

The Wheel o' Fortune

BY LOUIS TRACEY.
Author of Wings of The Morning, The King of Diamonds, The Great Mogul, Karl Krier.
This Story is Controlled Exclusively by The Free Press

Baron Kerber and Alfieri must not meet here. If they do meet, we shall lose everything. . . . Tell the Baron to go on board the yacht, no matter what Mr. Fenshawe says. Do you understand? It is a matter of life and death. Slip out into a back street, so that Alfieri may not see you. . . . I will watch from here. Go, for Heaven's sake. Let nothing delay you. . . . She was incapable of further explanation. Dick feared she would faint if he waited another second. . . . Hence, when Irene turned to say that Mr. Fenshawe and the Baron appeared to be paying a prolonged visit to the Governor, she found that Mr. Haxton was sitting alone, with her veiled face propped in her hands, while, so malicious was fate's decree once more to Royson, that he was hastening through malodorous lanes and crowded slums in order to save from threatened peril the very man whose downfall offered the only visible means by which he could bend his own frail fortunes in that direction that looked best to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Massowah Asserts Itself.

Royson knew not one word of Arabic. His Italian was of a rudimentary type, based on some acquaintance with Latin, eked out by a few phrases gleaned from books of travel. The polite hotel manager's French was only a shade more fluent. Consequently, the latter told Mulai Hamed, deputy assistant hall-porter, that the Effendi wished to be conducted to Government House with the utmost secrecy, thus twisting Dick's simple request that the guide should avoid the main streets into a mysterious demand which an Eastern mind could not fail to embroider with intrigue. . . . For Mulai Hamed was a negroid Arab, whose ruffianly aspect was rather enhanced by the swaggering way he carried a broad shoulder-belt and brass badge of office. He interpreted his orders literally, being eager to display a certain skill in conducting to an artistic finish any enterprise that savored of guile. As soon as the two quitted the hotel, Royson saw that he was traversing by-paths seldom visited by Europeans. He passed through evil-smelling alleys so shut in by lofty houses that the sun hardly ever penetrated their depths. He caught glimpses of dim interiors when forced aside by a panier-laden mule or lumbering camel, and the knowledge was thrust upon him in many ways that his presence in this minor artery of the bazaar was resented by its inhabitants. . . . The few females he met were swathed from head to foot in cotton garments that had once been white. Dark eyes glanced curiously at him over the yashmak, or veil, which covered nose, cheeks, and mouth from the gaze of strangers. Orange-tinted nails and fingertips, visible occasionally when the loose fold of a robe was snatched from the contamination of touching him, suggested the talons of a bird of prey rather than the slender well-shaped hands for which the Arab woman is noteworthy. Every man, almost without exception, scowled at him. Naked children, playing in the gutter, ran off, half frightened, yet stopped to shriek words which he was quiet sure were not kindly greetings. Prowling dogs, the scavengers of the native quarter, shared the general hostility, and scurried out of his path, but sullenly, and with bared teeth. Through occasional sunlit vistas he peeped into main streets in which loitered numbers of Italian soldiers and civilians. Even a few carriages appeared, conveying ladies to the shops or public gardens, now that the intense heat of the sun had subsided. Therefore he found it scarcely credible that in the fetid slums there should be such covert hatred of the white race which held undisputed sway in thoroughfares distant not a stone's throw. And, in puzzling contrast to the evidences of the eye and ear, he was conscious of an uncanny sense of familiarity with his surroundings. Before the Aphrodite brought him south by east he had never been nearer Egypt than Paris. Yet the sights, the sounds, the nauseating smell of this dank bazaar, appealed to him with the breathless realism that the jingle of hansom's, the steady crunch of omnibuses, the yelling of newboys and the tar-laden scent of the wood-paved road might convey when next he entered the Strand. This entirely novel and disquieting conceit recalled his strange obsession when first he looked out over the desert at night from the bows of the yacht, and the memory brought with it the legend of his house—that the Roysons were descendants of Coeur-de-Lion. He saw now that which he had never realized from the glowing pages of written romance, that the Crusaders must have mixed with people nearly identical in manner and

