me in safety from the bonds that now encompass me, I will give you such return as you may desire. You may remain with me, if you like, or I will give you safe conduct into the land of the Syrians."

"Your word is enough, my master; and henceforth Selim and I are your servants. We change our allegiance, and the proof of our fidelity shall be manifest in this first act of our service. We have dangers to meet, sir."

"Talk not of dangers," cried the chieftain. "Throw off these chains; give me a sword; and lead me to the upper world; and I ask no more. Once again I trust you, and if you prove true, my gratitude shall be your while I live."

Without further words Osmir proceeded to the work he had come to perform. Selim held the lantern, while he loosed the irons from Julian's limbs; and very soon the chieftain stepped forth with his limbs free.

"There is no time to waste," said Osmir, as he cast the chains upon the floor. "We have good swords at hand, and for the rest we must trust to our wit and strength. There is danger enough between this dungeon and the open air; but I am ready to meet it."

"By the gods," cried Julian, as he grasped the sword which Osmir had placed in his hand. "I can laugh at danger now. Lead on, and let this present hour be the last of Horam's power!"

(To be continued.)

HARPOONING BLUE WHALES.

The Harpoon Gun is a Cruel Instrument of Destruction.

To pursue the blue whale successfully, according to an interesting article in Pearson's Magazine, a complicated undertaking. For instance, one of the requirements is a boat that can steam twelve knots an hour, and which is furnished with a formidable weapon known as the harpoon-gun. The harpoon-gun is a ponderous piece of apparatus laced on a raised platform on the prow of the whaler, and consists of a short, stout cannon, mounted on a broad pedestal, on which it can rotate horizontally. The gun has also a vertical motion, and can be turned quickly in whatever direction the prow of the ship dominates. On the top of the gun are "sights" for aiming, just as in a rifle. Behind is the stock, which is grasped in the hand when firing the gun, and beneath it the trigger. The breech is a box-like arrangement, situated just where the stock is fastened to the gun proper. The gun is loaded in the ordinary way from the muzzle, and the harpoon is tightly rammed into it. To discharge the gun, a small cartridge, with a wire attached, is first put into the breech. Pressure on the trigger causes a pull on the wire, which ignites the cartridge and discharges the gun simultaneously. The harpoon is about six feet in length and very massive. It consists essentially of three parts, the anterior conical portion, the movable barbs, and the shaft. The anterior conical portion is an explosive shell filled with gunpowder, and screws on to the rest of the harpoon. The explosive shell is fired with a time-fuse after the harpoon is imbedded in the whale. Taken all in all the harpoon-gun is about the most exquisitely cruel instrument of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man! But it is only when one sees and knows the prodigious brute it is meant to destroy, that one realizes that it is nevertheless none too effective. The gun is never discharged at a greater distance than fifty feet, and seldom indeed at more than thirty from the whale. To be able to get so near requires not only very fine seamanship but a very intimate knowledge of the habits of the animal.—Philadelphia Times.

Hugest Sea Creature.

Of all the uncanny creatures in the animal kingdom the one whose acquaintance is hardest to make is the blue whale, the largest of all the whales, and, indeed, one of the most colossal animals, living or extinct, known to science. You will look in vain for him in zoological collections, in menageries, or even in museums. A brute 90 feet in length and weighing just as many tons does not lend itself to preservation or stuffing, and the few skeletons of him which do exist give one no idea of what he is like. The blue whale is hunted by the Norwegians chiefly for the sake of his oil, and is of considerable value, a full-grown specimen being worth from \$1,250 to \$1,500.

NO PUBLIC SUPPORT.

TARIFF REVISION PLAN NOT IN GENERAL FAVOR.

Advocated by Professional Free-Trade Reformers and a Limited Number of Doubting-Thomas Protectionists—Without a Leg to Stand On.

One point in connection with the gossip about alleged necessity for revision of the tariff cannot fail to be observed by those who are considering the question in all its phases, and that is that except among the professional tariff reformers the demand is not vociferously emphasized in any quarter except where there has always been a manifest weakness on the doctrine and policy of protection. You look into any section of the country where there has always been a lame and halting support given the cause of protection, and you will find all the Republicans that are to be found anywhere who are fearful that the trust gobbles will get the people and the Republican party if the markets of the United States are not speedily turned over to the foreign producers.

With these exceptions, and a few representatives in congress who are ready to get into the current of any passing breeze of popular clamor, rather than take their part in shaping public sentiment rightly, there is absolutely no support for the talk about the necessity for revising the tariff. When the people reflect upon the results of the past year, not only in domestic trade, but in the marvelous development of our international trade, facts concerning which will soon be ready for inspection, there will be a speedy fading of the Babcock idea of reforming trusts with the aid of foreigners.

It is well to reflect upon the fact, in this connection, that not a single member of either house of congress, who has any really close participation in the preparation of laws bearing upon the tariff or finance, has uttered one word in favor of the Babcock idea. This is significant, to say the least.

