

The Scourge of Damascus

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

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CHAPTER XI. Horam in Caged.

Curiously the three men emerged from the dungeon; and when Osmir had closed and bolted the door behind them, Selim went on ahead with the lantern. They were armed with good stout swords, and the blacks wore daggers in their sashes.

"In what direction must we pass out?" asked Julian, as they came to the end of the first vaulted passage.

"We must pass up where a guard is always kept," answered Osmir; "and our only hope is that we may be able to fall upon the sentinels, and overcome them, without creating disturbance enough for a general alarm."

"Whatever can be accomplished by strength of arm, we will accomplish," said the robber; "and I think we can be shrewd enough not to strike until we see that the blow shall fall surely."

"You can depend upon us," added Osmir, stopping while Selim opened a door. "We have already placed our lives in jeopardy, and only a successful exit from the palace can now save us. But, as I told you before, there is danger in the way."

"You have counted the chances?"

"Yes."

"And are you ready to bide the result?"

"Yes."

"Then let us meet the worst. If you, to set me free, are ready for the risk, I should be much more so."

At this juncture Selim, who had opened a door, and gone on a few steps in advance, came hurriedly back, with a look of alarm in his face.

"I hear footsteps in the passage overhead," he said, in a whisper.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I heard them very plainly."

"What is the passage of which you speak?" asked Julian.

"It is one through which we must pass," replied Osmir, "and one in which we had expected to find no obstacle."

"It may be," suggested Selim, "that a new guard has been set there."

"That cannot be," asserted Osmir. "I came through there only a short time since, and the place was empty. Hark—I hear the steps from here—and I think they are coming this way. Hold a moment. Remain where you are, and I will find what this means."

Thus speaking, Osmir glided away into the darkness, towards the point where the stairs led down from the upper passage. After an absence of a few minutes he returned, and his first exclamation told that he was excited.

"The king is coming!"

"The king?" repeated Julian, in a quick, deep whisper.

"Yes—and two of his guards are with him. Some one else came as far as the end of the stairs with them, but I think only the king and the guards are descending."

"He must be coming to see me," said Julian.

"A must be so," answered Osmir; "for there is nothing else here for him to see, save our damp walls and traps."

"Hark! Here they come. I hear their voices, and can see where the rays of their lantern breaks in the gloom." It was Selim who said this, and as he spoke he drew back, and hid his own lantern beneath the skirt of his tunic.

Our adventurers, from where they stood, could see the foot of the steps at the far end of the passage; and presently they saw two men descend, the foremost one bearing a lantern, and wearing the robes of the king, while the other seemed to be an officer of the household.

"I see now," said Osmir, as he gained a view of the approaching men. "I was mistaken. The guards have been left behind, and this is Benoni, one of the captains of the guard, who comes with the king."

The robber chieftain was for a moment undecided as to the course he should pursue. Once his sword was half drawn from its scabbard; but Osmir, who heard the movement, seemed to have a better idea.

"But," urged the captain, "the way is rough and dubious, and you may miss your step."

"Out upon thee for an ass!" cried the king, indignantly. "Do you think my step is growing feeble? I tell thee it was never stronger. I will go the rest of the way as I have said. I shall find Selim at the door of the dungeon, and he will render me such assistance as I may need there. I must see this prisoner alone. He possesses a secret which I must fathom before he loses his head."

"I beg thee, sire, be careful."

"Peace, good Benoni. Don't fret on my account. I know what I do. I'll find out the story of this robber's life, and then his head shall come off right quickly. Stay you here, and await my return."

Thus speaking, the king moved on, and when the sound of his uncertain, stumbling footfall could be no longer heard, Julian reached forth until his hand touched one of his companions.

"Who is this?" he asked, in a hushed whisper. It was Selim.

"There is no time to lose. The captain must be disposed of quickly. Uncover your lantern, and I will throttle him."

