CHAPTER XVI. A SURPRISING CHANGE OF FRONT.

So all my rosy hopes were blown to the winds again. Fate had cut off the last chance of escape, and I could look for nothing but immediate death. For I had heard something of the portentious mysteries of statecraft that make such havoc of the conscience of rulers and understood that behind the personal will and inclination of Abou Kuram were reasons of such fearful cogency as no prince who valued his security could ignore. However friendly the governor might be at heart, he was not a free agent, but merely the instrument of a tyrannous system which sentenced and slew with ruthless disregard of the sanctity

of private thoughts. This was driven in upon me with staggering emphasis when the leather faced ingrate I had relieved of his pains, humbly venturing to commend the wisdom of his master's speech, enlarged on the absolute necessity of preserving the state from foreign intrigue at all hazards and at whatever cost of blood and ending up with the proposition, "Let my lord decree death forthwith, and while he dispatcheth weightier matters I will see this rogue executed."

But we had both mistaken the force of Abou Kuram's character. A weak man is the slave of his office; a strong man is its master and director. Perhaps it was the working of humanity in his breast, perhaps it was a sudden conviction of my innocence, or, what is more likely, it may have been a prince's dislike of dictation and interference that influenced my judge, but he unexpectedly took a course of his

own.
"Words of wisdom drop from thy mouth
as honey from a honeycomb, Abdallah," he said, with a severe look at his counsel-"Foreign intriguers and spies must indeed be given to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth. It is my duty and privilege to quard the state. I will take care they are not neglected. Again, business, as thou well sayest, presseth hard, and in order that thou mayest give thy mind to other and more important affairs I will myself execute justice on this stranger. Get thee forth with all haste, and thou, Koor Ali, who will command next to myself, go with him and take no rest until my army be ready for war."

The two men bowed very low and hastened out. He watched until they had gone, with a clamorous mob at their heels, then turning to me he said briefly: "I have purposes that will astonish thy

friend Abdallah. Thou shalt ride by my bridle rein, and we shall see of what stuff thou art made. Nay, nay; no speeches," as he saw the fillness of heart coming into my face. "This is a time for action. Be-side thou mightest find cause to repent of thy fair words, for if thou shouldst prove false thou shalt die the cruclest death Abdallah can devise to atone for this present clemency."
With that he turned abruptly to a fawn-

ing official and said in a brusque tone: "The stranger will have need of food. Sec thou to his wants, and thy head answer for his safe keeping." Whereupon, rising quickly, he swept majestically into an inher room without giving me the opportunity of saying a word of thanks.

My first impulse was to sit down and sob aloud. It seemed that nothing else could relieve my pent up feelings, and indeed a careful observer might have noticed an unusual moisture about the lashes, which I wiped furtively while trying to jest with

The rising sun, they say, is worshiped, and certainly the favor of a prince insures many smiles and obsequious attentions. The demeanor of the people toward me changed as singularly as my shifting fortune. Those who had spat on me with foul imprecations but an hour before now saluted me with loud ejaculations of friendship and blessing. Many a man probably would have valued the tokens of good will more than I did. I had been deflant to the mob in my adversity; in my triumph I hope I was not insolent, but assuredly I was in no mood to respond with any cordiality to the greetings of people, who, if Abou Kuram's humor had been different, would have shouted themselves hoarse with glee at seeing my head slashed off my shoulders.

The sight of one eager face, however, among the many fawning ones gave me a enuine thrill of pleasure. Said Achmet had haunted the place all the morning like a perturbed spirit, and now on the first opportunity he came running forward to congratulate me on my new lease of life. I had not much to say, but I gave the good soul's hand a hearty Christian wring, and he did not resent it, though to shake hands with an infidel or stranger is pollution to the ordinary Musselman.