speech with the strange human miscellany of Massowah. During those medieval campaigns in an arid and poverty-stricken land, feudal pomp and regal glitter would yield perforce to the demands of existence, Richard of England and Philip of France, with many another noble warrior of high repute, had doubtless been glad enough, times without number, to seek the shelter and meager fare of just such a jumble of darkened tenements as that through which his guide was leading him. . . . But why should he, Richard Royson, acknowledge an occult acquaintance with this unknown scene? And what was the fascination which the squalid life of the bazaar had exercised occasionally on men of exalted rank at different periods of the world's history? The mere notion that he might succumb to it—that he should even feel its glamour by the operation of some subtle trait of heredity—was so grotesque that he laughed aloud. He happened to be crossing a tiny square at the moment, and a bearded moulah was entering a mosque which filled one whole side of it. The unbeliever's mirth doubtless disturbed a pious meditation, and the moulah turned and muttered something. The words might be a verse of the Koran, but they had the ring of a malediction. . . . Mulai Hamed was abashed and angry. He spoke apologetically to the holy man, alluded to the "gisour" more than once, and proceeded to give Dick a voluble lecture, enlightening him, most probably, as to the exceeding importance of politeness where a Mahomedan priest was concerned. . . . Royson was unable to explain that his hilarity was not intended as a slight on the follower of the Prophet. Yet dignity demanded he should not remain dumb, so he pointed ahead, and vociferated, with a fairly accurate assumption of his skipper's voice and manner: "Lead on, you swab, and keep silent, or I'll alter the shape of your face." . . . It sufficed, nor was he wholly mistaken in his rough-and-ready philosophy for it is thus that the West dominates the East. The incident had the effect of arousing Royson to actualities. He dismissed the day-dream, and bent his wits to consideration of the queer message which Mrs. Haxton had asked him to deliver. Would the Austrian obey her, he wondered? A man's point of view and a woman's differ materially when the graver crises of life have to be faced. If it were merely a question of physical courage, Dick imagined that the Baron would refuse to play the coward's part by skulking on board the yacht. In that event, von Kerber and Alfieri could hardly fail to meet within the hour, for Massowah was a small place. Nor was it altogether probable that bloodshed would be the outcome. The affair at Marseilles had given the Italian an excellent opportunity for settling old scores in that fashion if he were so minded. At any rate, the position was rife with dramatic possibilities, and each that presented itself to Dick's judgment seemed to favor his own projects, which now demanded a speedy return to England. Yet he hoped to arrange his departure in such wise that Irene Fenshawe might not have it in her heart that he had deserted her. . . . Dick did not admit even to himself, that he had any well-defined motive, other than the fulfilment of a promise, for wishing to stand well in the girl's esteem. . . . "I may be a potential baronet," he commended, "but I am not such a fool as to fall in love with the heiress of a man like Fenshawe. A baronet, indeed! Hardly a month ago I was tramping the streets of London looking for work. One does not, under those conditions, include in the list of prospective occupations marriage with a young lady worth a million or two." . . . It was surprising how bitter this very sensible reflection could be. It disturbed his placid temper. He felt disturbed as if fate for ill-usage. Fortunately, Mulai Hamed had no further cause to chide the Effendi on account of his seeming irreverence, or Dick's copying of Stump's methods might not have been confined to speech. . . . But it was a remarkable fact, worthy of high relief in the fresco of weird and startling events then vaguely grouping themselves, that Royson first dreamed of love, even as a fantastic idyll where Irene Fenshawe was concerned, while he was hurrying through the native quarters of Massowah on a mission destined to change the whole course of his life. . . . For the hour was at hand when he would be tried by tests that few men could endure. Treading close on the heels of his guide, he emerged from a cramped arch into a spacious parade-ground. A regiment of bersaglieri was assembling for drill during

