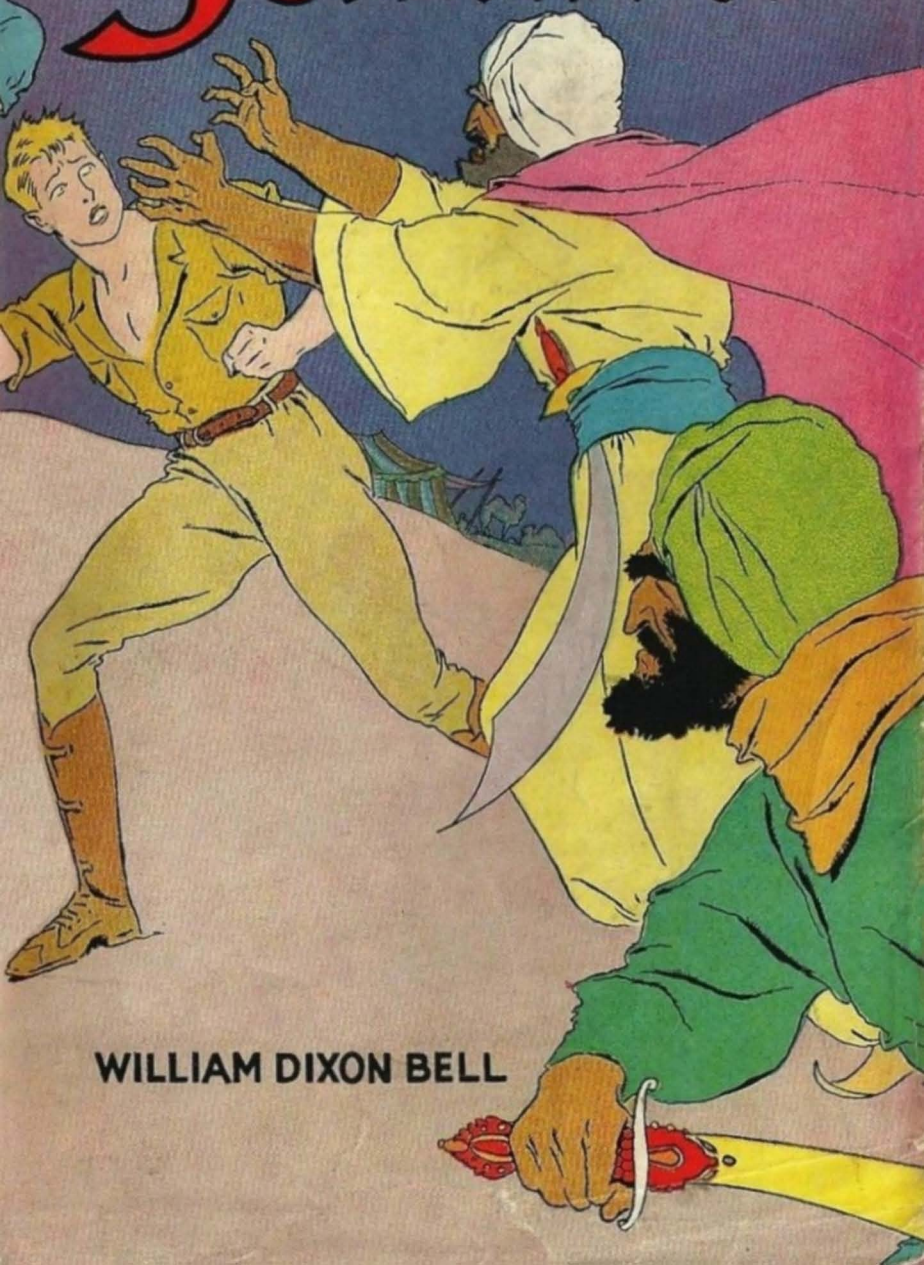
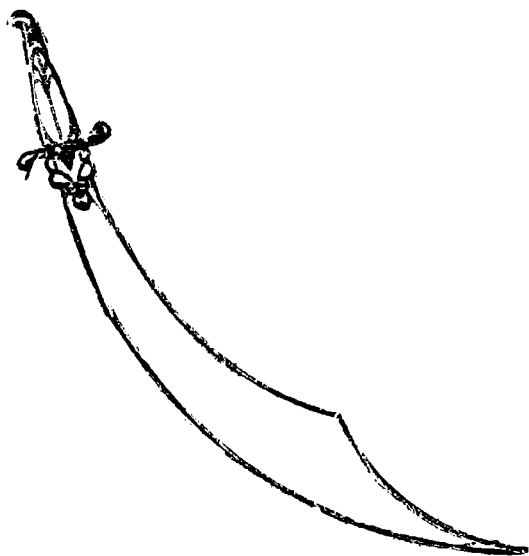


# The Sacred Sciimiter



WILLIAM DIXON BELL

The Sacred  
Scimiter



**WILLIAM DIXON BELL**

# **THE SACRED SCIMITER.**

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**THE**

**SACRED**

**SCIMITER**

★

By WILLIAM DIXON BELL



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# **THE SACRED SCIMITER**

## A Mysterious Woman

**T**HERE was not much wind, but Theodore Curtis was acting wrong in making a cross-wind landing. Will Hope looked up at the big yellow plane, and shook his head.

“Why did Dave let him do it?” he asked himself in a huff. “He knew better. That is no way to teach a man to fly. He is going to slide.”

But Theodore Curtis gave him an agreeable surprise. He made a steady, sloping landing, and taxied to an easy stop. Dave Hope, Will’s twin brother, jumped out of the cabin, and winked at Will.

“Well, I guess Mr. Curtis is about ready to put on his wings.”

“Are both of you still determined to remain in this part of the world? Why not go to Europe with me?”

Theodore Curtis, without giving Will time to answer Dave, stepped out of the airplane. He was a vigorous, active, tanned young man, with all the earmarks of a world traveler.



"That would only give us the trouble of coming back," Will protested smilingly. "We expect to see things while we are here. Perhaps we may conclude to fly all over Africa before returning."

"You can fly like an old timer now," Dave added, "and will not need our help."

"That cross-wind landing did not indicate much knowledge," Will remarked dryly.

"Made on purpose." Dave grinned audibly. "I wanted to see what he could do. He did it all right. Gave her proper gun and slipped her along easily with the rudder bars."

"Where did you go? You were gone long enough to fly to Jerusalem and back."

"Not quite to Jerusalem. We went the other way. We stopped at the ruins of—what is the name of the place, Mr. Curtis?"

"Persepolis. It is the great relic of early Persian civilization, and was burned, it is said, by Alexander at the instigation of the courtesan, Thais."

"Just a ruin," Dave added. "Nearly underground now."

"Well, so long," Theodore Curtis said, as he walked rapidly toward the ornate gate that

## A Mysterious Woman 15

opened into the city of Teheran. "I will be on my way tomorrow morning. But I guess I will see you before I leave."

The landing had been made not far from the gate of the city, and as Curtis disappeared inside, a dozen Persians in the garb of soldiers of the Shah advanced and shoved the great plane under a large tent. Then they placed their guards around in positions that assured a careful watch day and night.

"*Adios!*" Will called out. "If forever still forever, etc."

Curtis came back to the gate and stepped out again.

"That farewell gives me a thought of dire happenings. Sometimes these little Asiatic nations pay very little attention to official papers. You must be careful. Some small Arabian sheik may take a notion that he would like to own the Bird of the Occident."

"We will take the chance," Will smiled at him and waved his hand. "We were not born yesterday."

Curtis departed with a feeling that he was leaving his two young friends in danger.

Will and Dave Hope were the two American boys who had won a twenty-five thousand dollar prize by flying from Dallas, Texas, to Tokio. Later they had met Theodore Curtis in Shanghai, and had gone with him into the great mountains of Tibet to rescue Prof. Albert Noll, who had been lost in a scientific expedition. Not only had they found Albert Noll alive but they also rescued a girl, who was being robbed by a Chinese rascal. This girl was the actual owner of the big yellow flying plane that had just landed. In the entire company had succeeded in getting to Teheran with the Bird of the Occident dismantled and stacked on the top of the yellow plane.

At Teheran the Bird of the Occident, which was the plane in which the two lads flew across the Pacific Ocean, was put together again, and now as we meet the two lads they are about to set out on a voyage of aerial interest. They expected to loaf along through Persian and Arabian skies, cross the Sinai Peninsula, and visit Egypt. Their plane was stored in the same tent as the yellow plane and watched by the same men, but before leaving they wished to see more of Teheran.

The day before they had been permitted to see the famous Peacock Throne, which had been seized by the Persians when Delhi was sacked, and while they knew little about precious stones, they were astonished to be informed that the jewels in the throne were worth \$30,000,000.

When Curtis had disappeared both boys thought of this throne at the same time.

“With all the bribery and corruption they are telling about as prevailing here,” Will observed, looking intently at the flap of the tent that was bulged out by the body of the Bird of the Occident, “it seems to me that some one would try to steal the jewels attached to that throne.”

“How would they get away with them? It would not take a very strong police system to catch a man trying to get out of this country—one railroad and three or four caravan routes would be all that would need watching.”

“How about the Bird of the Occident? I’ve got one of my mysterious hunches that something is going to happen to our plane. If you remember it was an awful good hunch in Shanghai.”

“We might put another watchman on,” Dave agreed uneasily. “If some one should steal all

those jewels and then get away with them in our plane we would be held for the burglary."

"Where will we find another man?"

"Inside of the gate of course."

Together the two walked across the open space to the gate, paused for a second to look at the ornate carvings and marble work on the four high, round pillars, and then passed through the great arch. Just outside of the gate they came on a street barber. He was smiling broadly as he shaved his customer's head and ran the clippers over several weeks' growth of beard. The customer's head was already shaved half way back and one side of his face had been clipped.

"We are looking for a man to work for us for several days," Will said as he stopped in front of the barber. He had little hope that the barber would understand but he addressed him with the idea of getting some fun out of a street situation. "We will pay him well."

"He good man," the barber answered in pidgin English, much to the surprise of the two lads. "Take him 'long. I fix him up much, more he have plenty trouble. Him got a divorce and him looking for new wife."

“Do you mean for us to hire him with his head half shaved, and one side of his face clipped?”

Dave laughed outright.

“Ah, Sahib, you nevaire take zis man wiz his face shaved. Him get cleaned up him so handsome a woman get him 'fore night. Then he be in terrible fix again and have to get another divorce.”

“Another divorce? Can a man get a divorce easy in this country?”

“Yes, Sahib. If him marry and no like woman he call two witnesses and him say ‘Get out.’ Maybe he say, ‘and Allah go with you!’ Maybe he no say that. Maybe he say ‘to *Shaitan* with you.’ ”

“We want him to watch our airplane,” Dave objected. “Do you think he is honest?”

“Maybe he steal,” the barber admitted agreeably. “Maybe you better watch-hire two mans—another man to watch him.”

“Sahib, I am honest,” declared the customer, pushing a mouthful of lather out of his mouth, and wiping the side of his face. “Allah be praised, I am the most honest man in Teheran.”

“They are all alike,” Will said aside. “Just

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as well hire him. He can't fly the plane off. All right. Come on with us."

The customer did not wait for a second bidding. He tossed the barber a coin and hurried after the two lads.

After placing their new employee inside of the tent with instructions to keep a vigilant eye on the airplane backed against the wall of the structure, the two lads again started toward the open gate.

Just before they got to the gate they met a woman. She was unveiled, although a dark cloth was drawn partly over her chin. Her clothes were ragged; her hair, loosely braided, hung down her back. In addition to a rather unprepossessing appearance she was not immaculately clean.

"I wonder if by any chance you are Will and Dave Hope?"

The two boys stopped in astonishment. Here was a Persian woman, of low extraction, speaking to them in good English, and addressing them by name.

"We are the Hope Twins," Will finally replied. "What can we do for you?"

“Sh—h! Come with me.”

Dave drew back and chuckled.

“That is rather a big order, lady. Did it ever enter your mind that you are a mysterious stranger, and that——”

“I am a Persian woman who speaks English. I am watched, spied on every moment, and we cannot talk here. Come, follow me. There is the man who is watching me.”

She jerked her head back toward the tent hangar. Peeping backward the two lads saw a man with his head sticking around the corner of their tent. The man was dark skinned, with a peculiar face, and——

His nose was badly bent to the left side of his face, and his left ear had been cut off.

When Will saw this man he fell in behind the girl, and motioned to Dave to follow. Will dearly loved a mystery, and here was a deep one.



## Bent Nose Appears Again

**A**S THEY entered the gate Will thought that if the gate entrance should be barred the spy at the tent would not see where they were going; but the sun was high in the sky and there was little chance of the gate closing until night. Nevertheless he thought that he would like to get away from the thought of that spy.

“That bent nose and lopped-off ear give me the same feeling I had when I saw the scar-faced Chinaman in Shanghai,” he whispered to Dave. “I smell danger ahead. Why are we following this woman like two chumps? We should have made her explain her purpose.”

They walked on hurriedly until they came to a narrow, dirty street where the houses almost topped together over the street. It was crowded with pedestrians. The girl stopped, put up her hand to enforce silence, and pointed at the street.

“In there!”

She looked hurriedly around. The man at the

## Bent Nose Appears Again 23

tent, if he had been spying on them, had not yet entered the city. At least he was not visible. Catching Dave by the arm she hurried him into the narrow street, and pushed him forward.

“You also.”

Before Will could draw back he was in the street, and soon they were swallowed up with the crowd. Swift-footed, the woman marched forward, guiding the two lads past the dirty bazaars, the small fruit stands, the little cubbyholes where costly Persian rugs were on exhibition, and all kinds of produce was sold.

Presently she came to a small court on the opposite side of which there was a crumbling stone wall.

“Over that! Be careful!” She drew them behind a building where they were not seen from the street. “Make no noise, and as you go over try to keep your bodies from being seen by the passers-by on the street.”