When sorrows come, says the poet, they come not in single spies, but in battalions. Once or twice in a lifetime a few happy mortals have the sweet experience of find ing joys, too, come trooping in companies. While my benefactor and myself were in converse together, to the further delight of us both, word came from Abou Kuram that until the troops were ready I was to be his guest or Said Achmet's, just according to my fancy. Needless to say what choice I made nor how deeply grateful I was to Abou Kuram for this fresh sign of Said Achmet carried me off with as proud

a heart as if I were the greatest man in the land and treated me with a tenderness that mere greatness could never have evoked. Indeed if I had been his own son risen from the dead he could not have been more lavish of the caressing attentions in word and act that the tremulous affection of an old man delights in or evinced a livelier regret at the parting that was near. For the most part of three happy days I

was with him, listening to wondrous tales of the diabolical prowess of the man on the black horse from Tabal, or discussing the prospects of the campaign with him, or drinking in the wise and varied discourse of my host himself as we sat inhaling fragrant essences in the shade of his garden

How far off all that is now, and how strangely tinged with mystic hues! Said Achmet has long since gone to his account-And on his grave, with shining eyes,

The Syrian stars look down, but the memory of his benign refuge remains with me as a beautiful dream of a day spent on an azure summer isle after escape from devastating tempests.

The preparations at the castle went on with more bustle than speed, for it ap-peared to be the determined object of every man to get into his fellow's way and thwart him in his work. The scene was one of constant confusion and uproar. Night and day the hubbub went on, waxing ever

louder and shriller, till it seemed like pandemonium come again, but at length order began to rise out of chaos, and even the novice mind could see that the preparations were really going on.

Men came hurrying in from outlying dis-

tricts, horses and camels were got ready, swords, spears and matchlocks were furbished up, ammunition was laid out, water skins ' re filled, provisions were loaded on snapping, grunting pack camels-a hundred pounds to every beast—and all the while the soldiers badgered, shouted, jested and blasphemed in a way that might have moved the envy of any Christian army in the world.

On the morning of the fourth day a messenger came to me breathless, saying that Abou Kuram was seated in the audience court and wished to see me at once. I hurried off, Said Achmet accompanying, in some excitement, fearing that liars and intriguers had been at their loathsome work and had succeeded in turning him against me. But I was quickly reassured, for when I entered his presence with palpitating heart and hesitating step he beckoned me to him with a gracious smile, bade a cush ion be placed for me, and proceeded to in quire in his most affable tones, and as I thought, with covert glances at Abdallah, who sat close by, about my health and wel-

[Copyright, 1893, by John Alexander Steuart.] "lime; perchance, hangeth heavy upon thee," he said. "But thou shalt soon have sport enough. Ere the sun go down again we shall be on the march to meet Yumen Yusel and his helper satan. We shall see how thou canst sheathe thy sword in flesh.

Tis a merry game, and methinks there will be plenty of it going." And then in the hearing of all he repeated that I was to ride by his bridle in the character of physician and personal attendant, and that I was to be mounted on a favorite mare from his own stable. Abdallah sat looking on the ground with a clouded brow and compressed lips, but dared not speak a word. The crowd gaped and beamed on me as one basking in the favors of an all powerful prince, though doubtless puzzled by the change of sentiment that conferred on me my distinctions. [An Arab can confer no more signal honor than to present a guest with a horse of high pedigree. A wife from his harem is a small thing in comparison.] "Thou wilt find the little Fatima of the

purest Kohlani breed," he went on, addressing me, "in shape and spirit unequaled outside my royal stables. In her veins is the unadulterated blood of the prophet's own mare. In fleetness as the deer, in courage as the lion, in gentleness as the lamb, in beauty as the gazelle, in intelligence as the serpent, she will be to thee both companion and protector, obeying thy wishes ere thou hast time to express them. She will carry thee bravely to victory or fly with thee swifter than the wind in defeat. She will nurse thee when thou art sick, rejoice with thee when thou art glad. She will be thy lover and thy slave. See thou prove worthy of her. And now there is but one thing more; when thou seest the sun looking for his bed in the west, come hither and thou shalt find her ready for

He waved his hand to signify the audience was at an end, and rising passed into the interior of the castle.

"Verily the great Abou Kuram hath shown thee favor beyond example," remarked Said Achmet as we returned for a little to his home. "I think thou hast thy fair face to thank. The truth of nature will overturn many lies. As for the enterprise on which thou goest it accordeth well with thy adventurous spirit. The scent of danger is to thee as the scent of prey to the lion. Thy gladness is shining in thine eyes. would I could see thee again." "And may I not return to Marabel in tri umph?" I asked.