Selim did as directed, and as soon as the rays of light fell upon the captain, the latter started to gaze about him. But his free-will movements were quickly terminated by a blow from the first of the robber chieftain, which felled him to the floor, and before he could move or cry out, he was securely bound, and Osmir's sash passed over his mouth.

"Now," cried Julian, "for the king. He will be an easy subject to dispose of."

"And how will you dispose of him?" asked Osmir.

For an instant a dark thought struggled through Julian's mind. Here was an opportunity to put his worst enemy out of the way, and, at the same time, free the world from a ruler who had ceased to do justice. But the thought was not long entertained. The soul of the chieftain was above the doing of such a deed. Osmir noticed the hesitation, and tremblingly asked:

"Will you kill him?"

"No, no," was the quick reply. "That would be too cowardly. He is a poor foolish old man, whose continued life must be the greatest curse. We will put him where he put me, and let his slaves find him after we are gone. Come—I will lead to this event, and then you shall lead to the next."

Without further remark the robber moved on towards the dungeon where he had been confined, Selim going by his side with the lantern. Pretty soon they saw the king ahead of them, whereupon Selim was suffered to go on in advance. Horam had reached the door of the dungeon just as Selim came up.

"Ha, Selim, is this you?"

"Yes, sire."

"I did not see you when I came. Where have you been hiding?"

"I have not been hiding, sire; but have been doing my duty."

"And the prisoner?"

"He is safe."

"Open the door. I would speak with him. He is securely chained?"

"No mortal man can break the chains wherewith he was bound, sire."

"Then open—quick. His arms are bound?"

"Like iron, sire."

"And he cannot move from his place?"

"The chains all center upon the bolt in the floor."

"Then you may remain without, Selim. I wish to speak with the prisoner alone."

Selim had no particular understanding with his companions touching this movement; but he understood that Julian would act when he saw fit, so he proceeded to unbolt the door and throw it open.

"We can shut him in and leave him," whispered Osmir, when he saw the king about to pass into the dungeon.

"No, no," quickly returned Julian. "I have another thought. I may find use for those royal robes which he wears."

"By the gods!" cried Osmir, "the prize is worth ten thousand times more than I had thought. If you don those royal robes, Selim and I can lead you in safety from this place. By the blessed star, it is a lucky thought. Ha! He goes in. Shall I accompany you?"

"You may remain close at hand."

CHAPTER XII. A Royal Disguise.

Until the present time Julian had thought of overcoming the king without a word—of felling him to the pavement and binding him, and leaving him in ignorance of who had done it; but a different fancy seized him as he saw the monarch enter the dungeon. The temptation to face his deadly enemy, and let him know to what he owed his disgrace, was too strong to be resisted. The thought that he could now place his foot upon the neck of the king of Damascus, and grant the poor life which he had the power to take, was not to be passed by. And that the robber chieftain had another reason for wishing to speak with the king, since the opportunity had thus unexpectedly offered itself, Julian had come on purpose to see him.

to learn some secret. Our hero had a curiosity to know what this meant. "Stay a moment where you are," he said, addressing the blacks; and thus speaking he passed into the dungeon just as the king had discovered that no prisoner was there.

"Ho! Selim!" shouted the monarch, turning his face to the door. "What is the matter here? Is not this the—"

He stopped, for the light of his lantern, falling upon the face of the man who had followed him in, revealed another face than that of Selim.

"Horam," spoke the chieftain, "you find the Scourge of Damascus not quite as powerless as you had expected."

"What ho! Selim! Selim!"

"Easy, old man. Selim will not come at your bidding. Let me inform you that I am master, for the present, of this lower region, and Selim is my slave."

"Mercy!" gasped the terrified king. "What ho! Benoni! Benoni!"

"Benoni is in my power," said Julian. "He is bound hand and foot, and cannot help you. And, thou base, false man—thou, too, art in my power. Down in this deep dungeon, where the light of day cannot come, and where the noise of the upper world cannot penetrate, here I have thee as thou didst hope to have me. Horam, I am thy master!"