With an unexpected movement she lifted Dave up.

“Catch the wall and pull up quickly. Hurry!”

Releasing Dave she lifted Will, and before the astonished lads could protest they found them-

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selves on the other side of the wall in a garden.

“Come!”

Again she led the way, crossing the garden, leaping over flower beds, and directing her course to a large building that was of European architecture. With bewildered emotions the two lads followed her up to a large door, closed and locked. On this door the woman struck three times, paused and delivered two more blows. Immediately the door opened.

“Enter!” a hoarse male voice commanded in English.

Will looked around anxiously. To his ears came the hoarse cries of the street, and yet he could hardly believe that this quiet, isolated building could be so near a dirty, narrow place alive with shouting, bargaining people. There was an air of tenseness about the woman and the place that alarmed him.

“If some of those people saw us——”

The woman pointed over her shoulder. Not far away the stately spires of the Shah’s palace lifted up toward the skies.

“If we are seen from that building there is a possibility——”

## Bent Nose Appears Again 25

She drew her hand across her throat.

"You do not mean that we would be killed?" Will inquired in alarm.

"Perhaps not, but it would become exceedingly unpleasant for you."

"Then I am for getting out of here."

Will started back toward the wall. The woman extended her hand and caught his arm. Her grasp was like an arm of iron.

"In you go," she hissed. "Move along!"

The door opened a partial crack and the woman pushed both boys inside.

"Here they are," she said. "Fussy, and without knowledge."

"Who comes?" demanded the harsh voice.

"The Keeper of the Scimiter."

"Good; straight ahead!"

"Both of you are wearing shoes soled with rubber," the woman whispered. "It is well. You will need to move cautiously down this corridor. One route leads to the Shah's guards; the other to——"

She did not finish, but caught each boy by his hand and hurried forward. They turned several corners, heard low conversations from different

apartments, sometimes in English, sometimes in Persian, and finally crossed a large open court and entered another building. Here they passed through an office where several girls and men worked with typewriters, and entered a door leading into a room where a man sat at a mahogany desk.

He was an Englishman. The girls at the typewriters were English.

"Come in and shut the door," the man ordered in a voice indicating the habit of a commanding officer.

The woman lagged behind and closed the door. The man, who was writing, left them standing until he had finished writing something on a pad. When he looked up there was a frown on his face.

"They know nothing," the woman explained, as if replying to the frowned interrogation.

"Good. Sit down!"

The two lads sat down. They did not exactly like this gruff man at the desk.

"I brought these lads here to offer them some money," the woman said in a low voice, as she leaned over the desk and looked into the man's face. "A nice sum of money."

## Bent Nose Appears Again 27

"Persian money or British sovereigns?"

"Good English gold. Better than that—American dollars."

"How much are you going to offer them?"

The woman turned a pair of deep, piercing eyes on the two lads, studied them thoughtfully for several moments, and spoke sharply:

"I want to use their airplane. I may want night flying, day flying, secret flying, dangerous flying——"

"Mysterious flying," Will protested slowly. "Now just why should a Persian woman want to be flying around—a seemingly poor woman? Before we start on a flight of that character we would want to know its purpose, and where the woman wanted to go."

"To be frank I am not a woman. I am a man."

She threw off her outer garments with a quick movement and stood before them in male costume.

"More mystery?" Dave shook his head. "I see no sense in it."

"And we are not in the habit of undertaking something that we see no sense in. It looks to me as if you are up to something crooked."

Will, as he spoke, reached for the door knob.

"There are fifteen thousand dollars in this for you," the disguised man said softly.

Will's hand grasped the door knob.

"We are not in any kind of crooked work. You haven't enough money in Persia to hire us to do it."

"I can promise you that you will not be asked to do anything wrong. All I want you to do is to carry me in your airplane."

"Carry you where?"

"Really, I do not know where. I will be forced to wait until I find out. My first stop will be Bagdad, and I will want you to take me to that city tonight."

"For what purpose?" Will continued inexorably.

"My purpose is honorable, but must be kept a secret. I should not go so far as to make this statement but I have read enough about Will and Dave Hope to know that they will not violate a secret when it is trusted to them."

"If the work is not dishonorable," Dave put in, "how much are you offering us?"

"To obey me, be ready to fly me from one place

## Bent Nose Appears Again 29

to another—any place I may designate—and keep my presence and my mission secret, I will give you twenty-five thousand American dollars.”

The man behind the desk whistled, and then closed his mouth.

“You might want us to work for you forever and forever under such a contract,” Will objected.

“I cannot say how long this service will be required. I will say that there is a possibility of it ending at Bagdad, and then it may be required for a year during which I may have to visit many lands.” The man leaned forward with earnest, seemingly honest eyes. “It is a work for humanity. If I win humanity wins; if I lose, men will be pushed back hundreds, perhaps, thousands of years.”

“You talk in riddles,” Dave returned slowly, “but twenty-five thousand dollars looks large to me.”

“It will all be clean profit. The expenses of fuel, repairs, etc., will be paid. My proposition is that you fly me to any spot I designate, and wait there until I wish to move on. After we get



to the first landing you are not expected to do anything but keep quiet, and refrain from exposing my presence. When we leave I promise you that you will not carry contraband and will not be engaged in anything vicious."

"Looks fair enough."

"If you permit us the right to withdraw if we see anything crooked going on," Will added.

"If you find me crooked in the least you may fly on and leave me, but you must understand that there is a mystery connected with this that I am not at liberty to disclose."

"And yet," Dave suggested mildly, "I do not see twenty-five thousand good American dollars lying around anywhere."

The man behind the desk put his hand in a drawer, drew out an enormous roll of United States bills, counted out twenty-five one thousand dollar bills and shoved them across the table. He did not speak or crack a smile.

Dave picked up the bills and examined them carefully. As far as he could see they were good, but he could not think that any man could thus easily put his hands on twenty-five thousand and have a big roll left.

## **Bent Nose Appears Again** **31**

"May be counterfeit," he surmised, laying them on the desk again.

"Take them to the American consul." The man disguised as a woman smiled gently through tight lips. "Deposit them with him, and be ready to leave Teheran tonight at eight o'clock. If the American consul does not pass them and will not take care of them for you, leave them with him, and the deal falls through."

Dave picked up the bills and put them in his pocket.

"He directs us to the American consul," he mused. "That looks honest. Go with us to the consul's office."

The man rang a desk bell, a liveried servant entered, and the man said: "Take these two lads to the American consulate, and see that they are not robbed of this money on the way."

The American official declared that the money was good, and took it over for the boys to forward to America.

As the two boys came out of the consul's office they passed at the door a dirty Persian beggar with a nose bent toward the left side of his face, and his left ear lopped off.

“Same face, same nose, same lop-ear,” Dave whispered as the man ran rapidly into a cross street and disappeared.

“My hunch,” Will replied, “is that he has for some reason been trailing us ever since we left the tent hangar.”

“If so, we had better get back to the Bird of the Occident.”

“We are on the way.”

## Dealing With A Stowaway

**D**AVE threw back the flaps of the tent, and Will and the Persian rolled the Bird of the Occident out into the opening. It was a brilliant moonlight night and the magnificent plane looked like a model on exhibition. It had been newly painted, the engines had been overhauled, the parts that were worn had been replaced, and it was in splendid flying condition.

“What is your name?” Will asked, as the three paused to look around to see if there was anyone looking. “You may call me Saladin.”

“All right, Saladin is as good a name as Bob, or Dick, or Merriville Manners. Let’s get our tools and overalls and get into the air.”

The three walked back into the tent hangar to get the clothing and tools. The second they stepped under the flap of the tent a dark figure peeped around the corner of the tent, discovered the coast was clear, and darted across the open space to the airplane.

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He barely had time to get into the cabin and shut the door when the two American lads and the Persian came out, and sauntered toward the airplane.

“Board!” Dave called out energetically. “You first, my dear Saladin.”

The Persian tapped Dave kindly on the shoulder, and got in. Dave and Will followed, and Dave entered the control room. Several moments passed before the engine was revved, but during that time little conversation took place between Saladin and Will. All now understood what was before them, and there was no necessity for conversation.

The Bird of the Occident taxied across the open space into the broad road that led to the ornate gate of the city, lifted its nose before it got to the gate, tipped the long fringe of bushes on the side of the road, and circled as it climbed upward. Dave had his foot on the rudder bar and was pulling the stick gently.

Immediately the great Persian city passed under it. One would think that by this hour the city and its shops would be dead for the night. Not so. Every street was ablaze and all the shops

## Dealing with a Stowaway 35

were wide open, as much of the business of the city was transacted at night. But by looking down at the level-roofed residences a great host of Persians could be seen seated on their roofs, after the fashion of the East, engaged in social intercourse.

The city of Teheran did not last long. Dave made a quick mathematical calculation while the plane was circling the city. Directly north lay the Caspian Sea; too far away to be seen, but his knowledge of geography told him where it was located—twenty-five miles distant. South, shimmering in the soft moonlight, lay the waters of Daria-i-Namak.

He turned the nose of the Bird of the Occident west by south. With a loud purring noise the plane sped on its way, the three occupants gazing down in silence at the earth below them.

Presently Dave set the robot, watched the course of the plane for a short time to see that the robot guided it correctly, and stepped down into the cabin.

“We have now been on our way half an hour,” he started to say, “and——”

He halted as if shot just as his foot dropped on

the floor of the cabin, which was lighted by electricity. His eyes had fallen on the door in the rear of the cabin which closed up the fuselage. He gazed at this door for several seconds in surprise.

"You look scared," Will remarked slowly. "Is there anything wrong with the plane? What are you looking at?"

Dave would have ventured all he had that the door of the fuselage in the rear of the cabin had opened and closed softly. But his inaction did not last long. Leaping across the cabin he jerked open the door.

His action brought an unexpected result.

A Persian, who had his hand on the door, tumbled unceremoniously into the cabin.

"Ah! A stowaway!" Dave flashed out angrily. "How did he get in here?"

Will and Saladin, the later still being disguised as a peasant Persian woman, jumped up. Will stood with open mouth staring at the stowaway. But Saladin was used to dealing with unexpected situations. With a quick movement he jerked out an automatic gun and thrust it into the face of the Persian.

## Dealing with a Stowaway 37

"Be easy with that gun!" Dave demurred. "He is just a Persian beggar."

"It is the crooked-nosed, lop-eared man I saw peeping at us at the tent hangar," Will declared. "I also am wondering how he could have gotten into the plane when we had several men watching it."

"What I want to know," Saladin jerked out, "is how he learned that this airplane was going to leave Teheran."

"If you can speak Persian, suppose you ask him?"

Saladin began to fire questions in Persian at the beggar. The man got to his feet and stood trembling, brushing nervously at his ragged garments, which consisted of an enormous loose-sleeved, ill-fitting cloak, and a funny fez head-gear. While Saladin was interrogating him he nonchalantly sat down in one of the chairs.

"He says that he wants to go to Bagdad," Saladin explained. "And he makes out that he is a very poor man and has been hanging around the hangar for several days hoping that he could find a way to get to the City of Caliphs."

"But how did he know that this plane would go



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to Bagdad when it left Teheran?" Dave asked suspiciously. "Looks funny to me."

To this the beggar replied, when Saladin propounded the query: "I just guessed it. I wanted to get away from Teheran before the police got me, and any place was better than Persia."

"Ask him how his ear came to be cut off?"

Saladin smiled when he gave the answer.

"He says that the son of an infidel, a dog of an unbeliever, the Shah of Persia had it done because he tried to sell earthenware at the palace gate. In addition his stock was taken away from him."

"Rather hard lines," Dave agreed, "and it looks to me as if Persia needs a new ruler."

"He is telling a falsehood," Saladin rasped. "The Shah of Persia is a kind man, and would not take a living away from one of his subjects."

"What shall we do with him?"

Saladin leaned out of the window.

"The ground under us seems quite level. Why not drop down and let him take some exercise?"

"We have gone at least one hundred miles since we lifted," Dave protested. "I wouldn't want to make him walk that far."

## Dealing with a Stowaway 39

"I have an idea that walking will do him good. I venture that he is some kind of a spy——"

"A spy! Pshaw! Who would be spying on us? We are just world travelers and have no secrets."

Saladin grinned, and stuck his mouth against Dave's ear.

"He might—be—spying—on—me."

"Strap him to the seat," Will commanded harshly, advancing and looking into the face of the stowaway. "He does not know anything about air travel—how dangerous it is. You, also, Madame, Miss, or whatever you are."

Dave looked wonderingly at Will. Will winked his eye solemnly. Dave giggled and glanced out of the fuselage door.

"Does look like we are about to hit an air pocket," he prophesied. "Perhaps it would be best to make our passengers safe."

Will went into the aviation room, and seated himself at the controls. Dave pushed Saladin into a seat roughly, and snapped belts around him. Then he did the same for the beggar.

"Take it easy," he whispered to Saladin, who was viewing this with surprise. "We are going

to do some stunts to surprise this unexpected passenger. Hold tight."

Will directed the Bird of the Occident into a sudden loop, whirled it over on its back, thus jerking the beggar against the straps, flopped it aright with a swift movement that tore the beggar's sides, leveled out again, and turned a cartwheel.

The beggar did not open his mouth, but it was obvious from the way in which he crouched back in his seat that he was badly frightened.

"Do not be alarmed," Dave soothed, "So far things are all right but if the plane tips——"

"If the plane tips," Saladin gasped. "What is the matter with it? Is it likely to go over?"

"We have been over once but that was a mere trifle. The upper air pockets are sometimes mighty rough."

"Air—pockets!" exclaimed the beggar in broken English. "He no air pocket. He——"

"Thought you didn't understand English!" Dave thundered. "Say, mister, what are you trying to do to us? Who are you? Where did you come from? Where are you going?"

The man clenched his teeth, and maintained a sullen silence.

## Dealing with a Stowaway 41

Dave stuck his head up into the control room and looked at Will.