"Truly thou mayst, but something tells me thou wilt not. It was pleasent to sit with thee over the evening pipe or plucking the ripe fruit, hearing thee talk of thy country and adventures. But the bitter must be with the sweet. All things have an end, and that which once was becomes but a dream. The time of parting is at hand, and I shall lie awake on my bed at night thinking of the stranger who came from afar to cheer me in my solitude." "And the stranger will think of thee

with gratitude," I returned. "It is all be has to offer, and thou hast it in full meas-Wherever he may go, whatever may be his lot, he will remember thy kindness in the day of his trouble." "It is surely enough," he answered in a

ow voice that had a quiver in it. "When thou returnest to thy people, tell them that beneath the burnoose there beat human hearts. Now one last favor I ask of thee: thou art now a man of influence; I commend my Tabal to thy care, and the Lord prosper thee."

"May my best friend forget me if I forget thy son," I replied, and he thanked me with gushing eyes.

Early in the afternoon, in accordance with Abou Kuram's orders, Said Achmet, Tabal and myself went to the castle, which presented a scene of frantic commotion. An esplanade or parade ground in front was thronged with gaunt, fierce visaged troops, some on foot, some mounted on horses and some on dromedaries, wheeling and plunging and rushing to and fro with maniacal yells and brandishing of

On first catching sight of them through a vista of palms and tamarisks I thought that either they had suddenly gone stark mad or the the enemy, following up his successes in the field, had pushed on and captured the castle. It added to my amaze ment when Tabal, seeing what was going on, belted forward, shouting frantically, as though he, too, were magically bereft of his wits. Having no taste to advance among the flying spears, I was meditating flight when Said Achmet touched me reassuringly on the arm.

"It is the Arzah" [a wardance performed before going to meet an enemy], he said with a smile. "They are getting up the spirit of war. Methinks it will be bad for the enemy.

Whatever might be the issue, there was no denying the imposing ferocity of that wild wardance.

The men were armed with a variety of queer and uncouth weapons—ancient matchlocks, pistols, spears, swords, javelins and daggers, which flew and flashed promiscuously as if a company of bedlamites had somehow possessed themselves of half a dozen armories. As soon as we were seen approaching a

band of horsemen dashed to meet us, whirling their swords in the air so furiously that in spite of Said Achmet's assurance that the display was mere sport, I had an uneasy suspicion that they were bent on cut-ting us down by way of preliminary practice. But just at the crucial moment, when their lances were within a few feet of us, they wheeled with inconceivable quickness and dexterity and dashed back the way they came, yelling savagely. Two or three times this maneuver was repeated, each time with a madder dash and a quicker turning, then drawing up suddenly they faced us, saluting with a rigid precision that was in striking contrast to the wild movements they had just gone through. They had scarcely turned to get back to

their original positions when a great shout went up, and Abou Kuram, superbly mounted on a gay charger, came curveting and prancing on the esplanade with drawn sword. His appearance was the signal for another mad outbreak of the entire body of troops, horse and foot. Yelling and flourishing and throwing their weapons, they circled about him rather as if he were a captive for whose blood they thirsted than a commander whom they wished to honor, while he rode quietly through the maze, sitting his high spirited horse like one born to the saddle. By and by the tumult died down, and Abou Kuram, still riding about, noticed Said Achmet and myself. With two or three bounds of his leap-

ing steed he was beside us.
"Here thou art," he said, smiling down upon me. "It pleaseth me to see thee punctually, according to thy word. Hast said farewell to the good Said Achmet, for the time has come to mount and be off?" "I am ready, my lord," I answered.

"It is well, for the shadows grow long and the sun is hastening to his bed. Bring the little Fatima," he said, addressing a slave. "She waiteth for her master."

Accordingly a minute later my little mare, fully caparisoned, was led ambling into the parade ground. Addressing her, the slave made a pretty speech to the effect that she wa going forth to great honor with the fair faced stranger; that she was to obey his will, and that she would have her reward in a care that would preserve her from all ill treatment, and that she would have dates to eat and sweet water to drink when the perils of the desert were

The intelligent brute whinnied, as if to say she perfectly understood him. Then the bridle rein was formally delivered to me, and she took a step toward me, as if acquiescing in the change of proprietorship. I stroked her gently as a token of good will. rubbing her face and speaking encouraging words in her car after the Arab fashion. Having thus made an agreement, I fastened my green bag carefully to the saddle, em braced Said Achmet and mounted.