the comparatively cool interval before sunset, and, on the seaward side of the plain, a square fort pointed its guns at town and harbor. . . . Mulai Hamed hastened towards the nearest gate. He did not enter, but his gestures showed that the Governor's residence stood inside the fortifications. Royson went on alone, and was stopped by a sentry, who called a corporal; the latter conducted him to a lieutenant, and thenceforth Dick's progress was simplified, because the officer not only spoke English but was ready to display his erudition, though not exactly in the manner desired by his questioner. . . . When Royson said he wanted to communicate with two gentlemen who had called on the Governor some two hours earlier, the Italian smiled darkly. . . . "They landed from the English yacht out there?" he asked, with a hand-flourish that indicated the Red Sea generally and the Aphrodite in particular. . . . "Yes." . . . "And you are one of the ship's officers?" . . . "Yes," said Dick again. . . . "Well, I have no orders. I advise you to go on board, and await his Excellency's decision." . . . "It will be most gratifying to learn his Excellency's decision," said Royson, "but just at this moment I must ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Fenshawe and Baron von Kerber." . . . The lieutenant spread both hands depreciatingly. . . . "What is one to say?" he shrugged, arching his eyebrows and pursing his lips. "I repeat, I have no orders." . . . "But you have seen them?" . . . "Oh, yes. They are here." . . . "Then will you oblige me by sending in my name to Baron von Kerber, and saying—" . . . "It is impossible. Go to your ship, speak as a friend." . . . "I am sure you wish to help me," persisted Dick, "but I am carrying a message of some importance—" . . . "Ah, from whom?" . . . "From a lady." . . . "Who is she?" . . . "One of the ladies of our party." . . . "Ah, crude Amor! You have ladies on board, then?" . . . "Yes, Mr. Fenshawe's granddaughter, and—a friend of hers." . . . Something in the Italian's manner warned Royson that he was treading on unsafe ground. It occurred to him that if Mrs. Haxton had good reason for her display of fear at the sight of Alfieri it was advisable not to spread the tidings of her presence in Massowah by revealing it to an inquisitive official. And the warning given in one of his letters in his pocket suddenly assumed a sinister significance. He strove against any outward exhibition of concern, and the lieutenant was manifestly anxious to help him. . . . "I am sorry," was the unsatisfying statement. "I can do nothing without his Excellency's instructions, and he has gone out for a drive." . . . "Gone out for a drive!" repeated Royson, quite taken aback by this rather bewildering explanation. "Am I to understand that my friends are kept here—" . . . "You are to understand nothing but what I have told you, and you will remember that I have contented myself with advising you to return to your yacht." . . . It was evident that no good end could be achieved by striving to saddle the courteous officer with any responsibility for his admissions. Dick took the cue thus offered, and tried another line. . . . "Will you kindly tell me at what hour the Governor returns?" he asked. . . . "Certainly. He will be here in twenty minutes." . . . "May I wait until he arrives?" . . . "Nothing would give me greater pleasure." . . . The lieutenant clapped his hands, and an orderly appeared. . . . "Some wine, ice, and cigarettes," he commanded. He engaged Dick instantly in conversation as to the prospects of war in South Africa, and was obviously desirous not to discuss personal matters. And an enthusiastic admirer of the British soldier, of whom he had seen a good deal during a visit to Aden, so the talk did not flag until the clatter of hoofs through the vaulted gateway announced the advent of a carriage. . . . The Governor, a fat, unhealthy-looking man, whose seamed brow and puffy eyelids suggested that negotiations with King Menelek did not constitute the highest form of diplomatic happiness, was pleased to be explicit when Dick was introduced to him, and he found that the Englishman spoke French. . . . "After consultation with the Government advocate," he said, "I have decided to release Mr. Fenshawe, whose arrest was due to his persistent defense of the Baron Franz von Kerber's undertaking. The latter must remain in custody, and I warn you, and intend to give the same warning to all persons on board your vessel, that a gunboat is patrolling the coast with the most positive instructions to sink the Aphrodite if any attempt is made to land on Italian territory, elsewhere than at a recognized port." . . . His Excellency had cultivated the habit of plain speaking, which is an essential part of all dealings with Abyssinians. Royson did not attempt to answer him. He asked if Mr. Fenshawe would be set at liberty forthwith, and was assured that the Govern-