"How does everything look ahead?" he asked. "Is she getting any rougher?"

Before Will could reply the plane went into a tail spin, and the beggar bounced around like a ball. Saladin, who had caught a wink from Dave, had time to grasp the sides of the seat.

"There is always danger of a spill," Dave announced calmly, glancing at the beggar's white face. "But if we fall we will all likely be dead so quick we will feel no pain."

"P-p-please," muttered the beggar, "I do not think that I wish to go to Bagdad."

"Keep still in your seat!" Dave shouted, just as Will slipped out of the spin and went into a barrel roll. "Do you want to turn us upside down?"

"Son of an infidel!" howled the beggar. "I'll have the law on you for this."

"Oh, well; if you do not care to ride with us," Dave observed politely, opening the cabin door a little, "you may jump out. I will lend you a parachute."

"He is rather bulky," Will called out from the

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control seat. "I do not believe that one of our umbrellas will hold him up."

"You've got to stop this thing," the beggar snarled. "His majesty, the shah——"

He stopped, and stammered, and Will by a quick maneuver, caused the Bird of the Occident to make an unexpected dive that bumped the beggar around frightfully.

"Guess that I will have to put the safety buffers on him," Dave said anxiously. "He just can't keep still. He is liable to throw the plane out of balance any second."

"We might do better by seeking altitude," Will shouted.

"To get beyond this stratum and find freedom from these bursts of vicious air we would have to have oxygen tanks," Dave objected. "And I consider this a flurry that will soon pass away."

Both Dave and Will were bursting with suppressed merriment. But Saladin was not enjoying the fun although he was aware that it was a scheme on the part of the two boys to make the stowaway sick of his bargain.

Dave glanced out of the window and drew back with a jerk.

## Dealing with a Stowaway 43

“What is the matter with her?” he inquired anxiously. “She looks as if she is going to bump into the ground.” The beggar stretched his neck and looked out. Sure enough the ground was rushing up at them.

“Y-y-you are going to be paid for this,” he stuttered.

“What is the matter with her?” Saladin spurted fearfully, looking out. “She——”

“Nothing much,” Dave calmed. “We are just flying upside down. Will, give her more stick and flop her.”

The airplane flopped over with a mighty whirl. Saladin rolled against the side of the cabin and the beggar was propelled half into the aisle. Then the plane leveled out and there was a moment of smooth sailing with the speed of the wind.

For a time there was intense silence. Finally Will pointed downward.

“There is——”

He did not finish but went into a tail spin that came with a sudden jar.

“Whew!” Dave breathed in broken breaths, “It looks like we are going to tail spin into the earth. Put her on her feet, Will!”

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“I am trying to. Ah! There we are.”

The plane dipped out of the tail spin into a smooth glide.

“As I was saying when that last bump hit us,” Will continued smoothly, “we are back at the tent hangar in Teheran. Shall I land and let this man out?”

“I will get you a thousand——”

“Thought you were a beggar,” Dave interrupted harshly. “How can you give us a thousand taels, a thousand marks, a thousand francs, or a thousand pennies if you are just a beggar?”

Before the beggar could reply the Bird of the Occident hit the ground in a Chinese landing—that is on one wheel with the wing tilted. It is highly dangerous to undertake but Will brought the plane to a stop without injuring it.

“There you are, Mister Spy.” Dave unbuckled the straps that fastened the beggar to the seat. “Get out, and remember that when you attempt to steal a ride from the Hope Twins you bite off a large hunk of trouble.”

He pushed the spy out of the door so roughly that he landed on his hands and knees.

Before he could get to his feet Will taxied

## Dealing with a Stowaway 45

across the open space and lifted the plane again into the air.

"Now, Saladin," Dave grinned, as he unbuckled the belt around his other passenger, "I imagine that we can continue our flight to Bagdad without encountering such rough cross currents and air pockets; and at the same time without dropping a man a hundred miles from food and water."

Saladin looked down at the beggar who was standing up and shaking his fist at the flying plane.

The smile that flitted across his face, however, was sickly. He, as well as the beggar, had had enough of rough riding in the air.

"You handed both of us a fast one," he grunted.



## Curtis Overtakes Them

**T**HE moon dropped down behind the range of low hills in the distance, darkness descended upon the face of the earth, and then the stars burst out in gorgeous glory, giving a soft twilight to the scene. Flying over Persian table-lands had been a pleasant pastime to Saladin, but Dave had gone to sleep on the scenery.

Dave yawned, and lifted his head from the blanket on which he had been sleeping. When he looked at the Persian he noticed that his hands were clenching the sides of his chair, and his thin lips were set in a straight line.

“What is wrong?” Dave stood up. “You are acting as if you had seen the ghost of your mother-in-law.”

“I haven’t seen her yet but I expect to meet her within the next five minutes.”

“Pshaw! A case of nerves?”

“Not altogether nerves. Do you hear anything?”

Dave raised his head erect, and stood in a listening attitude.

“Not a thing.”

“Not even the hum of an airplane engine?”

“Saladin, you said something!”

Acting on an impulse he sprang into the control room. Will was seated at the controls calmly volplaning toward the earth over a vast level, uncultivated plain.

“What’s wrong with the engine?” Dave cried.

“Why did you shut off the gas?”

“She conked ten minutes ago,” Will responded calmly, “and so far I have not been able to discover the trouble.”

“Can you jockey her along like a glider until I can look into her insides?”

“Not a jockey. I have been wriggling her along ever since she choked, and when I discovered that we were above a country that offered a favorable landing I decided to volplane to the earth, and make an examination in safety.”

“Think you can make it?”

“Sure. Watch.”

The Bird of the Occident made a half bank, nosed slowly downward and came to a gentle rest

in a valley between two ranges of small hills. When it came to a full stop Saladin jumped out.

“Effendi, it is indeed pleasant to feel the good old ground beneath your feet after riding with two lads who seem to think that the air was made for a playground. My heart has been entirely out of commission ever since you landed that Persian spy.”

Will and Dave donned their overalls, stretched their legs and walked around the plane. Dave got a flashlight with five batteries, and began a cursory investigation. He was unable to locate the trouble.

“As a trouble shooter I am the bunk,” he remarked after looking at the carburetor. “We will have to wait until daylight.”

“But I am in a great rush to get to Bagdad,” Saladin protested. “It is possible that if we can get there before morning it may end our flying trip.”

“The sun will be up in three hours,” Will pointed out, “and we can make time by waiting. At the same time if we sleep a little now we will be in better mental condition to hunt the trouble.”

“I am afraid that you do not understand the

## **Curtis Overtakes Them** **49**

need of time," the Persian maintained. "The men we are dealing with have numerous ways of getting across the desert, and I want to get there before they do."

Dave made another investigation.

"No use," he fretted. "It is too dark, and this flash is not big enough to handle the matter. We will have to wait."

Setting the alarm clock to arouse them shortly after dawn the three lay down in the cabin, and went to sleep. But Saladin found that he could not sleep. He had dozed repeatedly during the trip and now when he discovered that it would be hard to sleep he got up and maintained a watch during the rest of the night.

The watch proved needless, and bright and early he roused the two lads. Dave, who was the most expert mechanic of the trio, went diligently to work while Will prepared breakfast.

But notwithstanding his work, the sun was two hours high before Dave finally located the trouble. He found a portion of the gas line bent near the opening of the wing tank. This had caused a choke-up of gas, and he succeeded in remedying it quickly with a pair of pliers and a slender wire

which he pushed through the pipe and removed some dirt. When the line was opened he closed the hole with solder.

He was putting his tools away when he heard the hum of a plane in the air.

"Another airplane!" he called to Will and Saladin, who were inside of the cabin playing chess. "It is coming like fury."

Saladin jumped up nervously and ran outside. Will followed a little slower.

"Where from?" Will asked.

Dave pointed toward the northeast. In the distance Will could see a speck in the air.

"Looks as if it might be after us," he announced soberly. "Is it possible that we are a lot of law violators?"

He looked inquiringly at Saladin. The Persian turned his eyes anxiously up at the sky.

"It—it—is possible that an enemy is on our trail," Saladin agreed. "That beggar——"

"We can soon find out if it is coming our way."

Will ran into the plane and got a pair of field glasses. When he returned he turned the glasses on the approaching airplane.

"Mr. Curtis and his yellow plane, I think," he

said, handing the glasses to Dave. "At least the plane is yellow."

Dave examined the approaching sky visitor carefully through the binoculars.

"Mr. Curtis," Dave concluded finally. "And he sees us."

Soon the yellow plane was overhead circling and coming down. When it struck the ground Theodore Curtis came out of it.

"Have a crack-up?" he inquired with a solemn face. "Can I be of any assistance? Shall I load her on my plane and take her to Teheran or Bagdad?"

"Thanks a lot," Dave answered with a light laugh, "but you should know by this time that the Hope Twins do not remain stranded long. We had a choke-up, and I have just finished repairing it."

"You had better come with me," Curtis invited. "I discovered this morning that you had left Teheran, and wondered what had called you off so suddenly."

"We had some business," Will evaded. "But we thank you for your offer. We will meet you later in New York."

They talked several moments, during which Theodore Curtis was introduced to Saladin. When he turned back to his yellow plane he motioned to Will to follow him.

“Who is this Persian? How is it that he is with you, stranded on the desert?”

For a moment Will was tempted to tell his friend the entire truth of the presence of Saladin but in time remembered that he had promised not to divulge the transaction. Nevertheless he was now sure that Theodore Curtis would not approve the acceptance of such a sum of money.

“He is just a passenger who wanted to go quickly to Bagdad, and paid us liberally for passage.”

This satisfied Theodore Curtis and he entered his plane and sailed away.

As the plane was rising Dave noted that it wobbled peculiarly.

“That is funny,” he pointed out to Will. “Something the matter with Mr. Curtis’s plane.”

Will placed the field glasses to his eyes. At this moment a face appeared in the yellow plane in the fuselage in the rear of the cabin at a small window.

## **Curtis Overtakes Them** **53**

“Look!” Will chattered excitedly. “Bent Nose!”

Both Dave and Saladin grabbed at the binoculars. Saladin got them, gave one glance at the vanishing plane and handed the glasses to Dave. When Dave caught a glimpse of the face of the man hidden in the rear of the yellow plane he confirmed Will’s recognition.

“Yes, it is Mr. Bent Nose. Not being satisfied with the treatment we gave him, he concluded to steal a ride to Bagdad in Mr. Curtis’s plane.”

“And why?”

Will did not look at Dave when he made this query but looked into Saladin’s face. Saladin dropped his eyes in thought.

“I am a fool—a natural idiot. I should have searched the man when he was in your plane. He is the very fellow I am trying to beat to Bagdad. He is doubtless carrying what I want.”

“Carrying what you want?” Dave’s eyes wrinkled. “He couldn’t have been carrying anything when we caught him as a stowaway?”

“Couldn’t, eh? Did you ever hear of a juggler who drew live chickens, eggs, and bird nests out of his wide sleeves?”



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“He—he—certainly wore a garment with tremendously wide sleeves,” Dave admitted, “but \_\_\_\_\_”

“In one of those sleeves, or in the capacious width of his garment he carried the bundle I want. We must beat him to Bagdad, and stop him before——”

“Not a chance in a million of beating him to Bagdad. That yellow plane is about the fastest thing in the air. We know because we tried to run away from it one time.”

“Well, get into the air, and try. Something may delay your friend.”

## Just a Friendly Punch

**T**HERE is a prevalent idea that Persia is a vast region of sandy desert. Toward the border of Afghanistan for a distance of seven hundred and fifty miles there is a deep sandy, salty desert—the desert of Kum. But the major portion of Persia is a glorious vista, vaster than Switzerland. On every side, except the east, Persia is surrounded by hills leading up in steps to a large plateau extending north, south and west, and dropping down into Central Persia to the Dasht-i-Lut Desert.

It was westward and south that the Bird of the Occident sped on wings of a gentle breeze 7,000 feet in the air, and a thousand feet over the plateau. Finally they crossed a river and the mountain range stepped higher into the air, thus causing them to seek a higher altitude. Presently they were flying over Hamadan, a Persian town noted for its cool, pleasant climate; then for half an hour the terrain was rough and rugged.

"There is another town," Dave barked excitedly. "It is hanging on the sides of a hill, lopping over into the valley by the river."

"Kermanshah. Beyond it we will have another stretch of mountains." As Saladin made this explanation he pointed with his finger to a stretch of hills that tilted up rapidly into the air. "The border of Mesopotamia lies just on the western edge of this range."

They were over an hour crossing this range of mountains, and then they shot over a long vista of barren land that extended westward as far as the eye could reach. Here they caught their first view of an Arabian mule caravan. The little animals, fifty in number, toiled along slowly in the direction of Bakuba. They were heavily laden with great packs of merchandise stacked on their backs.

"This is Arabia."

Saladin introduced them with a wave of his hand.

"They do not seem to use the yak that is so useful in Tibet," Dave observed.

"Or oxen, or camels," Will added.

"The mules can keep on the mountain passes easier, but if you stay awake until you get to the

deserts south of Bagdad and west you will see thousands of camels. They are the beasts of travel. They carry merchandise for thousands and thousands of miles."

Now they saw Arabia unfold. It was a vast, barren, waste land. Occasionally they noticed wells around which camels and small caravans gathered; then would come a flash of trees, scraggy, unkept; orchards that might have been one time productive—now a neglected wilderness. In these orchards were low houses with only one or two windows—houses of mud brick that belonged to the poor.

"Just a touch of Wahabis." He pointed out some tents pitched amid a desert stretch. Around the tents were children playing innocently, coming from a nearby well were women in desert costume carrying water in large water vessels to their tents, in front of the tents Bedouins basked in the hot sun. "The Christians of America and England think that these people are terrible—that they are going straight to the hot place. I do not know so much about that. There are good men and good women down there. They are true Mohammedans. They believe in temperance; they do not

drink intoxicating liquors; they abhor tobacco and drive it out of their desert living; they shun the temptations of life; they do not believe in spending money recklessly; they are opposed strenuously to adultery. Yet they have many strange ideas. They will not allow their women to go to a funeral because they weep and make a noise, and they prohibit the wearing of jewelry."