"Nay," 1 repnec. spoken half the truth. "my lord has not "And thou wilt see she is as good as she is beautiful," he said, a prophecy that was fulfilled to the utternest, as this history

Many who have never set eyes on him have been eloquent in the praise of the Arab horse. Poet and painter and romancer have vied in delineating his matchless excellences, physical and mental. But it is not until you have eaten and slept and fought with him in the desert, on the bat-tlefield, beside the black tent in the green pastures, until you have been his intimate friend and comrade and learned to appreciate his coolness and courage, his power of endurance and gentleness and intelligence and loyalty that you can know his many high qualities. Yet perhaps only a poet could describe my Fatima, for in her were surely combined the perfection of equine virtue and beauty. Never anything more lovely, more dainty

and proud moved on four legs.

She was neither big nor heavy, but her muscles were of whalebone and her bones of the finest tempered steel. Her limbs indeed were like wrought metal in the firmness, cleanness and grace of them, and the trunk in exquisiteness of curve and symmetry of parts was such as a sculptor may have dreamed of, but has never matched in bronze or marble. The sum total of that animate loveliness—the silken bay coat, the softly sloping shoulders, the buoyancy of the curved back, the flery pride of the arched neck, the full round haunches, the rich sweep of mane and tail, the sharp, daintily poised ears, the broad forchead and the fine muzzle, and, above all, the spirit of the alert full orbed eye-is beyond the power of any artist save nature herself, nor does nature take such pains anywhere out of Arabia.

When Fatima found me in the saddle, she began to glide through the giddy maze with an ease and fluency of motion that to me was like a foretaste of heaven. I plumed myself on my horsemanship, for one of the few things I learned thoroughly as a boy was to stick on the back of anything that could take a bit between its teeth, and no doubt I had now the conceit to hold up my head as a fit rider for the noblest of steeds. But indeed an old wife could have sat that supple, mincing creature with security, though the upward glance of her eye, with its intimation of suppressed fire, told that under different conditions she could behave in a totally different manner. I was afterward to prove how her spirit and behavior varied with varying circumstances. Presently the muezzin began to cry

plaintively from the minarets, and the soldiers and citizens trooped off to the mosques to pray for pardon and victory. leaving only a few men to look after the beasts. As my company in worship would defile the sacred places of Moslem, I also remained behind. When the worshipers returned from their

devotions, the baggage camels were put into line and examined by the officers, the horses and dromedaries being made ready for their riders while the examination was proceeding. Then came supper, and in honor of the great occasion many sheep were slaughtered and roasted whole over big fires. The hissing carcasses had hardly time to take a brown crust when they were torn asunder and eaten in huge mouthfuls by a ravenous host, who washed down the burning meat with copious drafts of goat's milk. As I did not care to enter the lists in such a contest, I contented myself with a piece of doughy bread, some dates and a cup of coffee.

When the meal was over, a characteristic ceremony was enacted. A calf only a few days old was led into the open space and killed with a sword, its blood being made to flow inward toward the castle. The animal's life extinct, every man who was to accompany the expedition stepped solemnly over the body, which was then burned, so that no dog or other unclean beast might eat any part of the flesh. This is supposed to bring good fortune, and an Arab army could not be induced to take the field with out first observing the sacrificial rite. The calf safely cremated, the men immediately mounted their camels and horses and wheeled into line. Then Abou Kuram, going to the front, delivered a short oration on the glory of war and the bravery of his soldiers, which evoked uproarious applause from the flattered.