or's own carriage would convey both Mr. Fenshawe and himself to the hotel within a few minutes. The big little man then vanished, and Dick soon had the satisfaction of seeing Irene's grandfather escorted to the inner courtyard by a file of soldiers. . . . It was a singular meeting between the two. Though the yacht-owner was white with anger, he was manifestly pleased at finding Royson there. . . . "Ah," he said, extending his hand. "I am glad to see you. Does Miss Fenshawe know of this outrage?" . . . "No, sir. I think not. Indeed I am almost positive she has heard nothing of it." . . . "Then why are you here?" . . . "Mrs. Haxton sent me with a message to Baron von Kerber." . . . "Mrs. Haxton probably guessed what would happen. Some scoundrel named Alfieri, who has tried more than once to steal my poor friend's secret, has gained the ear of the Italian foreign minister. Trumped-up allegations have led to cabled orders for von Kerber's arrest, and these wretched organ-grinders in uniform would have lodged every one of us in prison if they dared. Unhappily, the Baron is an Austrian subject, and there will be considerable delay before I can secure his freedom. We must make for Aden at once. I will not trust the cable from Massowah. By Jove, I have been a supporter of peace all my life, Mr. Royson, but it is a lucky thing for this thieves' den that I have not an armed ship now at my disposal or I would blow their fort out of its foundations." . . . The older man little knew how this outbreak affected Royson. The reference to Alfieri was absolutely staggering. No up-to-date battleship could have demolished the Massowah fortress so effectually as Mr. Fenshawe's outspoken wrath crumbled the edifice of doubt built by circumstances in Royson's mind. . . . "Things have taken an extraordinary turn, sir," said he, feeling it incumbent on him to say something. . . . "They will turn an Italian Governor out of his position before I have done with them," was the determined answer. "Come, Mr. Royson, let us leave this man-trap. I came here in good faith, and I quit this place with the resolution that never again shall I entrust myself to the vagaries of any Jack-on-office who thinks he can browbeat a man of my repute like one of the wretched natives whom he misrules." . . . Royson had some difficulty in persuading his irate employer to enter the Governor's carriage. Mr. Fenshawe only yielded to the plea that it was a stiff walk to the hotel, and his granddaughter would be consumed with anxiety if any alarming news had reached her meanwhile. . . . The coachman took them by an open road facing the harbor. The sight of the Aphrodite lying at anchor, trimly elegant in white paint and neatly-furled sails, and sporting the ensign of a famous yacht club, led Dick to ask if his companion knew that an Italian gunboat was on the lookout for her. . . . "Oh, yes, His Excellency spared no details," said Mr. Fenshawe, smiling sarcastically. "If I were a few years younger, and we had no women on board, I would not allow any threats of that sort to hinder me, and I am much mistaken in my officers and men if they refused to back me up. But, as it is, we can do nothing. That is what galls me, my complete helplessness." . . . "We have no heavy guns, I admit," said Dick, casting to the winds all thought of leaving the ship under present conditions, "but we have arms and ammunition in plenty to make it hot work for any one in Massowah stop us once we are ashore." . . . The other sighed, whether on account of his vanished youth or the impracticable nature of the scheme, it is hard to say. . . . "Our weapons are meant only for defense," he said. Von Kerber wished guard against Arab hostility—that is all. But I do not despair of obtaining redress from Rome. Surely it cannot be known there that I am the leader of this expedition. It is so wildly absurd to treat me as a filibuster. Why, Mr. Royson, the Italian Archeological Society elected me an honorary vice-president ten years ago." . . . Dick had his own views as to the extent of the Aphrodite's armament, but the present was no time to air them. Moreover, he was beginning to see features of the affair that were hard to reconcile with Mr. Fenshawe's statements. In the first instance, the Governor had acted on specific instructions, and the Roman authorities must have been well aware of the identity of the yacht's owner. Again, the person really aimed at in these high-handed proceedings was von Kerber. The Governor made no secret of the fact that the millionaire was detained solely because he declared himself a principal in the Austrian's enterprise, and it was no small token of official regret at an unpleasant incident that they were now driving to the hotel in his Excellency's private carriage. Finally, none but a man angry and humiliated would deny the right of Italy to forbid the passage through her colonial territory of a foreign force such as von Kerber had provided, a force equipped to an extent and in a manner that Mr. Fenshawe, in all likelihood, had slight knowledge of. . . . So Dick listened in silence to his companion's vows of diplomatic ven-