The king's knees smote together, and the lantern dropped from his hand.

"Mercy!" he cried. And then, as though remembering that he was king of Damascus, he clenched his hands, and tried to speak with the voice of authority.

"Vile miscreant," he said, "let me pass! If you dare to oppose me, you shall be torn limb from limb!"

"Easy, old man. I am your master now, and if you give me occasion, I may do you harm."

There was that in the look, tone and bearing of the stalwart chieftain which caused Horam to quail. The lantern had fallen in an upright position, and its light revealed quite plainly the features of the two men.

"You will not kill me?" whispered the king.

"No," replied Julian. "I should scorn the deed; and I should despise myself if I did it. I wish simply to do this. I must leave this palace tonight, and you must remain here in my place. Some of your slaves will find you in the morning. You must strip off that purple robe, and that golden chain; and I must have the jeweled crown from your head. Come—I have no time to waste."

"Ye gods of heaven!" ejaculated Horam, "how can this thing be! Who dares to disrobe the king?"

"I dare to do it!" replied the robber, sternly and quickly, at the same time taking a step forward. "Remove the garments instantly, or I shall tear them from you."

"No, no; you dare not rob your king."

"Peace, poor fool! Hesitate another minute, and I will smite you to the floor! Off with the robe!"

The trembling monarch cast one look into the face of the man before him, and then shrank back against the wall. He was as a mere child, and for the time, while unable to do evil, he seemed an object of pity.

"If I give you these things will you spare my life?"

"I told you once—yes. And once more I beg you to remember that my time is short. You will save yourself some trouble if you obey me."

This was spoken very slowly, each word dropping from the robber's lips with the weight of a death sentence; and the lowering of the brow, the swelling of the broad bosom, and the nervous working of the hands, told too plainly that the edict must be obeyed.

(To be continued.)

HOME MADE HONEY.

A Restaurant Man Captures a Stray Swarm of Bees.

Ralph Gushes, the lessee of the Park department restaurant overlooking the Hudson at the upper end of Riverside drive, tells a remarkable story of how he obtained the honey which is one of the "specials" on his daily menu.

"Two weeks ago," said Mr. Gushes to Corporation Counsel Whalen, who was the host of a party of politicians at Claremont, "I noticed a swarm of bees under the tree down there overhanging the drive just where the carriages stand at the dinner hour. I offered \$10 to anybody who would remove them and nobody wanted to take the offer until one of the policemen detailed to guard Grant's tomb heard of it. He said he knew all about bees and I told him to go ahead. He went down in the basement and got an empty sugar barrel. Then he demanded a sheet and borrowed a pair of buckskin gloves from a gardener. He spread the sheet on the drive under the tree and set the barrel, from which he had removed a couple of staves, on its side. Then he climbed the tree and gently shook the bees down to the sheet, whence he gathered them up into the barrel. This was covered with the same sort of momentary netting with which he had enveloped his own head and taken back of the hotel. There must have been three or four quarts of bees, and they settled into their new home as naturally as though they had come to Riverside Park for that purpose. They began to hive at once, and for the last two weeks I've been getting four or five pounds of honey right along and the bees are still at home and at work."

Mr. Whalen remarked laughingly that as the bees were evidently taking sweetness from the blossoms in the park it would be in order for the city to increase Mr. Gushes's rent. It is supposed that the bees came across the Hudson River from New Jersey.

BOERS LOSE 332 AT ITALIA

Details Show That War Is Again Serious.

BATTLE LASTS 19 HOURS.

Botha's Men Attack with Reckless Daring and Die by Hundreds—Guerrilla War No Longer—Names of the Boer Generals Who Were Slain.

London telegram: The British public has learned to its surprise that the Boers are fighting "out in the open"; that the "guerrilla warfare" is ended, and that engagements approaching the seriousness of real battles are becoming frequent.