Ere it died away the kettledrums were rattling and the cymbals clashing the advance, and amid vociferous cries of "God save Abou Kuram; God give the victory to Abou Kuram," the strangely assorted troops swung slowly into line. The huge serpentine procession wound tediously through the narrow, tortuous streets, in which two camelmen found it hard to march abreast, but its tardy coilings were enlivened by the caperings and shoutings of the mob who ran in front of us and hung on our heels and, to their own immediate peril, squeezed and pressed on both sides

On the outskirts of the town the people stopped, finding the pace on the open ground beyond their capacity in running; so they stood there and yelled themselves hoarse with blessings and good wishes, which we acknowledged with resounding cheers. As we deployed into open order for greater ease in marching I caught a last glimpse of Said Achmet, who stood apart, waving with his hands as if to signify he had a double interest in the receding column Both Tabal and myself waved our adieu in return, and from me there went with it a heartfelt benediction.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MARCH. The details of the march need not be narrated at length. Our journey lay over scarred and blighted ground and across sandy plains and in and out among circular sand hills-loose, impermanent heaps, which the winds of the desert twist and curve and fling about in their wanton, lonely sport; desolate heaps that hide the bones of the perished traveler and are forever moving their formless lips with a silent, stealthy motion to suck in and overwhelm the living. No man knows the deep treachery of mother earth till he has wres tled with the noiseless forces of the desert. The pace, however, was brisk, for man and beast were fresh and eager. Indeed it

was a perpetual surprise to me how the animals made such progress over the elusive path. The camels, swinging at a steady trot, had much the best of it, for when the hard hoof of the horse sinks and slips the elastic spongy foot of the camel spreads like a web, and he passes as easily and safe ly over drifting sands as a snowshoer over smothering wreaths. It was then Is first understood how truly the camel deserves its title of the ship of the desert, for as ships pass along their liquid way so the camel treads his unstable course over the sandy wastes. Yet the horses, too, had uncommon lightness and skill in making way where every step forward was a half step

backward. To the horsemen the first sensation of a desert ride is as if he were poised on sprin as of ineffable delicacy, which swayed gently on the slightest pressure. Much of this luxurious ease is due to the yielding track, but something also to the springy motion of the Arab horse. To the saddle nothing whatever is due, since it is merely pieces of the hardest wood roughly nailed and bound with thongs of rawhide. On an English horse and a macadamized road it would reduce a trooper to helplessness in an hour and indeed with all the suppleness and softness of the true Kohlan Arab saddlery is apt to pain the inexperienced. The Arabs themselves are aware of no discomfort because they are as hard as the wood they

bestride.
On the first night we marched steadily till set of moon, then halted for food and rest. I could not half admire the quickness with which the fires were lighted with withered grasses and shrubs, and the good humored alacrity of the cooks in preparing the meal. To be sure it did not call for any elaborate exercise of art, for the ration consisted of nothing daintier than coarse flour, salt and dried dates with some pack ages of coffee. The cooks took two or three handfuls of flour apiece, poured water on it from a skin and kneaded it into a dirty lough with dirty hands. It would be profane in an Arab cook to have clean hands and so he keeps them religiously filthy, thus giving those who eat his preparations the benefit of many unsuspected ingredi-

The dough, which was wet perhaps half way to the center, was beaten out into thick cakes, which were laid on the glowing embers and covered with hot ashes. They were left thus till converted into a sodden, soapy paste, then taken out and eaten as hot as they could be swallowed. I nibbled the edge of one, but finding my teeth stick in "Have my words exaggerated her excel | it I ate a handful of dates, took a drink of lence?" asked Abou Kuram eagerly, coming water, and then wrapping my burnoose close

pout me threw myself on the ground and slept the sweet sleep of the weary.

It seemed I had not lain five minutes when the kettledrums were beating the

reveille. The gray dawn was only beginning to glimmer, but already the camelmen were quarreling with their grunting beasts and our bakers were busy with the glutinous compound they called bread. We hastily swallowed some mouthfuls of it straight off the burning coals, with a few dates and a drink of musty water apiece, and were off again. For awhile the air was deliciously cool

and refreshing, and the glories of the open-ing day in the lone wilderness as the sun broke through his curtain of white mist were such as a man beholds with awe and remembers with reverence. But the blazing orb soon turned the dewy freshness to a sweltering, blistering heat that was try ing to the nerves and temper of men toiling through shifting sands and conical tumuli of volcanic slag. Yet no man complained, only as we mopped our streaming faces the conversation lagged, and here and there a man gave a low involuntary moan. Save such intermittent noises and the dreary, monotonous sift, sift, sift, of animals' feet in the sand there was not a sound. When the sun mounts in his might, desert travelers are apt to fall silent.