"They do not appear to have much government," Dave conjectured. "At least they seem to be running wild."

"Ghazi, son of Feisal, is now king of Mesopotamia, or rather the sherif under English mandate, and is the obvious ruler; but he has a hard time with them.' They demand independence, and Ghazi is held in power by British arms. Naturally he has a hard time pleasing his subjects and at the same time saving himself with the English, who put him on the throne. However as long as the Wahabis are not interfered with in their tribal life they will let the government of Bagdad alone."

Will guided the plane onward while Dave sat down in his seat, thinking of the surprising intelligence of this Persian, and wondering just what kind of a contract they had taken on when

## **Just a Friendly Punch** **59**

they agreed to place the Bird of the Occident at his command.

The earth below, with its scattering bands of people, its tent cities, and its herds of sheep, goats and camels proved so interesting that it was not long before a long, winding river leaped up in the distance, and they could see a large city on its banks.

“Bagdad!” Saladin cheered. “The city of caliphs, our present destination. Here is hoping that it may be the end of your journey, and that you have already earned twenty-five thousand dollars.”

“If this is not the end of the journey, where will it end?”

Dave was curious as well as deeply interested.

“I cannot say. You have been paid to convey me by air to any point I wish to go, whether it be by day or night. I will hold you to that bargain. Just at present you may fly over the city and I will point out the spot where I wish to land.”

Will and Dave looked down from their chariot in the sky on the city that had fastened itself in their minds as the land of romance. Connected with this place were the Arabian Nights stories,

and Haroun al Raschid. What they saw below disillusioned them. They were flying low and notwithstanding the fact that the sun had not yet reached the meridian they could imagine little romance in a country so hot.

"Imagine Haroun al Raschid chasing around down there in the middle of the afternoon," Dave blurted. "It is 120 to 130 in the shade, and the shade is already preempted."

"He didn't go around in the afternoon," Will defended, loath to give up his romancing. "He waited until it was night and went around when it was cool."

"Did he go around among the bungalows or down there in that section where the streets look like strings?"

"The bungalows that you point out are located two miles from the ancient city," Saladin explained. "They were erected on the barren desert by the English and Europeans because of the filthy condition of the old city. Officials and their families live in them. They are the last word in scientific heat-resistance, and are fitted up throughout with electric fans and refrigeration. Ice is manufactured at low cost and the electric

juice is furnished cheap. Sanitation has also been provided, and the new Bagdad is sewerred and given gas."

"What is that large estate over toward the left?"

Will queried.

"That is the Alwiye Club on the bank of the river. They have polo, tennis, golf and bathing. Their bathing parades rival the most elaborate of Europe, and that round track you see is an English race course."

"But that great tract of ancient buildings is—"

"Is the City of the Seven Great Smells. It is still one of the dust heaps of the world. Over three hundred thousand people there, and no sewer, no attempt at sanitation, or health protection. The streets are continually crowded with hungry people and starving dogs, which act as scavengers at night and are often dangerous to people who move around unarmed. Smallpox, cholera and sometimes the plague take a heavy toll of human life."

"My, I do not want to catch the plague, or cholera."

"Then be careful where you sleep. Land me at the end of that bridge; leaving New Street to



the left, and stopping in that bunch of trees. You will find a level landing place there.”

“Is that broad street New Street?”

“It is.”

“How in the world did it get there—cut right through the center of things?”

“During the war the Turks found it impossible to battle General Townshend in their location and they cut a way ruthlessly through houses, bazaars, mosques, and things that stood in their way in order to move their heavy guns. When the English captured the place they made that space into the broad thoroughfare you see, and named it New Street.”

The Allenby Bridge bobbed up.

“Is this the bridge you spoke of?”

“Yes. Fly low across the river and drop behind the trees. When you land me do not stop long—just enough for me to get out. Then move on. I want it to appear, when you make your final landing, as if this plane came straight from Teheran and that all the passengers are in the cabin when it lands.”

Will gave Saladin a queer look.

“That looks like dodging the law to me. You

are asking us to make a secret landing for you—fake you to the ground?”

“Exactly. That is one of the things you have been paid to do.”

“I do not like evading the law. You said——”

“I said that I did not ask you to evade the law. I am not. But I will tell you that you disobeyed the law when you left Teheran. You left without checking out. Still, I promise you that you are doing the right thing in landing me as I suggest. The men who are enforcing these laws are the ones who are doing wrong—or rather expect to do wrong.”

“Just your word for it, and you are a stranger to us.”

Saladin made no reply, and Will with a grim mouth skipped behind the row of trees and permitted the wheels of the Bird of the Occident to touch the ground.

“Do not stop the engine. I am on the way.”

Before the plane came to a physical pause Saladin had leaped to the ground, and was running swiftly for the shadow of the trees.

“Where will we meet you?” Will called out, as the plane began to pull ahead.

“Will let you know later. Good bye.”

Will drew the stick back slightly, the plane nosed upward, tipped a row of trees, and skimmed along back over the water on the south side of Allenby Bridge. The bridge was crowded with life, Arabs, Indians, Persians, Turks, and Kurds rubbing against each other on foot and an occasional horseman from the desert with his long trailing robe, or a Turk with his fez headgear. Idling along were women and children, the women with heavy bundles on their heads, and the children lagging behind with their fingers in their mouths.

All stopped to see the strange and wonderful bird shooting like an arrow across the river, just above the water line and barely missing the round guffahs whirling and twisting down stream, bumping the inmates against the walls, or loaded with vegetables, and merchandise from up stream. These boats, cauldron shaped, were made of reeds, and plastered with pitch from the hot springs of Hit where it bubbled out of the ground in the shape of asphaltum.

Just beyond the river the ancient city met them, and they found a level spot to land. Both boys

got out and looked around. They had just enough time to discover that they were near an ancient sheep market, where shepherds from all parts of Arabia gathered to sell their scrubby stock, when a company of policemen came from behind a building and confronted them with drawn guns.

The leader of this company of officers was a big, brawny brown man with a fez covering on his head. He stopped in front of them, and smiled. When he smiled he displayed several open spaces where there should be teeth and his smile had the appearance of a threat.

*"Keif halak?"* (How are you?)

The boys of course did not understand him but when he paused and winked his left eye, which was partly crossed, they imagined that he had cursed them in some vile manner.

*"Taybin?"* (Well?)

This time the man stuck his thumb playfully against Dave's side. It was entirely too friendly a punch to please Dave.

*"El hamd el Allah."* (Praise be Allah.)

Dave grinned good naturedly, and reaching into his pocket he drew out a package of cigarettes. These he handed to the officer. The Arab took

several, bowed politely, and handed back the case. When he struck a match and drew a breath of smoke he gave Dave a kinder glance.

At this moment a man the two boys had not seen came around the airplane.

"The guests that Allah has sent!" the man clucked softly. "*Maa-salaamih.*"

As he spoke he pointed at the officer with the fez headgear. Dave wheeled.

"Bent Nose," he cried in alarm.

On the face of the Persian beggar there flashed a gleam of anger, and he did the remarkable thing of twitching his lop-ear. But his reply was gentle and tempered with exquisite piety.

"Allah akbar! God is God, and Mahomet is His Prophet."

He pointed toward the ancient city. The Arabian officers closed around the two boys and marched them away.

## **Nubians—Servants or Guards?**

**I**T WAS the hour when the vast population of Bagdad was looking toward the noonday rest. The centers of the narrow streets were furnaces with the sun blistering down past the smooth walls of the two-story buildings. Even the coffee houses on the shady side of the street were desolate in appearance, and the hive of humanity was seeking the coolest recesses.

But notwithstanding this there were still many people dodging along on the shady side of the street and beneath the upper storied building where the streets were protected by the extension of the buildings partly over the street.

Alas for Dave and Will Hope! They were marched down the center of the very hottest streets, and the perspiration was pouring out of their faces in streams.

“Land of Romance and Arabian Night Dreams,” murmured Dave plaintively, wiping the sweat from his brow with his handkerchief, which

was already wet. "No wonder that Sindbad, the Sailor, hunted the sea for his stories of miraculous adventure."

"I will agree with you," Will echoed. "Haroun al Raschid was wise to select the night hours for his escapades, and the man who could keep cool and imagine fairy stories in a climate like this must certainly have had a marvelous imagination. He must have worn an ice pack on his head. Do you suppose that there is another place in the wide, wide world that is hotter than this?"

"May not be in this world but if you do not be a good little boy you have been promised something that tastes like this. I am sure that when these people wish to cook an egg they simply place it out in the open where the sun can get a lick at it."

They were marched past many bazaars where were sold all kinds of things, from chickens to Persian rugs, past a long string of women who were making their way to the river to get water in the ancient way, and take it back to their homes on their heads in earthen jars, into a space where they could see a large Mohammedan mosque in the distance; again into narrow streets filled with

## Nubians—Servants or Guards? 69

Turks wearing their fezzes, with Arabs wearing long Bedouin robes and rags for headgear, with women barefaced and bareheaded, and women in the spotted *abaas* that completely masked their features with the horsehair that looked uncomfortable and terribly hot; across the broad New Street, paved and filled with hurrying automobiles; again into the narrow streets; and then on toward an open space in the center of which was a palatial building. When they saw this palace they thought that they would be ushered in with majesty and introduced to the King.

“What is the name of the king of this place?” Dave asked of his brother. “It seems to me that I have heard his name but have forgotten it.”

“You forget everything,” Will rebuked. “The trouble with you is that you are too gable-headed—a lot of wheels are always turning around upstairs. The Sherif, or ruler of Bagdad, is named Ghazi.”

“What is the use of trying to remember anything when you have a brother with a mind like an adding machine or a phonograph record?” Dave snorted. “What do you suppose I take you along with me for?”



Instead of being ushered into the palace with great ceremony they were taken in through a side door. Passing a broad, marble-floored corridor they were escorted into an immense chamber. At the extreme end of this chamber there was a raised flat dais. On the platform there was an ornate bench, bedecked with jewels. Seated on the bench was a small man with a rotund stomach. He wore a rich Arabian robe over a light thin costume that looked to the two lads like pajamas; his head was fully covered with a dark-blue checked handkerchief, folded diagonally, and held in position by a coil of camel hair. His outer cloak was of fine wool and the tunic was of camelhair cloth.

He was smoking his *narghile*—a large water pipe shaped like an elongated vase, with a big bowl and a narrow neck. This pipe, filled with water and tobacco, was on the floor, and a flexible stem extended from the bowl to the man's mouth.

Holding the stem in his mouth with his right hand, he bent his eyes inquiringly on the two American boys.

“Welcome, sirs, to the ancient City of the Caliphs.”

He expelled a cloud of smoke, looked up at the

## Nubians—Servants or Guards? 71

ceiling, elaborately frescoed, and back into the faces of the two lads.

The leader of the policemen bowed low before the man without speaking.

“Only two?”

The beggar, who had followed them all this distance, pushed in front of the boys, and addressed the man on the dais.

“There should be three, your excellency.”

He spoke softly.

“And where is the other one?”

“That is what I wish to find out.”

The man on the dais turned to Will and Dave.

“Who are you?”

He spoke in English and smiled pleasantly. The two lads were slightly reassured by the smile.

“We are Will and Dave Hope,” Will answered, nudging Dave to indicate that he wanted to do the talking. “American flyers.”

“Somewhat indefinite. Why are you flying over Arabia, and into Bagdad?”

“We are loafing along trying to see the world.”

“Naturally you carry papers and passports?”

The query was put politely but both lads saw that if they did not produce passports they would

get into trouble. With one accord they put their hands in their pockets, secured their papers, and handed them to the man. The passports had been indorsed by the American consuls at Shanghai and Teheran and in both cases the two lads had been introduced very favorably. The man examined the passes thoughtfully.

“Flying around the world? Still I do not see why you came by way of Shanghai?”

“We landed there after making a non-stop flight across the Pacific Ocean.”

“Allah be praised! The two American boys who conquered the Pacific Ocean—the two that the whole world is talking about.”

“If the world is talking about us we do not know it,” Will modestly objected, “but we are the two flyers who won the Dallas-Tokio prize.”

The man placed the stem of his pipe on the bench and rose up with grave dignity.

“I am glad to meet two such distinguished flyers.” He sat down again after bowing. “I welcome you to my country. I am Hassan Atejan, grand vizier of Bagdad, confidential adviser of King Ghazi, ruler of Mesopotamia.”

“Then we are at liberty to depart?”

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“I really hope that you will not be in a hurry,” Hassan Atejan protested blandly. “Presently—presently.”

“As I stated, your excellency,” the bent nose beggar inserted, bowing humbly several times, “there should be another. When we left Teheran there was a woman with them. Make them tell where she went.”

The grand vizier frowned as he again faced the two boys.

“I hope that you will be perfectly frank with me. Where is this woman? Who is she?”

Will and Dave exchanged glances. They did not want to tell that the woman was a man and that he had dropped out of the airplane on the outskirts of the city, and yet they did not want to tell a falsehood. The judge saw their indecision and wrinkled his brows.

“This woman—where did she go?”

“A woman came to us at Teheran. She said that she wanted to get to Bagdad in a hurry, and offered to pay us well if we would let her come with us. We accepted her money, and she dropped off before we got here. Who she is, and what she wanted, we do not know.”

“Two nice little boys,” mused the grand vizier. “I see no harm in them. They shall be my guests. Convey them to the guest chamber where they may be bathed and refreshed, and permitted to rest until evening.”

“But our airplane?” Dave burst out. “Thieves may——”

“Your plane will be well cared for. Rest easy on that point.”