Fuller details of Botha's attack on Forts Italia and Prospect, and of Delarey's assault on Colonel Kekewich at Moedwil are at hand this morning. In the latter fight the British were practically surprised. From Durban comes the details of Botha's attack on Italia and Prospect, in Zululand:

Battle for Nineteen Hours.

The British fought against overwhelming odds for nineteen hours. The Boers were fearless and fought desperately. They gained the summit of Italia repeatedly, but were repelled each time. It was probably the news that General Bruce Hamilton was approaching that caused a cessation of the fighting. The Boers suffered heavily. Three hundred and thirty-two of their dead were found, and in addition they carried off a number of their killed. They admit having 300 wounded. In their rushes they were met with cold steel.

British Outposts Surprised.

The whole British garrison at Italia numbered only 300 men, with two fifteen-pounders and a Maxim gun. An outpost of eight men under Lieutenants Kane and Lefroy occupied the summit of the hill out of sight of the main camp, which was on the slope of the hill. At midnight 600 Boers rushed the outpost. Their onslaught was so sudden and fierce that for twenty minutes only bayonets were used. Overwhelming odds soon decided the possession of the outpost. Lieutenant Kane fell dead shouting, "No surrender." Lieutenant Lefroy was severely wounded, and the whole force was disabled.

Attack on Main Camp.

The main camp was thus reduced to 220 men. The Boers assailed from all sides. From 1 o'clock in the morning throughout the remainder of the night and all the following day the little garrison withstood them until 7 o'clock in the evening, when the outlook seemed desperate. The artillery had been silenced. The soldiers had been without water for many hours, and their ammunition was fast failing. Almost suddenly the Boer fire began to slacken, and soon after the attackers withdrew, either learning that General Bruce Hamilton was approaching, or, according to others, in sheer despair of succeeding. Their retirement opened the way for Major Chapman, who was himself among the wounded, to withdraw his exhausted force, which reached N'Kandha in the morning. Among the Boers killed were Generals Opperman and Schultz and Commandant Potgieter.

LATEST MARKET QUOTATIONS.

Winter wheat—No. 2 hard, 69c; No. 3 hard, 68c; Spring wheat—No. 3 spring, 69c; No. 4 spring, 68c; Corn—No. 2 yellow, 54c; No. 3 yellow, 53c; No. 2 white, 57c; No. 3 white, 56c; No. 2 mixed, 55c; No. 3 mixed, 54c; Hay—Choice timothy, \$1.01; No. 1, \$1.02; No. 2, \$1.03; No. 3, \$1.04; No. 4, \$1.05; No. 5, \$1.06; No. 6, \$1.07; No. 7, \$1.08; No. 8, \$1.09; No. 9, \$1.10; No. 10, \$1.11; No. 11, \$1.12; No. 12, \$1.13; No. 13, \$1.14; No. 14, \$1.15; No. 15, \$1.16; No. 16, \$1.17; No. 17, \$1.18; No. 18, \$1.19; No. 19, \$1.20; No. 20, \$1.21; No. 21, \$1.22; No. 22, \$1.23; No. 23, \$1.24; No. 24, \$1.25; No. 25, \$1.26; No. 26, \$1.27; No. 27, \$1.28; No. 28, \$1.29; No. 29, \$1.30; No. 30, \$1.31; No. 31, \$1.32; No. 32, \$1.33; No. 33, \$1.34; No. 34, \$1.35; No. 35, \$1.36; No. 36, \$1.37; No. 37, \$1.38; No. 38, \$1.39; No. 39, \$1.40; No. 40, \$1.41; No. 41, \$1.42; No. 42, \$1.43; No. 43, \$1.44; No. 44, \$1.45; No. 45, \$1.46; No. 46, \$1.47; No. 47, \$1.48; No. 48, \$1.49; 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