geance. He was resolved to talk matters over with Miss Fenshawe before he said a word about Alfieri or the news he had received from London. In fact, he had little doubt that a night's reflection would render her grandfather amenable to reason. If there were charges against von Kerber, let them be brought to light. If they were true, the Italian Foreign Office was justified in its action: if false, there would be such a hubbub that the resultant apologies would certainly be accompanied by the offer of every assistance to the objects of the expedition. . . . When they drew near the hotel, Royson saw Irene watching the main street anxiously from the balcony. It was rather remarkable that she should be alone, but all other thoughts were swept aside by the sight of the joy which lit her face when the carriage stopped at the portico and she learned that her grandfather had arrived from an opposite direction. . . . They heard her glad cry of surprise, and she hastened to meet them. . . . "Good gracious, grandad," she said, "where have you been? I have waited here for you ever so long, wondering what had become of you." . . . "The Governor was such an affable person that he refused to let me go," said Mr. Fenshawe grimly. "He has detained the Baron altogether. But let us go up-stairs. I am pining for that long-deferred tea. Where is Mrs. Haxton?" . . . "She is ill, I am afraid. She found the heat and noise too much for her. Half an hour ago she asked Captain Stump to take her to the yacht. Of course I told her I didn't mind being left here until someone came. But the funny part of it is that, although I was looking from the veranda, I failed to see either her or the captain leave the hotel." . . . By this time they were free from inquisitive eyes or ears, and Mr. Fenshawe proceeded to amaze the girl with a full recital of his disagreeable adventure. Royson noticed that she gave no heed whatever to his share in it. Her attitude was tinged with a slight disdain, and he began to feel miserably depressed until it occurred to him that she probably resented his departure on Mrs. Haxton's errand without letting her know. That was consoling, to an extent. He was sure she would forgive him when he had an opportunity of telling her exactly what had happened. . . . They were so engrossed in their converse that a servant entered who had lamps before they realized that daylight had waned and night was falling with the rapidity of the tropics. Mr. Fenshawe leaped up from his chair with an alertness that belied his years. . . . "I must break my resolution and send at least one cablegram from Massowah," he cried. "It will be harmless enough to escape mutilation, as it is to my London office directing that all correspondence must be addressed to Aden in future. You will take it for me, Royson, and pay the cost?" . . . Dick went off as soon as the message was ready. Irene avoided him ostentatiously while her grandfather was writing, and thereby laid herself open to the unjust suspicion that she was flirting with him. In very truth she was torn with misgiving, and Royson's share in her thoughts was even less than he imagined. Her quick brain divined that the arrest of von Kerber had only strengthened the Austrian's claim on Mr. Fenshawe's sympathies. Like all generous souled men, her grandfather ran to extremes and she felt that it was hopeless to try and shake his faith in one whom he regarded as the victim of persecution. . . . "Will Captain Stump come back for dinner?" inquired Mr. Fenshawe, after he had glanced through the letters which Irene brought to him. . . . "I hope so. Mrs. Haxton went off in such a hurry that I forgot to mention it." . . . "Was it illness, or anxiety, that sent her to the yacht?" . . . "A little of both, I fancy. But why should she be anxious? She did not know that matters had gone wrong at the fort." . . . "I think she made a shrewd guess, but was unwilling to alarm you. That is why she sent Mr. Royson after us. By the way, what did she tell him to do?" . . . "I have no idea," said Irene coldly. . . . "That is odd, distinctly odd. I meant to ask him, but forgot it in my excitement." . . . "He will be here in a few minutes," said she, with a livelier interest. . . . There was a knock at the door. A negro waiter had something to say, and she gathered from a jumble of Italian and Arabic that a native wished to see the Signora Haxton. The man pronounced the name plainly, so there could be no mistake as to his meaning, and Irene answered: "The Signora is not here." . . . Mr. Fenshawe was immersed in his letters again, but he looked up. . . . "What is it?" he demanded. . . . "Some man is asking for Mrs. Haxton," she said to him. . . . "Better go and interview him. If he can tell us anything, bring him here." . . . She went down stairs with the attendant. He pointed to a muffled Arab near the door, who saluted her deeply the instant she appeared. . . . "What do you want?" she said, in Italian, and the Arab silently indicated a closed vehicle drawn up close to the curb in front of the hotel. Think-