Toward noon, when we had almost reached the point of utter dissolution, we gained the crest of a low ridge, whence ooking to the northwest we saw what evoked a cry of gladness from nearly every throat in the company. It was an oasis, a tiny spot of green with a clump of trees in nidst, shining like an emerald in a broad drab setting. We knew there was a well there, and Tabal, with the privilege of guide, suggested we should halt and redenish our water skins. But Abou Kuram answered curtly that we were not yet in need of water; that the time for rest had not come, and that in forced marches men had to think more of speed than of comfort. There was a general look of disappointment at this speech, which urged Tabal to appeal again and to advance reasons for

topping.
"When I desire thy counsel, I will tell thee," returned Abou Kuram shortly. "Look thou to the way and leave the rest to me. And methinks thou hadst better

mend thy pace."
After this no man durst speak, and keen as was the disappointment there was no murmuring—only the men sat a little more grimly and prodded a little more viciously with their riding sticks. As we passed, many a man turned with yearning eyes to the verdurous spot, thinking perhaps he should be dead ere another came in sight. If the forenoon had been hot, the afternoon had an atmosphere of living fire. Yet

and wondering how long we could stand the burning lances of the sun. I speak of the rank and file. As for Abou Kuram, he seemed to be oblivious of heat or thirst or fatigue. How I envied him! While my mouth was cracking he was evidently as cool and moist as a ripe pear Koor Ali, who rode beside me, must have noticed the painful twitching of my lips,

we tolled on, dissolving and open mouthed,

of concern he asked if I was thirsty. "As dry as a baked brick," I croaked. Koor Ali's son, Ahmed, a lad about my own age, rode beside us, and on hearing my raven voice burst into a fit of laughter. "What art thou laughing at, Ahmedr demanded Abou Kuram, turning slightly in his saddle. Ahmed pointed to me. "The stranger croaketh with thirst," he

for looking in my face with an expression

I tried to explain but failed; my mouth was as a rusty machine that had not moved for a century. "Give him thy water skin, Koor Ali," said Abou Kuram, "lest he faint. It were ill to die in the desert," he added, smiling

said, "ere we are half way over the desert."

The water was dingy and beginning to smell badly, but just then a stagnant pool would have been sweet, and I took a huge gulp. Taking another, I held it in my mouth for a minute, then squirted it out ending it, as if by pure accident, over the

sprightly Ahmed.
"By my faith, I like not to be spat on by an infidel," he cried, grasping his spear as f to have at me. The laugh was now on my side, though l

perceived the danger of indulging in it. "'Twas but an accident," I said apolo-etically. "Yet it is good and will-see! I tried to propitiate him by handing him

his father's water skin to drink, but hedis lainfully declined.

"Nay. I am not a babe like thee," he said. "Thou shouldst have brought thy mother with thee," and he tossed his head as if he were safe from the weakness of thirst in a desert land.

Three mortal hours of panting toil and dripping sweat had yet to pass ere Abou Kuram ordered a halt, and then it was but to dismount, swallow a mouthful of dry with a mixture of scorn and haughty imdates and foul lukewarm water and scramble into the saddle again. Through the broiling afternoon we stewed and gasped slons of personal good will with which the and pushed on, fainting, never drawing rein oration was interlarded he acknowledged till sundown, when we stopped for prayers and the evening meal. I had scarcely eaten when I was asleep on the sand, and my eyes appeared to have just closed when those abominable drums were beating the this man of smiling face and fine words order to mount and march again. Words than to stand and listen. Koor Ali, percannot tell how sore and tired I was or ceiving the temper of his chief, and well how I longed to lie down and be at peace. The feeling was as if some one had pound ed me limp and nature was slowly stiffening up again with the joints all out of place and every muscle and ligament stretched beyond endurance. But as the Arabs said nothing of fatigue I would have cut my tongue out rather than complain. Five days we panted on through scorching sands under a flaming sky, and five nights the bright Arabian moon lighted us

third day man and beast were showing decided signs of exhaustion. Camels fell and were left to die, sometimes with their burdens on them. The horses lagged with low heads and protruding tongues, and men lropped suddenly from their saddles with strange sterterous noises and lay as senseless as logs. Two went raving mad, one of them succeeding in killing another and himself ere his comrades could overpower him. Hollow graves, which the jackals and hyenas could reopen with a scratch of the paw, were scooped out for the dead and heir camels given to others.