The preliminary figures furnished by the treasury department covering the trade of the United States with foreign countries have been completed, and, subject to a few changes, will stand as representing the most remarkable year in the experience of the nation with international trade. One thing is demonstrated by the results of the last year's business, and that is that those who are of opinion that there should be a revision of the tariff must find the reasons for such action by the next congress elsewhere than in the results obtained in the field of our trade relations with foreign countries. So far as that trade is concerned the advantages, to whatever cause due, have been largely with the producers of this country. Our laws of trade have certainly been promotive of the best interests of the country so far as international trade is concerned, to a greater degree during the past year than during any recent year in the nation's life. The most significant fact is the remarkable gain in our exports of domestic products. The returns to the treasury have not yet been completed to an extent which makes it possible to show the relative gains of manufactures and farm produce in this increased export business, but it is interesting to know that during the year ending June 30 we sent abroad commodities to the amount of \$89,000,000 worth more than were sold abroad last year and almost double what we sold abroad during 1895. The influence of wisely framed laws is also shown in the fact that while our export trade was growing so handsomely, we bought in foreign countries about \$28,000,000 worth less of commodities than we bought in the previous year, which means that the producers of this country had a wider field among our own people for the disposition of their products. The net foreign business done by our people in the twelve months just ended aggregated nearly two and a half billion dollars, and the striking fact which stands out in bold relief in this connection is that the aggregate of our sales abroad exceeded our purchase abroad by the sum of \$66,000,000. The tremendous importance of these figures is made clear when it is considered that this excess of exports over imports amounts to almost the total aggregate import or export business of the country in any year previous to seven years ago. If there is any comfort in these figures for tariff revisionaries they are welcome to it. The fact of the matter is the trade statistics of the fiscal year just closed leaves them without a leg to stand on.

In this connection it is well to note the fact that the treasury finances were never in better shape than at present. The total available cash balance is upward of \$171,000,000, and the net amount of free gold in the treasury, the property of the government, is about \$60,000,000. This is a handsome showing, considering the reductions made in internal taxation, and the bond purchases made by the department during the past three months.

COMPLACENT UNCLE SAM.

Well Satisfied with the Way Things Are Running at Present.

"Things are rather quiet," I remarked to Uncle Sam as I found him complacently resting in a hammock, smoking a most fragrant domestic cigar.

"Yes," he replied, handing me a perfect, "and I think we are entitled to a rest. My people never worked so hard before in their lives, and never

made so much money. They are sort of figuring up the profits these days, and cleaning up the factories. But they will all get to work again pretty soon, for orders keep pouring in for all kinds of goods."

"The free-traders don't seem to be very happy," I said.

"No, it's not their kind of weather," he remarked, with a smile. "But I don't mind them any more than I do these pesky flies and mosquitoes. They are gone with a little brush."

"Did you ever notice," he added, "that mosquitoes don't like tobacco smoke? Well, free-traders don't like smoke, either, especially the chimney smoke of the factories. They are a good deal like tramps. They hate work and water and soap. By the way, did you ever know of so few tramps as there are this summer? Even they seem to be working at something besides back doors and haylofts. What a blessing it is to think we are at peace with all the world, and that every one who wants work can get it. I'm not much of a fellow to moralize, but I never was quite so much impressed with the blessings of a well balanced protective tariff."

"Do you consider the prosperity of the farmers due to the tariff?" I asked.

"Of course I do," replied the old gentleman, earnestly. "I'll give Providence credit for the continued good crops, but what do abundants crops amount to unless the prices are right? And good prices are the result of the demand for more food right here at home. Why, my people never ate so much in their lives, as they are consuming now. That full dinner pail is no fairy tale, I can tell you. And the people are eating all the meat they want, and they don't stint on butter and eggs and fruits and berries that they never had of abroad. The grain and other farm produce I sell abroad are almost insignificant compared to what I sell at home. I knew when the Dingley law was passed that Liverpool would not always make the price of wheat. I'll be selling them tea and coffee and macaroni yet."

"But, Uncle Sam," I interrupted, "the free-traders keep telling us that we cannot keep on selling abroad if we do not buy more."

"Don't worry about that, my boy. Look at the figures. Those free-traders either don't know what they are talking about, or else they're training to beat Ananias. Those foreigners have got to buy of me whether I buy the same amount of them or not. If they can't pay in full, I'll charge it and collect the interest at 3 or 4 per cent. I'll allow they can't keep on forever buying more than they sell, but when they get broke, why, perhaps they'll want to be annexed. Guess Old Glory can cover them all. Have another cigar and a little juice."

And the old man laughed as heartily as a farmer at the circus. F. C.

TRADE'S RISING THERMOMETER.



Would It Pay?

The New York World is still harping on the old free-trade string—viz., that, if we want foreign nations to buy from us, we must buy from them; that, in other words, we ought, in order to retain our foreign trade, to throw open the American market to foreign manufacturers. Without bothering, for the time being, to discuss the merits of the question exhaustively, we would like to ask the World if it would not be just as well not to get so excited about the matter until foreign nations begin to show at least some little evidence that they are about to withdraw their trade from us. Just at present there are no signs which seem to point to that course of action on their part. Our foreign trade is not falling off alarmingly. On the contrary, it is still on the increase. When it begins to decline, it will be time enough to take up the question as to whether it will pay us to exchange for our foreign market the market worth fifty times as much which we have at home.