The policemen bowed low, and with the bent nose beggar departed. At the door Bent Nose looked back. There was a cold, suspicious grin on his face.

“Go with Allah!” he whispered gently, rubbing his hands together, and shutting one eye slowly.

The next moment he was gone.

Hassan Atejan clapped his hands together several times. Two heavy damask curtains moved aside on the opposite side of the room, and several servants gorgeously arrayed came soft-footing into the great chamber.

“Depart with these two!” commanded the grand vizier. “Entertain them royally. See that they have all things.”

The grand vizier closed his left eye, and lifted

## **Nubians—Servants or Guards? 75**

the stem of his pipe to his mouth. The two boys did not like the action. To them it smacked of a dungeon, or something terribly oriental.

But in this they were mistaken. They were escorted with elaborate ceremony along the long marble-flagged hall, up a flight of stairs, along another marble hall, and into a cool room where several electric fans were purring softly. This chamber was fitted up with Arabian sumptuousness. There were three large divans, covered with expensive draperies and rugs, several handsome silk-covered couches, and four or five deep-bottom chairs. A Nubian servant, black as ebony, came forward with a cool Arabian robe for each boy, and they were permitted to change their dusty, hot air clothing for an attire more comfortable.

When they were seated side by side on one of the large divans two Nubian servants placed themselves behind the divan with large ostrich fans in their hands and moved the fans back and forth. There was little need for this attention. The electric fans cooled the room but they concluded that the Nubian servants were added for style.

“This is what I call oriental luxury,” Dave

cooed gently as he stretched his legs, "and it is a great relief from the hot sun of the narrow street."

"Sabe English?" Will demanded abruptly, turning on the Nubians behind the divan. "If you do bring me some ice water, and ring the bell for a bell boy with an ice cream cone."

The Nubians both smiled, and shook their heads. Then they opened their mouths and pointed at their tongues. Again they shook their heads.

"They are deaf and dumb," Dave exclaimed with a start. "I have read some terrible stories about slaves from Nubia. Do you suppose that these men have been captured in Africa, their tongues removed and their bodies sold into slavery?"

"I am going to see. I didn't get a good look at their mouths."

Will sprang up, and to the surprise of the two servants, pushed their mouths open. The Nubians stared at him for some time in astonishment, and then began to jabber in Arabic.

"Perfectly good tongues," Will said with a sigh of relief, resuming his seat. "Both of them have tongues tied in the middle and going at both ends. Listen to them talking about Allah."

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Dave laughed heartily.

“Let me see your tongue,” Dave ordered, turning to the man behind him. “I can’t think the noise you are making is talk.”

The Nubian, with a frightened look shook his head. Dave stuck out his tongue and wriggled it. The fear on the Nubian’s face increased. He imagined that he ought to also stick out his tongue at this strange guest but was held back by the belief that if he insulted a guest of the great vizier’s this way he would get his head cut off.

“He is all right,” Dave grunted. “Talk out. They will not understand.”

“That reassures me. What do you think of our situation?”

“I think that I am hungry.”

“Try clapping your hands. It seemed to get that gorgeous pipe smoker along quite nicely.”

Dave clapped his hands together vigorously. To his surprise a door at each end of the chamber opened, and four men came in, bowing and scraping. When they stopped in front of their divan Dave worked his mouth as if he were eating and pointed inside as he opened it.

The servants bowed again and ran out of the



chamber. Presently they returned with baskets of grapes, dates, and melons. In their hands they carried silver goblets and a jug of wine.

"That wine looks sparkling," Dave remarked as the servants poured a goblet of the stuff and placed it before him, "but I am for the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment. Bring me some water."

One of the servants understood that he was rejecting the wine and went out and soon returned with some water.

"Classy! I say classy!" Will chuckled with his mouth full of grapes. "Just look at my lily white hands. They were made for this."

The two boys were hungry, the fruit was fresh and sweet, and they made a good meal. When they had finished, careless of the world, and feeling that their airplane would be well cared for, they stretched out on the divans and went to sleep.

When they waked up the afternoon was far spent, and instead of being fanned by two Nubian servants they were covered with light cloths. The two servants however were near at hand.

"They are not servants," Will surmised as he rose up and looked at them. "They have been

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put over us as guards, and the country is so full of corruption and bribery the grand vizier selected guards that could not understand English for fear that we might bribe them.”

To prove his surmise he got up and walked toward the door. It was barred on the outside, and when he turned around he found one of the Nubians near him.

“Just as I thought.” He was very serious. “That royal high-ink-a-dink is going to treat us fine but at the same time he is going to keep a careful eye on our movements. Now why?”

## A Ride Delayed

**T**HE answer to Will's question did not come soon, but at the end of two hours the door of the room opened and a gorgeously costumed individual entered. He stopped before them with a grandiloquent bow.

"His excellency wishes to see you," he stated in broken English, "and has sent me to lead you to the reception room."

With pompous strides the man preceded them and the two Nubian servants followed.

"They stick to us like flies," Will whispered, motioning back at the two Nubians. "If we started to run we would catch something."

"I have an idea that they can run like an Olympic athlete," Dave grumbled, "and that we wouldn't have a chance—not a Chinaman's chance."

They were escorted to a large banquet room. One man was seated at the table. The man was Grand Vizier Hassan Atejan. He rose and greeted them with a grave bow. When they seated

themselves they looked around on an empty table.

"I begin to see your Arabian Romance at last," Dave announced.

"Really." Hassan Atejan smiled. "Where?" Dave grinned.

"May I beg you to excuse me. I was thinking about Sindbad, the Sailor."

"Ah! I appreciate the joke. You contemplate getting drunk on imaginary wine and striking me over the head?"

"I do not think that I would go that far—not with these two Nubian gentlemen nearby. But I have been wondering how you could have such a romantic country with all the heat of your terrible summers."

"Perhaps there is still some romance."

Hassan Atejan clapped his hands. Immediately the chamber thronged with servants with their hands full of sumptuous viands. These they placed on the banquet table. Dave shook his head.

"Not like romance at all. You present me with all the luxuries of a chamber of commerce dinner."

During the banquet the grand vizier entertained them with witty and pleasant conversation. He told them that he had graduated at Oxford,

England, and had visited the United States although he had not stopped in America long. He made himself so interesting that they forgot that he was holding them as prisoners.

After the banquet Hassan Atejan again clapped his hands. This time the servants entered and removed the viands from the table and transformed the marble-floored hall into a dance chamber. Now they were given a view of the terpsichorean artistry of the country. First dancing dervishes entered and whirled and twisted in a religious frenzy; they were followed by Arabian girls, experts in their profession, who presented a dance program exceedingly attractive, the music being furnished by a hidden orchestra.

"I am drifting back to the idea that Romance still lingers here," Will asserted after giving the dancers an encore, "and that you are one of the fabled Caliphs of Bagdad who could turn the world upside down by clapping his hands, and who owned a hundred slaves."

"In some remote places there may still exist human slavery," Hassan Atejan told them, "but not in Arabia unless——"

He stopped for some reason, and gave the two

lads a peculiar glance out of his big black eyes.

“Almost as good as a movie show and a radio program,” Dave declared as the last girl bowed her way out. “And what makes me happy, is that it is not costing anything.”

“All gotten up for your entertainment,” the grand vizier explained. “But speaking of movie and radio programs——”

He clapped his hands again. Instantly a servant ran to a large cabinet, threw back a heavy damask curtain and exposed a large radio set. When the grand vizier bowed his head the servant tuned in on New York, and got a National Broadcasting program.

“Good work for paid servants,” Will complimented.

“Better than the work of slaves, and not so costly,” the grand vizier agreed. “Now that the world is free of slavery it finds that there was never much merit in the debasing of human souls. Perhaps you play chess?”

“Will plays some but I do not know the game,” Dave responded. “It looks slow to me.”

“Chess is the national game of Arabia. It was discovered in this country,” Hassan Atejan de-

clared proudly. "We say that we possess the best chess players in the world."

"That being the case I could hardly interest you," Will protested. "But if you wish a game——"

"Of course a game of chess without a wager is not chess," smiled Hassan Atejan. "What will you wager?"

Will turned his pockets wrong side out, and waved them.

"My pocketbook was left in the Bird of the Occident."

"By the way," Dave edged in, "what has happened to our plane? We are getting uneasy about it. By this time your fellow citizens may have torn it into a thousand pieces."

"It has been well cared for. I promised this yesterday. But mentioning your plane gives me an idea. I will wager a gold jewel against a ride in your plane. I have no servants who can fly an airship, and I would like to ride in one."

Will shook his head. "We do not gamble."

"Yet you bet your life against twenty-five thousand American dollars that you could fly across the Pacific Ocean."

"I am not so squeamish as Will," Dave affirmed. "If you win you get a ride in our plane, and I will fly it for you."

"And if you win I give you a jeweled bracelet watch, and stay on the ground?"

"No. If I win you will ride anyway, and keep your wrist watch."

Hassan Atejan laughed pleasantly.

"In the language of some of your American magazines I would not call that a square deal. I win anyway the game turns out. Now I will put the proposition differently: If you win I will give you the watch and ride with you. If you lose I will do the same thing."

"Fair enough."

Dave joined in the laugh.

"But you promise *no stunts*. I heard something about a beggar friend of mine who rode with you, and discovered that there were pockets in the air. I do not wish to hit those pockets."

"There will be no pockets," Dave acquiesced.

At this time a heavy curtain parted and a small Arabian girl dressed in her night robe stuck her head into the chamber timidly.

"My Lord, Sheikh Hassan Atejan, come and



avaunt the lion, the big black genii and the terrible dragon.”

“Where is your mother?” the sheikh demanded sharply.

“She has gone to call on your other three wives, and I—am—afraid—of—the—dark.”

“So she leaves you to sleep in the dark. I have a mind to call in these two American boys as witnesses, and tell her to depart—that I divorce her.”

“But she is your oldest and best wife,” objected the child, “and she is my mother.”

“I heard a barber talking about getting a divorce that way in Teheran. Can one get a divorce that easy in Bagdad?”

“W-w-well, yes. That is the Arabian way, but I really have no intention of divorcing the mother of this child. She is a good woman, intelligent, educated, refined. There is no better. Excuse me for a moment. I will tell the child the story of Cinderella and get her mind off of the fearful genii her mother told her about when she put her to bed.”

The grand vizier departed, and was gone ten minutes.

“The child is asleep,” he announced on his return. “She is particular, and will not sleep unless her mother or father tell her stories.”

Neither of the lads replied to this but both formed the conclusion that there was considerable “book” talk about the way the Arabs treated their women and children. Patently this child was not afraid of her father, and her father was as kind to her as an American would have been. In fact, few American fathers would have permitted a child to interrupt them when entertaining distinguished guests.

“Now for the game of chess.”

Hassan Atejan seated himself. Will had never before seen such costly chessmen, and such a magnificent chessboard. The men were made of silver and gold and the board was of the finest hardwood, and inlaid with squares of pearl and ebony. During the game not a word was spoken.

Will proved that he was a good chess player, and he honestly tried to win. The grand vizier saw this, and had to fight hard. When he finally won the game it put him in good humor.

“I like you,” he commented gently. “You are two nice lads, and in order that you may remem-

ber this game I am going to present you the board and the chessmen."

"But," Will hesitatingly protested, "it cost a lot, and I do not wish to rob you of so costly a thing. I am sure that if I have contributed to your pleasure that is enough."

The grand vizier patted him kindly on the shoulder, and clapped his hands.

"Now run along and get some sleep. That chessboard will be in your plane when you get to it."

Will laughed, and put his hand into his inside coat pocket, drew out a pen and pencil combination and handed it to Hassan Atejan.

"That is the only keepsake I have to offer you."

The grand vizier took the pencil solemnly.

"Perhaps that may do until we get back to the Bird of the Occident tomorrow," Will added. "Then I may be able to find something of more value."

"I consider this valuable. First it is a courteous gift; second the pencil is a hollow tube with slender leads. We have no such pencils in Arabia, and I may make a fortune manufacturing them and placing them on our local market."

"I guess fortunes are being made out of them in America," Will surmised.

"All that being settled nicely," Hassan Atejan assented briskly, "you may now tell me the name and business of that passenger you brought to Bagdad?"

The question came so unexpectedly that Will found that he had no ready response. All he could do was to shake his head. The grand vizier frowned, and clapped his hands. Immediately servants came running into the chamber.

"Take them back to their apartment," commanded Hassan Atejan, "and see that they want for nothing."

They expected Hassan Atejan to appear the next day and say that he was ready for the air ride. He did not come—that day, or the next, or the next.

"Nothing to do but play checkers through these window bars with our noses," grumbled Dave, "and yet I was willing to swear by our Arabian ruler."

"We are not going to get out of here," Will responded gloomily, "until we tell him who that woman was, and what Saladin was doing."

“And—we—do—not—know. We told him this and he would not believe us.”

“When you look at it from that beggar’s standpoint our story sounds fishy, and that is the light he has on our action.”

“Oh, well, let’s take it easy.”

## **“My Head Fits As It Is”**

**I**T WAS the morning of the fourth day after the banquet that they were awakened bright and early by an obsequious servant who spoke broken English.

“Arise, arise, most noble sirs, my master awaits thee.”

Hurrying into their flying apparel they followed the servant out of the chamber. He led them across the city to the Allenby Bridge, and down the river to a house that lay back from the stream with a broad space of pavement between it and the river.

In front of this house they found the Bird of the Occident. Standing with one hand on the left wing was Hassan Atejan.

“I suppose that you were beginning to think that I had forgotten you,” he greeted amiably. “Not at all. For reasons of state I discovered that I could not take the ride until today. May I hope for your pardon?”

The boys were grouchy. They had been kept in a palatial prison for four days, and they had a right to be fussy. But Hassan Atejan was so courteous and smiling that there was nothing else to do but meet him graciously.

“You are pardoned all right,” Dave returned truthfully, “but I am asking you to take a good look at my nose.”