The young soldiers shook and looked anxious, for sudden death and unceremonious burial are disconcerting to juvenile nerves. The old ones clinched their teeth, growling that war and the desert were not for children, and Abou Kuram, self possessed, but a trifle grimmer than at starting, spoke roughly about the delays. So the cavalcade toiled rearily on, yearning so fervently for rest that it forgot glory, yet stolidly enduring the harshness of fate. But indeed an Arab is a wildcat in vitality, and more than a wildcat in the capacity to bear pain uncomplainingly. ressed silently ahead, counting the beads of sweat as they rolled down and wondering how many of us the desert would swallow ere we got a chance of taking it out of

the enemy. At last we left the sands for alkaline ands scantily clothed with hard, sour grass and sapless diminutive shrubs, and an excursion of the man on the black horse gradually ascending to a range of mountains that crossed our line of advance north and south. It was somewhere within those ramparts that we expected to find Amood Sinn and his discomfitted army. Being now close upon the scene of the late battle, we if he were a fex, with his army scattered he had to exercise double vigilance, for Yumen Yusel would naturally be on the lookout to prevent aid from reaching the man whom he wished to destroy utterly. Neary all the cooking was done by day, so that there might be no fires at night to indicate he intended to let Yumen Yusel harry his our presence and position, and when we lay down to rest the number of sentinels was increased. But we reached the foothills without molestation and far from sorry

selves together before fighting. As it would be at once extremely danger ous, extremely difficult and tedious to take armies outside the mountains. It was near sunset when we arrived at our halting place, and as soon as the moon rose Koor All and his little band set forth, Tabal still leading.

that we were likely to be able to pick our

According to the guide we might expect them back at the latest by noon next day. Noon came, however, without bringing them. The afternoon wore slowly on, darkness fell, prayers were said and supper was eaten, and still no Koor Ali. Abou Kuram was getting impatient. After a forced march across the desert, it was exasner VERTISER.

ating to be kept waiting at this stage: "Ine camp lay down to sleep, moon and stars kept their vigil, morning broke and still no tidings of the absent ones. Abou Kuram strutted sullenly about the camp, recalling his stock of Arabian oaths. Noon came again, and again sunset, supper and

prayers, yet there was no sign of Koor Ali I am afraid Abou Kuram went through his devotions with a preoccupied, inattentive mind that evening. At any rate the first thing he did after turning his face from Mecca was to pour a flood of objurgations on Amood Sinn, on Koor Ali, on Tabal and all concerned with them. But that did not bring them, and once more the camp lay down to rest. The commander, however, did not lie down. Long after his men were snoring at the sky I watched his dark and solitary figure moving to and fro in angry uneasy expectancy.
"There shall be a reckoning for this," 1

heard him mutter once. "Woe betide the man who causeth this delay." He was still walking about when I fell

I was enjoying a happy dream, when all

at once in the black darkness I was roused by the crackle of firearms and the shrill roices of excited men. "The enemy, the enemy," they shouted as I sprang up, rubbing my eyes. "The devil on the black horse with 10,000 demons at his back." And then all along our front there was a momentary line of leaping fire which showed our scurrying men confused-

ly trying to get into fighting order. To our

great surprise there came no response to

our volley, nor could we hear any move-

ment outside our own lines, though we hearkened with ears that would have heard the stealthy tread of the panther. "The enemy has run," said some one exultingly. "Our fire has given him fleet feet to make off." And just then, as if in answer to this boast, there was the vicious ping of flying lead in the air, and some o our men dropped screaming to the earth. We delivered another volley blindly into

the darkness, then waited for the return

fire, but it did not come. Savage at the double disgrace of being fooled and taken unawares, Abou Kuram ordered a sortie, but the party had not gone 20 yards when another shower of bullets fell upon us from the opposite direction. The foe was running round us, peppering us at his will. A second sortie party was instantly sent out, but like the first it came back without making any discovery. Only some said they had seen a terrible apparition on a black horse of gigantic size, and that steed and rider breathed blue flame So the army stood there, nervously handling its matchlocks and supplicating the protection of the prophet. The prophet was evidently gracious, for there were no more of those ugly surprises that night. The foe, content with a moderate amount of fun, had gone off to chuckle over his success and get up his courage for a big