ing there was some visitor inside who did not wish to alight, she went forward without hesitation. The dim, smoke-laden street was unusually crowded, she thought, but she gave no attention to the passers-by, as the Arab had opened the door of the dingy looking vehicle, and she expected to find an occupant peering out at her. The conveyance was empty! . . . "There is some mistake," she said, glancing from the dark interior to a Somali driver, and then back to the silent messenger. Suddenly she had an unnerving consciousness that several other white-sheeted figures had crept stealthily between her and the doorway. With a little cry of alarm, she turned and strove to re-enter the hotel. Instantly she was swept off her feet, a coarse hand closed her mouth, and she was dragged with brutal force into the carriage. She saw spring into existence what seemed to be a murderous fracas among a dozen men. The street was filled with clamor, and the pavement was blocked with struggling forms. Knives flashed, brawny-armed Arabs closed in deadly combat, and cursed each other with all the rich repertory of Islam. Of course, people tried to rush from the vestibule of the hotel to ascertain what was causing the tumult. But the fighters filled the doorway so that none could enter or leave the building, and, in the midst of the alarm and confusion, the pair of Somali ponies attached to the ramsackle vehicle were whipped into a fast gallop. Then the riot subsided as quickly as it arose, and, were it not that Irene was gone, no one appeared to be much the worse. . . .

CHAPTER IX.

A Gallop in the Dark.

Several minor rills of events combined to produce this tempestuous torrent at the door of the Hotel Grande del Universo, and any level-headed man acquainted with their meanderings might come to the just conclusion that Irene had been kidnapped in the mistake for Mrs. Haxton. He might have deplored the blunder, but, leaving out of count any humane consideration for the girl's feelings, he must have admired the stage-craft displayed by her abductors. If cool skill were worthy of success they had earned it in full measure. In fact, the achievement would have ranked high in the villainous annals of Massowah were it not for the blind chance that separated Mulai Hamed from Royson two hours earlier. . . . The sun sank behind the highlands of Abyssinia while the Effendi awaited the Governor's return in the guard-room of the fort. Thereupon his guide, being an orthodox Mahomedan, faced towards Mecca, knelt by the roadside, and bowed his forehead in the dust. Another devout follower of the Prophet joined him, and the two chanted their prayers in unison. It is said that hymns are seldom sung with such gusto as in convict settlements, and appraised by this standard, Mulai Hamed and his casual companion were accomplished rascals, for they rattled off the Salat and the Sunnah unctuously, and performed the genuflections and prostrations of the Reka with military precision. . . . Then they exchanged news. Mulai Hamed, telling of the Gisors in the hotel, was vastly surprised to hear from his brother Mussulman, a cook in the fort, that two of the Effendis were prisoners. But the cook soon hastened away to decapitate certain skinny fowls which would form the basis of a Risotto al pollastro for dinner at the officer's mess, leaving Mulai Hamed to wonder if, perhaps, the tall Effendi had also been kept in durance vile, until he saw Mr. Fenshawe and Royson being whirled off in the Governor's carriage along the sea front. . . . He cursed both of them in suitable terms, and started on the long walk to the hotel. Being a born gossip, he chose the livelier route of the main street, which might yield a meeting with another acquaintance. This divergence led him near the Elephant Mosque. Abdullah, wearied of the rendezvous arranged by Mrs. Haxton for von Kerber, detected Mulai Hamed's badge, and sought information. . . . "Brother," said he, "I would have speech of thee." . . . "Say on," was the courteous reply. For Mulai Hamed was flattered at being addressed thus by a man of distinction. . . . "There be certain Gisors at thy caravanerai, an old man, a fat man like a bull, a young man who stands more than a cubit high, and a thin nan, the Hakim Effendi, whom I await here. Hast thou any knowledge of them?" . . . Mulai Hamed checked the list carefully. . . . "It must be that the Hakim Effendi is in jail, for the others I have seen, but not him." . . . Abdullah was annoyed. He, a pure-blooded Bedouin of the desert, had already made a great concession in using the word "brother" to one of mixed race. . . . "I ask not for folly," he muttered. "That is the answer of a drunken Frank." . . . "Nay, friend, I speak truly. May I never drink at the White Pond of the Prophet if I have told thee even that which I have heard." . . . Abdullah swallowed his wrath, listened to the Mulai Hamed's story, and was convinced. Notwithstanding Mrs. Haxton's prohibition, it was now essential that he should see her without delay, so he accompanied the deputy assistant hall-porter in the direction