“It seems all right to me,” the great man answered thoughtfully.

“May look all right to you but it feels as red as a beet to me. I got that grinding it against the bars of that window.”

“Too bad. I shall order my servants to remove the window, and plaster up the walls.”

So they were not to be freed after giving the grand vizier a ride. Dave looked at Will. Will shook his head decidedly. He understood that Dave wanted to treat the grand vizier to a few stunts just for meanness, and he thought that it wouldn't do. They had given their word that the ride should be smooth sailing.

The three entered the cabin of the Bird of the Occident, and the grand vizier seated himself in the control seat by the side of Dave, who

appointed himself aviator for the trip. The plane left the ground so quickly and easily that Hassan Atejan was in the air before he realized it.

But when he looked down and saw the City of Bagdad suddenly grow small and the great Tigris River assume the appearance of a small stream his face went white.

"I—I—would rather be a little nearer the ground," he gasped.

"Just as you say," Dave answered indifferently.

And the next second Hassan Atejan felt his breath going as the Bird of the Occident darted downward like a hawk after its prey. Before he could recover his mental equilibrium Dave had leveled out and was skimming along like a bird about a thousand feet over the surface of the earth.

For several moments they flew along in silence. Finally Will stepped up on the step to a spot where he could look over Dave's shoulder, and waved his hand toward the earth.

"The land of romance no longer," he exclaimed. "War and waste, desolation and ruin except for a short stretch of land adjacent to the



river. Your country seems to be waiting for more wars. There are miles and miles of fields that were once cultivated that are now barren stretches of desert; few signs of life out there (he waved eastward) disturb the serenity of nature."

"Too true," the Arab replied slowly. "Between the two great rivers, beyond the rivers on each side, are empty deserts. To bring them into cultivation will cost millions and millions of dollars. Today there is much want and poverty among our people; with that country under irrigation and developed by English money, wealth and happiness would slip into all our Arabian homes, and the population could increase twenty fold. That is why I wished to take this sky ride. I want to see it as Allah sees it."

"It seems to me," Dave ventured, "that your people are rather shiftless."

"Political policy." There was a sarcastic sneer in the Arab's voice. "They are scattered far and wide; they live by herding sheep, goats and cattle, in tents that are easy to move. Thus they are constantly prepared for war. Sometimes it is easier to move than fight. They do not even seek a garden among the desert tribes. However, since

England established its mandate over the land and brought about a condition of safety some cultivation has sprung up along the banks of the two rivers.”

He pointed down at a bit of ancient machinery stuck into the bank of the Tigris River, and extending out over the water. To Dave and Will it looked like a wooden trough, inclined at an angle of ninety degrees, and fastened at the top with ropes. In the center of the trough there was an enormous wooden pulley, six feet in diameter, and over this pulley stretched two ropes. One of the ropes was attached to an ox, and the other to a large canvas waterbag that was let down into the water and drawn up out of the water as the ox moved. Another rope was tied to a horse's tail. When the water got to the top of the trough the horse moved up and pulled the rope until it tilted the waterbag and hurled the water into the wooden trough. Along the trough it trickled in a slender stream to an irrigation ditch.

“Compare that with the proposed Metropolitan Water Aqueduct from Boulder City to Los Angeles, will you!” Will laughed. “No wonder the crops look scant.”

The grand vizier frowned but did not speak.

"How many acres will that kind of a system irrigate?" Dave queried.

"Four or five if the man who drives the ox and the horse works all day."

"With a river like that," Will added, "in California we would irrigate a million or more acres of land."

"We are poor," Hassan Atejan sighed, "but that simple construction is not our best. When we get to the Euphrates I hope to show you something better."

From Bagdad on the Tigris to Ramadi on the Euphrates, usually a ride of half a day, the Bird of the Occident sped in an hour. The first thing that caught the eyes of the two lads was the pontoon bridge at Feludja. This was a flimsy structure of boards placed on boats, which jerked and swayed with the current of the stream.

"That is the way we crossed the Tigris at Bagdad until the English built the Allenby Bridge," Hassan Atejan explained. "It is crude, but we managed to get across—those who did not cross in the round boats that you see coming down stream laden with fruits and vegetables."

"And I imagine that you did not go from one river to the other quite so quickly," Will smiled.

"True. The airplane is marvelous. I must have one. What will you take for this one? I will give you a fortune for it."

"It is not for sale," Dave answered dryly. "It is a part of Will and Dave Hope. Without it we would be only a half of a Hope family."

They turned up the broad Euphrates, and sailed majestically onward.

"There are some of our pretentious water wheels," Hassan Atejan indicated with his forefinger. "They move with the current, and furnish a constant supply of irrigation water."

The point he indicated was an island mid-stream, with a pontoon bridge connecting it with the west bank of the Euphrates. It was covered with walled-in gardens, and surrounded by irrigation pumps. These pumps consisted of an endless chain of buckets that turned on a large wooden cog-wheel. The wheel was moved by a blind ox or mule which walked around in a circle. Dave and Will had seen many similar horse-power motors in America.

The airplane flashed by the island quickly,

Dave dropping down to within five hundred feet of the river.

"I still do not think much of your irrigation," Will grunted. "A string of boys and girls could dip water almost that fast."

"How about those rock aqueducts with their large water wheels?"

As the grand vizier asked this question they were passing an area where both banks of the river were lined with groaning automatic irrigation wheels. They stood between stone piers thirty-five feet high. Attached to the wheels were buckets that dipped in the water as the wheel turned, filled and were carried up to a point where they turned and deposited the water in a stone aqueduct. Here the water formed a continuous flow along the aqueduct. The great wheels were turned slowly by the current of the river. From the aqueduct, ditches had been dug into the cultivated fields adjacent, and the water was flooded over the vegetation.

There were many of these irrigation wheels on both sides of the river, and they had turned the barren desert into green fields for a distance of a mile or so beyond the river on each side.

"Not so bad," both boys exclaimed in unison. "They are cheap and permanent. In California the irrigators have to bore 400 feet for water and place deep well pumps down in the earth to pump the water. Compared with your scheme the cost would be prohibitive here."

Up and across, from river to river, first on the Tigris and then on the Euphrates, the Bird of the Occident winged its flight over a country of endless changes. First from Bagdad to Ramadi, from Ramadi to Hit, frequently getting peeps at the Berlin-Bagdad railroad which is and which is not—in other words partly built—over the pit fields of Hit, where the asphaltum comes out of the ground in hot springs, and then across to Mosul—the oil field of Asia. Here they saw the largest pontoon bridge that spans the Tigris. It was the only bridge at Mosul. The oil fields are at present restricted but the stratum extends from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. Englishmen, Turks, Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Hindoos, and Russians labor around Mosul.

In the midst of the new oil fields is Kirkuk. They flew over this place.

"There," Hassan Atejan pointed at a small

amphitheater bursting forth sulphurous flames from the earth, "is the site of your Bible 'fiery furnace.' Into that lambent blaze King Nebuchadnezzar threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego."

For a moment the two boys stared at this small terrific flame of heat coming out of the earth in astonishment.

"I—I—thought that King Nebuchadnezzar had a furnace made and the fire increased many times when he threw them in," Dave protested in disbelief. "That place is simply a fire coming out of the earth."

"It is hot enough for all purposes," the grand vizier smiled sneeringly. "It is gas and oil on fire, and few people can go near it. Be that as it may it is now known as the Fiery Furnace."

"The workmen seem to be laying a pipe line near it," Will said slowly. "What for?"

"They are preparing to carry oil to the Mediterranean coast through a pipe."

They turned south from the main oil field passing over Arabs who tilled the ground with the primitive implements used during the time of Christ; then again on to the desert.

They came to the ruins of Ctesiphon, and made a landing to visit the home of the Parthian kings. They found the palace in a state of good preservation, and examined the famous vaulted hall. They were both interested to discover that the palace was made of brick, without moldings, and was 115 feet high. Hassan Atejan, who was deeply learned in ancient civilization lore, informed them that the palace was a splendid remnant of Sassanian architecture.

From Ctesiphon they flew to the ruins of Babylon. Here they saw the remains of the ancient hanging gardens, and the Istharr Gate, and were surprised to ascertain that the ancient Babylon covered an area larger than the City of New York.

Again they lifted into the air. Night was coming and they had not seen one-third of Mesopotamia.

"Suppose we make another day of it," Hassan Atejan proposed. "Let us spend the night down there. It will be an experience that you can take back to America."

They were flying over a long stretch of desert, far from the great river, and the grand vizier



pointed toward the earth at a well where a dozen or more Arabian women were getting water. They drew it from the well with a canvas bucket, filled their jars, placed the jars on their heads, and marched in a single-file-line to a small Bedouin camp that was spread out in scrawling shape on the burning sand. The only things to protect the Bedouins from the terrific heat of the meridian sun were the ragged, dirty tent tops. The two boys could see from their elevation that the camp was full of lazy men and dirty children. Behind the camp a herd of sheep and some camels grazed on the scrub growth of a small hill.

“Not promising,” Will observed dryly. “Some of those Arabs look as if they might steal our false teeth.”

“Ideal Arabia,” Hassan replied under his breath. “We need sanitation, health measures, deserts reclaimed. As for those men stealing from you, I do not think so. They might cut your throat but they are fanatical Mohammedans. They belong to the Wahabi Tribe. They do not smoke, they do not drink wine, they are faithful to their wives—and (in a still lower voice) they want to redeem Arabia, make it a great empire

stretching from the east border line of Persia across Arabia into Africa, and across Africa along the old lines of Islam power."

"There are some trees down there," Will pointed out, "and I am in favor of keeping that line of trees between us and that camp."

"Just as you say," Hassan Atejan agreed.

Dave, who was in the control seat, slowed down the gas, and guided the Bird of the Occident to an easy landing. While they carried ample supplies he thought that it would not be a bad idea to get some of the fresh water.

Hassan Atejan got out, and walked toward the well, which was hidden by the line of trees. At the well he stopped and began to talk to the women. They listened to him for several moments, discovered his identity, and ran hurriedly away.

It happened that Will and Dave remained with the airplane, and Dave was looking at the machinery while Will began to rummage in the fuselage for food and camping equipment. While they were thus engaged they became cognizant of the fact that a body of horsemen had approached the well, stopped for a few moments,

and had then disappeared in a gallop toward the southwest.

Stepping toward the door Will looked out. He saw the dust but was not interested and turned again to getting the lunch ready. Presently the two lads thought that they would call the grand vizier. From the air they had taken cognizance of the location of the well, and had put two hundred yards or more between it and their landing place.

Without thinking of danger or trouble they walked this distance. When they got to the well the women had gone, and Hassan Atejan was not to be seen. The jars that the women carried were lying on the ground, some of them broken as if they had been suddenly dropped.

This gave the two lads some uneasiness, and they ran beyond the fringe of trees around the well and looked out at the desert. In the distance they saw ten riders. They were galloping furiously out on to the desert.

"Bedouins," Will exclaimed. "Perhaps bandits. I have heard that many of the Arabs are too lazy to work, and live by robbing caravans and taking toll on the outskirts of the settlements.

But they do not explain the disappearance of our Arab friend."

They looked toward the tent camp of Arabs. Three women were baking bread on open coals in front of one of the tents, and four small Arab boys were sitting on a wooden frame. They were grinning broadly at the two flyers but did not seem to be interested in the airplane.

Dave, followed by his brother, walked across the open space to the camp. The boys and the women were dirtier than he had believed it possible for human beings to be, and there was a bad smell about the place although it was on the open desert. But the two American lads did not pay any attention to the smell.

Dave went up to the three boys and chucked the center one under the chin. He had a ragged, once white, handkerchief wrapped around his head in Bedouin fashion; the lad by his side wore a fez headgear.

"Where did the man go?"

Dave was careful not to say grand vizier. He feared that this might bring trouble to the official.

The four Arab lads smiled with expansive mouths. But they made no reply.

"No sabe English," Will ventured. "How can we let them know that we are looking for a certain man?"

Dave drew himself erect, puffed out his stomach as far as he could to give himself an obese appearance, circled his head to show an Arabian headgear, pulled his fingers down the front of his shirt and looped his forefinger and thumb to indicate a large button, tapped his shoulders to demonstrate shoulder decorations, and then whirled his hands around and tossed his palms outward.

"My, you are turning yourself inside out," Will laughed. "They will think that you are a Chinese mandarin."

But the boy understood. In fact he knew from the start what they wanted.

He rose to his feet, pointed at the horsemen disappearing on the desert, put his hands crossed behind his back, and walked with his head hanging dejectedly. Then he caught the lad with the fez headgear around the waist, lifted him up, and again pointed at the riders on the desert.

"There is not a doubt about it," Will declared emphatically. "Those men have made Hassan Atejan a prisoner, and are carrying him away

on the desert. I would say that these desert crooks were in this camp; they saw us land, and thinking that Hassan Atejan was a man of importance they kidnaped him and expect to hold him for a ransom."

"My idea also. What are we going to do about it?"

Will shuffled the ground with his foot in a troubled way.

"He is the king's counselor. If we go back without him the king may have our heads chopped off."

"Not so good. My head fits as it is." Dave gazed long and anxiously at the speck of dust that was getting fainter and fainter. "We must do something."

"True—but what?"

## Planning an Escape

**T**HE two boys went back to their airplane in a shock but when they saw the Bird of the Occident both exclaimed with one thought:

“How lucky they did not see the airplane, or did not think to cripple it.”

“They probably saw it in the air,” Will reasoned, “but did not know that it landed here. With it we can follow them and seek an opportunity to free Hassan Atejan.”

“If they are holding him for a ransom,” Dave suggested hopefully, “they will not kill him.”

They were not in a hurry to take to the air. If the horsemen stopped anywhere near they would have to stop on the desert, as they could not ride across the arid region during the night, and they could easily overtake them.

Arguing to themselves in this manner they delayed long enough to eat, and fill up their water-bags with fresh water from the well. The well was a deep hole in the ground, plastered up with pitch and mud but the water was pure and sweet.