Abou Kuram knew it was coming. He knew, too, that the enemy, flushed with success, would be exceedingly tough to deal with, and the knowledge incensed him afresh against his ally for being so dil-



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Koor All and his little band were at last spied emerging from a defile. atory. But intelligence was at hand. Just as the morning star was fading out of sight as the morning star was fading out of sight Koor Ali and his little band were at last spied emerging from a defile in the mountains. Abou Kuram watched them with never a word, but his face was set, and in is heart were the elements of a fearful

As Koor Ali approached we saw that he was accompanied by a stranger of rank was accompanied by a stranger of rank, whom we judged to be an emissary from Amood Sinn. At sight of him Abou Kuram became sterner than ever. "Behold, now we shall have a 'east of words," he said to me, "and we shall be alking idly when we ought to be driving

Yumen Yusel to destruction.". When at length the company drew up, he received their salute coldly and listened patience to the florid speech which the enstiffly; indeed the responses were so unwillingly made one with half an eye could have seen it would be far more congenial to him to draw his sword and fall furiously on knowing what it meant, advanced with the object of making his report, and so cut short the palavering. But he had not uttered a dozen words when Mohammed ben Eldad Hassam (such was the stranger's imposing name) interrupted him.

"Peradventure, I may be permitted to say to my lord's brother," said the envoy, beam ing upon Abou Kuram with a feline soft-ness and craftiness of expression, "that as to the delay which hath occurred the good on our trackless, hurrying march. By the and gallant Koor Ali and his followers, who showed the courage of lions in coming to us, are in nowise to blama."

"My lord ought not to trouble himself with such small matters," returned Abou Kuram, with the slightest of bows and the faintest of smiles. "They become not his rank. Besides he is weary and needeth

"I am indeed weary," responded Ben El-dad with unruffled urbanity. "And it is pecause of that I would speak in behalf of Koor Ali, for may I never have the holy joy of sitting in the prophet's presence if e hath not driven us as if we were things of iron and steel and not men of simple flesh and blood."

"It is not proper that my lord should thus add to his weariness," interrupted Abou Kuram. "Let him withdraw to my tent and have his feet washed by his serv ant's slaves and food set before him and take the rest of which he is so much in need. Koor Ali will himself tell his story, and with an imperative manner that was not to be resisted he led Mohammed ben Eldad Hassam to the retirement of the tent. In a minute he was back again.
"Now," he said to Koor Ali, drawing

himself up with soldierly sternness. "we will hear what thou hast to say. Where fore didst thou tarry so long, and what tidings hast thou brought?"

Koor Ali gave his story briefly and clear ly. To begin with, he said, they did not find Amood Linn at the place appointed, and his maranders baving driven him deeper into the mountains. This change of situa tion involved an arduous search of 48 hours, and when at last Amood Sinn was found he was skulking among the rocks as knew not whither. "His heart was as the dust under his

feet," pursued Koor Ali,"and he railed up on the evil spirit on the black horse who had come to destroy him. I asked him if kingdom and carry away his borses, hi camels, his wives and his little ones, and he answered, 'If it is the will of God.' 'Nay, I replied, 'that is but the voice of a craven fear. We are come hither to help thee with a great host, and are we to go back because thou liest among the rocks afraid to come forth and give the enemy battle?' Where the whole body of troops to the rendezvous upon there were shame and confusion on appointed by Amood Sinn, Abou Kuram his countenance, and he arose and said that lecided to send Koor Ali forward with an of a surety they would fight. 'But how escort to ascertain whether it would not be shall I prevail on my men,' he asked, 'for possible to effect a junction of the two they think these are evil spirits leagued against them?' 'Gather them unto one place,' said I unto him, and he sent out messengers and gathered them into one place-a great hollow in the midst of the mountains. 'Speak unto them,' I said. 'Nay, it will be better if thou speak unto them,' he answered, 'for they no longer

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