How Free Trade Would Work.

The only way that free trade would serve to prevent the tariff war that may be threatened would be that it would probably so cripple our industries that they would no longer be dangerous competitors in foreign countries. The question of the protective tariff does not enter into the equation only in so far as it has built up the industries that are now enabled to compete successfully with the manufacturers of the other countries on their own grounds.—Helena (Mont.) Record.

Railroad Receivership.

According to the Railroad Age railroad receiverships dwindled to three small roads with only about sixty miles of track during the past half year. This is the greatest height to which we have attained in railroad solvency. Monkey with the tariff and that record will soon go back to the more than 100 receiverships of '94, '95 and '96.

COW DEFENDED HER CALF.

Put a Hungry Bear to Flight After a Battle Royal.

The calf, having nursed sufficiently and feeling his baby legs tired of the weight they had not yet learned to carry, laid himself down. On this the cow shifted her position. She turned half around and lifted her head high. As she did so a scene of peril was borne in upon her fine nostrils. She recognized it instantly. With a snort of anger she sniffed again, then stamped a challenge with her fore hoofs and leveled the lance points of her horns toward the menace. The next moment her eyes, made keen by the fear of love, detected the black outline of the bear's head through the coarse screen of the juniper. Without a second's hesitation she flung up her tail, gave a short bellow and charged. The moment she saw herself detected the bear rose upon her hind-quarters, nevertheless, she was in a measure surprised by the sudden blind fury of the attack. Nimble she swerved to avoid it, aiming at the same time a stroke with her mighty forearm, which if it had found its mark would have smashed her adversary's neck. But as she struck out, in the act of shifting her position, a depression of ground threw her off her balance. The next instant one sharp horn caught her slantingly in the flank, tipping its way upward, while the mad impact threw her upon her back. Grappling, she had her assailant's head and shoulders in a trap and her gigantic claws cut through the flesh and sinew like knives; but at the desperate disadvantage of her position she could inflict no disabling blow. The cow, on the other hand, though mutilated and streaming with blood, kept pounding with her whole massive weight and with short, tremendous shocks crushed the breath from her foe's ribs. Presently, wrenching herself free, the cow drew off for another battering charge, and as she did so the bear hurled herself violently down the slope and gained her feet behind a dense thicket of bay shrub. The cow, with one eye blinded, glared around for her in vain; then, in a paroxysm of more terror, plunged back to her calf.—Leslie's Monthly.

GOOD LUCK IN BAD ERRORS.

Great Profits Have Sometimes Resulted From Seemingly Unprofitable Mistakes.

Mistakes are not always unprofitable. Sometimes they turn out to be the most fortunate things that could have happened. When Orme won the Eclipse stakes at Sandown eight years ago the prince of Wales sent his friend Mr. Courthope to lay a bet on a horse called Orvieto. But Mr. Courthope misunderstood the name and placed the prince's money on Orme. When Orme came in a good winner the prince thought, of course, that he had lost, instead of which he had won \$50,000. A lucky mistake was that which resulted in the opening of the famous Niersfontein gold mine in South Africa and the making of \$30,000,000. It was an error that saved a score of people from ruin and made wealthy many of them, for the original intention of twenty poor men who were seeking fortune was to buy a mine called the Rensnek farm. The prospectors who examined this farm found that it gave great promise of a rich mine, and they commissioned an agent to buy it for \$6,000. The agent, however, got mixed and made a hopeless blunder through not knowing the district well. He bought another place called Niersfontein for the prospectors, and the money was paid over before the dismayed gold seekers found they were let in for a place they did not want. They refused to accept the deal, but the money had been paid and retraction was impossible. Worst of all, some outside people profited by the error and snapped up the coveted Rensnek. Before going to law to repudiate the transaction the little company had a look at the despised Niersfontein place, and on giving a trial to it they found it worth while to hang on. The other place—the Rensnek—gave out within a fortnight and ruined the company which had bought it, while the Niersfontein became a magnificent mine and has yielded over \$30,000,000.

Great Growth of "Wire Houses."

There are 500 telephones on the floor of the exchange, each in charge of a boy, who receives orders from his office and transmits them to the floor broker for execution. In every broker's office there are from one to ten telephones, and many brokers rarely see their clients, who telephone orders from uptown offices, homes or out of town. In recent years there has been an enormous growth of what are known as "wire houses." There are New York, Chicago or Boston firms which lease private wires connecting with many of the leading cities east of Denver. No firm yet controls a private wire to the Pacific coast, but doubtless one will be heard of before long.—World's Work.

Telephone's Progress Abroad.

Although the use of the telephone has increased rapidly here there are countries in Europe in which telephones are in far more general use than here. In Stockholm, Sweden, one person in every fourteen has a telephone, there being more than 20,000 telephones in a population of 271,000. Every tobacconist's store is a public call office and the rates are very low. England is far behind in the matter of telephones, there being only 1 to every 636 of the population. In little Switzerland there is 1 to every 172 persons, but far more business is done over the telephone in England than in Switzerland.

Only a fool forgets his folly.