After eating and getting the water they desired they felt in better spirits, and entered the airplane with the determination to rescue the grand vizier or stay out of Bagdad.

"If that grand vizier is held for ransom, and we are not able to rescue him we have got to get out of this country quick," Dave advised. "But notwithstanding our own personal reasons for saving him I want to do him a good turn."

"Even if he still holds you as a prisoner?"

This remark sobered Dave's enthusiasm for a moment, and then he replied:

"If we stick to our promise to Saladin we have got to go back to Bagdad, and we cannot take the chance without taking the grand vizier with us."

The sun was down when they finally lifted the Bird of the Occident into the air, and started in pursuit of the kidnapers. At first they could not see them, and this gave them considerable uneasiness.

"We should have kept them in view," Will be-moaned. "They may have gone west, north, south. I did not think it possible that they could vanish so quickly."

"Perhaps they are hiding." Will searched the



terrain with his field glasses. "But I cannot see a hiding place for ten or twelve horsemen. They have simply traveled so fast that they have gone beyond our view."

For several moments Dave, who was at the controls, permitted the plane to fly due west. This was the direction in which the riders disappeared. But they did not catch up with them. With a snort of vexation he began to whiz around in an enormous circle. Still he did not see them. Finally he directed a straight course south and gave the engine all the gas it would take.

Flashing along at the full speed of the plane they soon covered a distance of fifty miles. By this time the shadows of night lay deep on the face of the earth, and both lads began to fear that after all they would miss their prey.

Again Dave tried a wide circling movement. He was still circling when the moon burst up from behind the eastern horizon. It lighted the earth for miles around, and in the distance toward the south they discovered a speck of dust. Will turned his binoculars on the dust.

"I see a company of horsemen," he announced

## Planning an Escape

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excitedly, "but it doesn't seem possible that they could have come this far in this time."

Dave directed the Bird of the Occident on a bee line toward the dust.

"Keep your glasses on them," he insisted. "If it is our men we do not want to alarm them by going too close."

Will watched for several moments, and then breathed a deep sigh of joy.

"They are the men we are after," he said. "I know because they have a prisoner with them—a man tied to a horse which another man is leading."

Dave made no attempt to land. He was too smart for that. He did not even fly near the horsemen. On the contrary he loafed along in a wide circle that just kept the men in view and yet kept the airplane so far away from them that they could not get the idea that he was watching them.

The kidnapers continued straight south at a breakneck speed. They were now far west of the Euphrates, and it seemed to the two flyers as if they were being led toward the great Syrian Desert. They passed many ancient ruins, deserted orchards and desolated lands that had once been fields; occasionally in the distance could be seen a

Bedouin camp, or a herd of sheep or cattle drifting toward distant hills. But the riders fought shy of these camps and people.

"They are not seeking the mountains," Will mused aloud, "and they flee from other Bedouins. That means that they are crooked, but they are bound to stop soon. Their horses are fagging out."

But the riders did not stop. On and on, and on into the night, urging their horses hard, one man leading the prisoner's horse and another riding behind and whipping it forward.

The moon came up to the middle of the sky, and still the men rode onward.

"Perhaps," Will urged, "if we return to Bagdad and inform the king that these kidnapers came this way he will send out a lot of soldiers to catch them."

"I am not going to take any chances with these brown men," Dave objected. "I didn't like the way that Bent Nose person looked at me when I was arrested. I am going to follow these men until they stop for the night."

He slipped nearer the riders. It could be readily discovered that the Bedouins did not know that they were being pursued. They were going on a

long journey and wanted to put distance between them and the power of Feisal.

Finally Dave began to think of gas. He had left Bagdad without looking at his tanks, depending upon Hassan Atejan to have them filled. What if the vizier had neglected this important matter? Already they had traveled an entire day. Now they were jumping into the night.

"Suppose our gas gives out?" he called to Will.

"I have been thinking about that but we cannot help it if it does. Keep going."

It was two o'clock when Will looked far ahead and saw the riders come to a halt on the desert.

"I should think that their horses would be thirsty by this time," Dave criticized, "and there is no water in this neighborhood—just a bed of sand."

"Except that big mound on the west. Circle that and let us see what it looks like. They are certainly going to camp for the night. You can tell that by their actions, and now we can investigate with the certainty that they will be here when we come back."

Dave circled the hill. It was a big mound in the desert a mile or more in diameter.

"I'll say that is some old historic city buried in the desert sand," Will decided. "The top is pure sand, blown up by the sand storms."

"And here comes one of their old sand storms now."

Dave pointed to the northeast. The sky was red, and a light wind was beginning to fan their plane.

"Loaf along the west side of that mound and land," Will suggested. "The plane will be protected from the sandstorm and our enemies will not think of being watched during a simoon."

Dave landed close into the mound. Hardly had the plane come to a rest when the moon above them was blotted out, and over their heads howled a wind full of blistering particles of sand and dirt.

"Easy enough to see now how a deserted city could be covered with sand in this region," Dave pointed out. "Ten or twenty years would do it."

"Hardly twenty years. Say a hundred years."

"Suppose you stay here and watch the airplane, Will. I am going to cross over that mound and see if I cannot creep up on that bunch of riders. Maybe I can get an opportunity to free Hassan Atejan."

"You stay and let me go."

"No, my dear Gaston. I thought of it first. You hang around and if there comes up any danger go up into the air, and if I do not get back by morning look me up. It will be hard to find me tonight, and it is possible that I may have to keep up my watch all night."

Before attempting to climb the hill Dave stopped and began a mental calculation. When passing over the mound he was particular to note the location of the Bedouin camp; now he was thinking of the direction he should take to get to it.

In many respects Dave was like Colonel Lindbergh. He was gifted with natural orientation, and he started out on a direct course. The mound proved to be over a mile across. In many places there were dunes and evidences of ancient hand-work that protruded from the sand. Often he stumbled over these, and he found it hard work to surmount the sand dunes.

Finally he came to the edge of the mound and looked over. He had made a very accurate mental calculation. The Bedouins, feeling no alarm, had built fires and had camped close to the mound

where they were to some extent protected from the sand storm. Dave when he peeped over the edge of the eminence looked down into their camp.

They were scattered around the camp fire. Many of them were already asleep; others were dozing with their feet toward the fire and their long cloaks wrapped over their heads.

Hassan Atejan sat in the center of a circle of men talking to the leader of the Bedouins. They were talking in Arabic but while Dave did not understand the language he could see that the conversation was exciting. He had expected to find the vizier bound hand and foot but the leader of the Bedouins seemed to be treating him with kingly courtesy, and had permitted him his personal liberty, although he was closely guarded by armed men.

"Pshaw!" Dave soliloquized fussily. "I wish they would talk in good old United States. I would like to know what they are talking about."

As if in answer to his wish Hassan Atejan spoke in English.

"You are insane, Es-Daud," the grand vizier exclaimed fiercely. "You are now getting \$400,000 a year from the English to help keep the

peace. You had better be satisfied with that, and let your people think that the English are paying your tribute."

"Like you," sneered the Bedouin leader, "I speak in the hated tongue to disguise my remarks. It will be easy if Abdullah and Hussein join with Ghazi, and lend me their support."

"Idle talk, Es-Daud; idle talk."

"It is not idle talk. The Wahabi are not ignorant savages as the English believe. True they are nomads but they are great fighters. Their leaders are educated, eloquent, able; and there are no criminals among them."

"I admit that your men are honest, truthful, sober, and your women loyal, and that you shun evil—even the use of tobacco. But you are leading them to destruction in giving them this advice."

"I say no! Let Hussein, Abdullah and Ghazi combine with us, and we will run the vile foreigners out of Arabia, and lay the foundations of another mighty Moslem empire greater than ever was known."

"An idle dream. Arabia will be blotted out—India pushed into the Ocean."



"Then you will not join us?"

"I cannot see it. Your plan means a nation of ignorant peasants; England is here with vast sums of money to develop our lands, reclaim our deserts, give food and happiness to our people. The scales are on the side of England. It is best for our country."

"Then we will go on without you. With your advice ding donging in his ear Ghazi will go against us. Without you he still may go our way. If you stay with him and battle our ideas he will not change. I ask you again to join us."

Hassan Atejan shook his head vigorously.

"I cannot see it."

"Then you will never again see Bagdad. For the sake of Arabia your bones will bleach by this mound. I give you until tomorrow's sunrise."

The Bedouin chieftain stood up, got a blanket, placed it on the sand, and clapped his hands. The two armed riders who were guarding Hassan Atejan rose up and saluted.

"Bind him, and place him on that blanket. He has until tomorrow's sun to change his mind."

When Hassan Atejan was bound the three turned away, wrapped their cloaks around their

heads, and nonchalantly fell asleep. They were not afraid that their prisoner would escape in this sand storm, or break the cords that bound him.

Dave waited and watched, carefully surveying the camp. When the Bedouin chieftain placed the blanket on the ground for the vizier he rolled it to one side, leaving the vizier's body covered but his head out in the open air. Fortunately he rolled the body beyond the sleeping riders. Dave noted this with bated breath.

He would wait until the Bedouin camp was sound asleep, and then, he thought, he would slip down the incline, cut the cords and try to accomplish the escape of the bound prisoner.

## Threat of a Knife

**I**T WAS a long wait, a breathless expectation of danger ahead. Finally the Bedouin camp seemed to be buried in a deep slumber, all except Hassan Atejan.

The grand vizier of Sherif Ghazi was revolving a life and death matter in his mind.

Would it be wise to hold out against Es-Daud? He could save his life by speaking. He knew that the Wahabi shiekh was a determined, hard fighting man. Behind him were three hundred other Bedouin chiefs with 300,000 fighting men, ready to go to war at a second's warning. And they were fanatical warriors. Es-Daud patently believed that he was doing the work of Allah in trying to run the infidels out of Arabia and seize Jerusalem. That would be a fine deed if it could be accomplished.

Hassan Atejan also had a secret hope of Mohammed again being supreme in Jerusalem. He didn't like the way the Jews crowded the Arabs away from the Wailing Wall in that city. He

thought that if the Jews were allowed to go on with their Zion movement they would finally cover Mesopotamia, and spread their obnoxious religion everywhere.

And he certainly had the ear of Ghazi, the Bagdad ruler. If he advised Ghazi to go into a revolution against England, and Ghazi was backed up by his uncle and grandfather——

“*Shaitan!*” he groaned. “It is impossible. It is all from the Evil One. Arabia would be put back several hundred years, and whipped into a death heap with bombs and airplanes by the English. It is a great dream but full of bloody war. I will not agree to it.”

Naturally Dave did not understand the thoughts of the prisoner. His blood was running cold at the belief that if he did not accomplish his escape that he would be killed at the rising of the sun.

Drawing from his pocket a keen jack knife, Dave held it in his hand, and began to silently crawl down the hill. His steps were fraught with danger. The least false move, the rolling of a pebble that would dash down into the face of the Bedouin shiekh, and he would be captured and

Hassan Atejan killed. Yet with fixed lips and a white, scared face he moved onward.

He was at the foot of the incline; he had only ten feet to crawl to reach the prisoner. Out on the desert a horse neighed; near the lad a Bedouin warrior grunted and half lifted his body.

If he was fully aroused and looked toward Hassan Atejan he could not miss seeing the American boy.

But he was sleepy, he felt safe on the vast desert, far from human eyes, and he dropped back to sleep.

Again Dave waited silently, holding his breath. Then he moved forward, thrust out his hand and placed his fingers on the vizier's lips.

"Sh—h! Not a sound. This is Dave."

The vizier, who was very wide awake, heard and understood. He answered with a slight nod of his head. Dave seized the blanket and threw it off of the prisoner; then with three swift strokes he cut the cords around the man's wrists and feet.

"Wriggle away quietly," he whispered. "Up the hill. Once on top of the hill we will run for it. By the time they discover us we will have a good start."

Dave drew back and slipped to his feet. The vizier followed noiselessly, courageously. The ascent of the hill was far more laborious than the descent and they had to move slowly. At first one step with an anxious heart; then two steps; then three. Finally the top of the hill was near at hand and they began to breathe more freely.

But just as safety seemed at hand Hassan Atejan, who was in the rear, dislodged a pebble. It rattled loudly down the hill, and landed in the face of a Bedouin who at that second threw off the wrap from around his head.

He jumped up with a loud howl.

“Run for it!” Dave encouraged. “Straight over the top of the mound and follow your nose. Put every ounce of strength in the race to the top so that we may get over before they see us.”

Suiting his actions to his words Dave darted up the hill. Immediately behind him came the Arab.

But they were not to get away easily. The Bedouin shiekh heard the shout of his warrior and sprang to his feet and cast an eagle glance around him. Instantly he discovered that the prisoner was gone, and his eyes seemed to naturally seek the summit of the mound.

There he saw two figures silhouetted in the sky.

The next second he was speeding recklessly toward the top of the mound followed by his howling comrades.

Like two frightened deer Dave and Hassan Atejan reached the summit of the hill and sped away. Now they were fortunate. They had almost reached the top when the Bedouin camp was aroused, and were now running on level ground, although occasionally stumbling over an obstruction buried in the sand. The Bedouins had hard work climbing the hill. This gave the two fugitives a good start, and by the time their pursuers got to the top of the eminence they were barely distinguishable in the distance.

The Bedouins had made a great mistake. They had put aside their arms when they camped, and now they had to catch the prisoners by running. Nature also favored the fugitives. The moon had passed behind the dust storm in the west, and the light was dim. Even if the Arabs had guns they could not have aimed correctly.

Hence it developed into a marathon, or a sprint.

At school Dave had acquired a reputation as a mile runner. But this was the fastest mile he had

ever made. There was not a split second in which he could catch his breath. Often he would turn his head to see if Hassan Atejan was still in the running. To his astonishment the fat Arab was going strong but could not pass him.