of the hotel. As they went, they met a rickety closed carriage being driven at a furious pace down a side street, and both men thought it was making for the mile-long causeway which connects the island of Massowah with the mainland. . . . "Who travels in such a hurry?" asked Abdullah, looking after the swaying vehicle. . . . "Perchance a kafila starts for the interior to-night," said Mulai Hamed. But the turmoil in the vicinity of the hotel now drew their attention, and they ran with others, for public blood-letting is ever an attractive pastime to those who form the audience. . . . Dick was then leaving the telegraph office, whence he had despatched a cablegram on his own account. Bare civility demanded that he should acknowledge Mr. Forbes' various communications, so he sent the brief message: "Writing, Royson," which he thought covered the ground sufficiently. Before rejoining Mr. Fenshawe and Irene, he walked a little way towards the harbor, and, as he half expected, met Stump returning from the yacht. . . . He proceeded to the evening's budget, but Stump had been thinking things out in his own fashion, and he set forth a theory which apparently accounted for von Kerber's discomfiture. . . . "You see, it's this way," he said. "These bloomin' I-talians have got the griffin about that treasure. And who gev' it to 'em? Why, that chap who arranged the hold-up at Marseilles. You said nothin' much about it, which was right an' proper, but Tagg is sharper'n he looks, an' he tole me that a paper was nicked out of von Kerber's pocket. That paper put the sharks on the scent. They got ahead of the Aphrodite by catchin' the Indian mail at Brindisi, an' nad every-thing cut and dried for us when we dropped anchor here. Miss Irene an' me spotted one of 'em watchin' the hotel this afternoon." . . . "I believe that man was Alfieri," said Dick. "Indeed, Mrs. Haxton admitted it to me, and it was his unexpected appearance that caused her to beat a retreat." . . . "An' who's Mr. Alfie Wot's-his-name?" broke in Stump. . . . "I'm sorry. I forgot that you had not heard of him. He is the man who secured the papyrus, or paper, at Marseilles. Both Mrs. Haxton and the Baron are afraid of him." . . . "You seem to know a dooce of a lot about this business," exclaimed the skipper testily. . . . "I cannot help that—I have been dragged into it in many ways, each peculiar, and hardly credible when considered collectively. I promise you, captain, that I shall tell you the whole story one of these days. Meanwhile, I think the sooner we are at Aden the better it will be for Mr. Fenshawe and the ladies, and I offer you the respectful advice that you should back up Miss Fenshawe if she tries to persuade her grandfather to go there at once. . . . "Funny thing," growled Stump, "but them's Mrs. Haxton's very words as I helped her up the ship's ladder. Hello! Where's the fire? Unless I'm much mistaken, young feller, there's a first-class row goin' on outside our bloomin' cafe. No, no, don't you butt in among Arabs as though you was strollin' down Edgeware Road on a Saturday night, an' get mixed up in a coster rough-an'-tumble. These long-legged swine would knife you just for the fun of it. Keep full an' by, an' let any son of a gun who comes too near have it when it'll stop him." . . . Stump's sound precautions were unnecessary. None of the combatants approached them. Indeed, the struggle ceased as quickly as it began, and they were in the hotel before the frightened servants dared make known the thrilling fact that the young lady was missing. The negro who accompanied her down-stairs was positive that she had gone off on her own accord in the carriage that was standing outside, but Mr. Fenshawe's frantic protestations when the scared manager told him what had happened convinced Royson that the servant's statements were wildly absurd. Moreover, it became clearer each second that Mrs. Haxton, and not Irene, was the prize sought by the marauders. Royson, though in a white heat of helpless rage, soon became alive to this element in an otherwise inexplicable outrage, and endeavored to soothe Mr. Fenshawe's wild-eyed alarm by telling him that the girl would surely be sent back as soon as the error was discovered. . . . There was no time for explanations. All was panic and useless running to and fro. A messenger was sent to summon the police, and matters were in a state of chaos when Royson was approached by an Arab whose clearly-chiseled features, arched eyebrows and high cheek-bones showed that he was of different lineage to the hybrids of the coast. His carriage, too, was that of a man of consequence, and he wore his burnous rather in the Algerian style. This was Abdullah, who had gathered from the negro's now almost incoherent words that Mrs. Haxton had been spirited away in the carriage. He had his own reasons for believing the lady would encounter difficulties in Massowah, and the man spoke her name readily, whereas Miss Fenshawe's was unknown to either of them. . . . "Monsieur," said he, addressing Dick quietly in excellent French, "can

(Continued on page 4.)