Behind them were several fast Bedouins. They were not trained runners but they were desert bred, strong and hardy, and they were running easily, steadily.

At first Dave and the vizier gained but gradually they began to lose ground.

"I had no idea that this mound was so large," Dave gasped. "From the air it looked like a little bump on the earth. When we landed it was still small. Now it is bigger than a flight around the world in the Bird of the Occident."

Hassan Atejan made no response. He was panting heavily, and looking around anxiously for a place to hide.

There was no hiding place—just level sands with occasional sand dunes. The vizier now knew that the two boys had followed him with their airplane but he had no idea where the plane was located. All he could do was to try to keep up with the fleet-footed American lad.



“Glory be! There is the end of the rush. Just another spurt or two, and then down the hill.”

Dave had marked his course well, and now he came out on a spot where he could look down and see the airplane. Hassan Atejan stumbled, and gasped out something in Arabic. Dave half turned, saw that he was falling, and grabbed his arm. The act enabled the vizier to make another spurt.

With a desperate energy both started down the hill. When they looked back they saw one of the Arabs running easily, and rapidly drawing near.

Dave had thoughtfully left the door of the airplane open, and had cautioned Will to see that it remained opened. Now he spurted for the open door. Behind him came Hassan Atejan. Will heard them coming and stepped to the door of the cabin.

“Get the engine going!” Dave shouted.

Will ran into the control room and pressed the starter. The engine whirled with a loud purring sound. Fortunately it had not had time to cool, and the gas caught immediately.

Dave got to the plane and leaped into the open door. Hassan Atejan followed and stumbled;

Dave extended his hand and jerked the Arab inside. At once the vizier attempted to close the door.

He was slow. The Bedouin immediately behind him ran up, thrust his hand through the open door and caught the cowling with both hands.

At this second Will pulled the stick slowly, and gave the plane more gas. It taxied and leaped into the air, dragging the Bedouin with it. The Arab looked down, saw the earth receding like a rocket, and sent up just one shout of terror.

Then he closed his mouth, and tried to pull himself into the fuselage.

Dave, who had stepped into the control room to see if Will was acting properly, heard the shout, and turned back into the cabin. He paused on the last step of the stair leading to the control room, and looked horrified at the open door of the plane.

At the moment they were three hundred feet in the air, and Hassan Atejan was drawing a long, keen knife from his sash, and leaning over to cut the fingers of the man clinging to the cowling.

“No!” Dave thundered, jumping forward and pushing the vizier forcibly aside. “If you stick his hand with that knife he will fall to his death.”

"I know it," Hassan Atejan replied nonchalantly. "I intend that he shall fall."

"I say NO!"

Dave stooped down and grabbed the wrist of the man clinging to the cowling for dear life. The man was too heavy for him to pull up. All he could do was to stop his fall.

"Grab a hand!" he commanded sharply. "He is falling."

Hassan Atejan held back with a strange smile.

"Help me pull him inside of the cabin," Dave whispered hoarsely. "If you do not both of us will fall out."

Hassan Atejan extended his hand, caught the clinging Bedouin and together the two pulled him into the door. With a deep inward intake of air Dave closed the door and turned to the rescued Bedouin.

The man was Es-Daud, the mighty leader of the Wahabis.

## The Twins Force a Promise

**T**HE moment Es-Daud felt the firm floor of the airplane beneath his feet he grew calm, and sat down nonchalantly.

“Looked for a time, Sheikh Hassan Atejan, that you were going to have it your own way but now——”

He smiled grimly, and drew an automatic from under his long cloak. He petted the weapon affectionately, and turned the muzzle as if accidentally, on the vizier.

Hassan Atejan placed his hands complacently on his round stomach and sat down in the seat opposite the Bedouin chief.

“Really, Es-Daud, I do not think that you will use that little plaything.”

“You are getting in the way of Arabia.” The broad, brown brow of the Bedouin wrinkled fiercely. “If you go back you destroy much good work. You whisper bad things into Ghazi’s ears, and he is now about ready to join. We have

Teheran, and now we are asking for Iraq, Trans-jordania, and Hedjaz. Later we will pick up the Soudan."

"I do not think that Sherif Hussein will join you," the vizier remarked quietly.

"Who is this King Hussein? A mere figure-head for England—just like Ghazi and Abdullah. Behind Hussein and Abdullah are some very strong members of the Mohammedan faith."

Hassan Atejan waved his hand downward. By this time the Bird of the Occident had passed over the edge of the desert and was flying over an area of deserted fields.

"England will bring that all back to life. Your proposition means hungry and ragged people throughout a vast Mohammedan region."

"So I heard you say back in camp but liberty is behind that Mohammedan empire, which we hope to make stronger than England."

"Es-Daud, you do not seem to know the English people. Not only are they bulldogs but there are several of them. They live in England, America, Australia, South Africa, and—they—know—how—to—fight."

"I have talked enough. You are going my way

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or you are not going back to Bagdad. I have said."

The Bedouin sheikh lifted his gun, and shoved the muzzle into the vizier's face. The vizier turned pale but did not shrink.

"Just a moment."

Dave stepped fearlessly in front of the Bedouin, and pushed his gun aside.

"Get out of the way!" hissed the angry sheikh.

"You see now, my young friend," Hassan Atejan drawled, "that it would have been the move of wisdom to have permitted me to slash his fingers."

The Bedouin stood up, and pushed Dave aside with a powerful hand.

"There are only two men in this airplane who can fly," Dave remarked coldly, unafraid. "My brother is one, and I am the other."

Will, who had heard the talking, had set the robot, and now appeared on the steps to the control room.

"You said it," he added firmly.

"This is our airship," Dave continued. "It is a commercial plane, not a war bomber. It was not built for murder and fighting, and we will not permit it to be used that way. You two have been

making a lot of war talk that I do not fully understand, and I do not feel interested in it. But I will say that both of you are going to land living men, or you are not going to be landed in Arabia. We will fly across to Jerusalem and turn both of you over to the English authorities."

The Bedouin smiled sourly, and tapped his gun.

"Just a harmless little toy," Dave prophesied. "You wouldn't dare use it on me. If you do you will certainly forfeit your life. My brother will see to that. If you kill both of us I imagine that you will have some trouble landing. In fact, you will land on your head, and the ground is hard anywhere when you fall two thousand feet."

He sat down complacently, and grinned at the man holding the gun. For a short time the man was nervous, puzzled. Finally he slipped the gun back under his robe.

"Boy, you are brave. I will say that under no circumstances would I kill you or your brother. I realize that you are not in this. I will add that I appreciate the fact that you saved my life back there. But now I am asking if you take this other man back to Bagdad what are you going to do with me?"

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"Take you to Bagdad also, and turn you loose."

"How long would I remain free in Bagdad? This very fine gentleman has the ear of the king. He is in fact the real king; his spies are all over Mesopotamia. Once in Bagdad I would rot in a dungeon."

Dave looked at Hassan Atejan.

"How about that statement?" The vizier frowned.

"I suppose that you will remember that he kidnaped me, tied me hand and foot, made me ride a miserable day over the barren lands, and promised me a cemetery at sunrise?"

"I remember all those things but I am beginning to discover that there is a lot of politics in this country. I do not understand all that you are talking about but I do not think that this man is a murderer. Anyway I shall have nothing to do with his death."

Will opened the door of the fuselage and looked out.

"It is nice and level down there," he observed.

"How would you like to land down there?" Dave asked of the Bedouin. "Could you make it back to your people?"



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The Bedouin peeped out. Far below he saw the tents of an Arabian camp.

“Wahabis,” he replied softly, pointing down. “Once in that camp I can defy the authority of all these Sherifian kings. I will be grateful if you drop me there.”

Will looked out, saw the small camp pitched on the bank of a small stream, and without paying any further attention to Hassan Atejan entered the control room.

Dave sat down and began to whistle.

The Bird of the Occident circled swiftly, nosed down and landed not far from the Bedouin camp. It was much larger from the earth than it appeared from the sky. The Bedouin, who had again drawn his gun to prevent Hassan Atejan from interfering, opened the door and leaped out.

“*Etrush!*” Es-Daud called out as he struck the earth. “Go with Allah.”

As the plane began to move slowly forward he ran along by its side and thrust his head in the door.

“The Talisman, Hassan Atejan,” he cried out triumphantly, “is on the way. Take it easy.”

Will lifted the Bird of the Occident from the

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earth, and the flight toward Bagdad was resumed.

“What did he mean by saying the ‘Talisman is on the way?’ ” Dave asked curiously.

“You should know,” Hassan Atejan half snarled. “You and your brother are messing up things.”

“Pshaw! We haven’t messed anything. We know absolutely nothing about all this.”

“Yet you take the chance of being sent to prison for life to free the great Wahabi leader, and bring a mysterious passenger from Teheran.”

Will, who had turned the plane over to the robot, came down into the cabin in time to hear this, and it caused him to shiver slightly. Then he smiled gently. But there was a dangerous twinkle in his eyes when he spoke.

“We are not in Bagdad yet—NO, NOT YET.” He sat down by Dave, and nudged his brother in the side. “In fact, we are on the way to the City of Jerusalem, AND—THE—VIZIER—OF—THE—KING—OF—BAGDAD—CANNOT—FLY.”

“And you are not taking me back to Bagdad?”

There was anxious appeal in Hassan Atejan’s eyes.

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“Not to Bagdad,” Will returned gently. “When you began to talk about imprisonment, and taking chances, I concluded to change our course.”

“You win.” The vizier laughed heartily. “Two bright boys. I shall not speak derogatory to the king about you.”

“And when we get to Bagdad,” Will insisted, “that palatial chamber will be exchanged——”

“For any apartment you wish. You will be free to move any time.”

“Thanks. It will not take long to change our course again.”

With a slow smile Will reentered the control room.

“Do you think that we can trust him?” Dave asked in a whisper, following Will into the control room. “He may play foxy.”

“I think that when he gives his word he will stick to it. I am so sure of it that I shall fly immediately to Bagdad before our gas gives out. That Bedouin, Es-Daud, was ready to take his word.”

## Another Mystery Flight

**D**AVE and Will were walking on the narrow street watching two women moving. Their task was easy. Moving is not hard in Bagdad. These two women had their tables and chairs on their heads and were walking calmly along.

“Looks like one of Abraham Lincoln’s moves,” Will laughed. “They just picked up their saddlebags and whistled to the pup.”

“This country certainly has many primitive customs,” Dave added. “Do you smell anything?”

“Doesn’t smell like attar of roses.”

Will put his hand over his nose.

“That man named it correctly when he said that Bagdad was the ‘City of Seven Great Smells.’ The streets haven’t been cleaned since Adam was a boy, and there is not a vestige of sanitation.”

It was early morning—the hour when the bazaars were all open. Turks, Arabs, Jews, Syrians, Greeks, Hindoos, all kinds of nationalities

brushed elbows along the narrow streets and crowded into the small stalls, examined the silver work of the silver workers of Iraq, purchased vegetables from the next stand, or fruit across the street, or a Persian rug from another, or a bird cage from another.

Over one of the silver stalls, printed in English, were the words:

“HASSAN—JOHN THE BAPTIST  
GOLD AND SILVER  
ENGRAVERS  
FROM AMARA”

“What do they mean by referring to John the Baptist?” Dave was not up on Arabian merchandising. “I do not see any sense in that advertisement.”

“We are the famous silversmiths of Amara,” the man seated in the stall with his hands on his knees informed them. “And in addition are the descendants of John the Baptist. Would you like to buy one of our ornaments?”

Dave looked at the man curiously. He had a long flowing beard like a Jew, wore a tunic and Arabian cloak, and an Arabian headgear. His

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face was kind and benevolent. His features were Hebrew.

“What do you think about that statement?” Dave asked Will as they walked onward. “Sounds peculiar to me but I am not prepared to dispute it.”

“I doubt the correctness of the claim.” Will was quite well up in religious history, and was the reader of the Twins. “I was under the impression that John the Baptist had his head cut off, and did not leave any descendants.”

“He wandered in the wilderness, and all the country east of the Jordan was wilderness to the Jews. He may have had an Arabian wife that our historians have not told us about.”

They came to the coffee houses—just places to sit under an awning on the side of the street, or beneath the extension of the upper stories, and sip coffee. The coffee stalls were full of the higher classes. Many of these men wore pants and coats, fez headgear and straw hats. The two lads stopped for coffee. They were looking for Englishmen but saw few.

“Let’s continue our bazaar window shopping,” Dave suggested when they left the coffee shop.

“The whole merchandising business has the appearance of a fair.”

They walked onward, and presently Will pointed at a table where two men were seated playing chess, and two more long beards were hunched on their feet watching the game.

“Chess seems to be their national outdoor sport. I suppose that the two players are champions and the other two are betting on the game.”

“They are as interested as if it was a horse race.”

Walking slowly they passed a grain bazaar, a sweets bazaar, a silk bazaar, a gold and silver-smith stall in front of a big mud brick house, and stopped in front of a chicken bazaar. They were laughing at a man who held two roosters tied by the legs, and was exhibiting them proudly when a woman brushed against them. She struck Dave so hard that he staggered slightly.

He turned on the woman with a frown. She was a very old woman, and on her head she carried a sewing machine that she had just purchased. When she caught Dave looking at her she began to jabber at him in Arabic. Dave laughed. But the longer the woman talked the madder she got.

Then he tried to placate her. Instead of relieving her anger it increased it, and she began to speak to him in pigeon English.

“Pig of a foreigner, where are your eyes?”

“My dear lady,” Dave placated, “you came on me so suddenly that——”

“Grandson of a double-headed dog,” howled the woman angrily, “could thou not see my beautiful sewing machine?”

An Arab, who was leaning against the side of the building and watching the scene, burst out laughing loudly.

“And you, whose grandmother was a monkey,” snorted the old woman turning on the Arab, “is it your affair?”

“On your way, woman, who goeth around a snarling cat,” the Arab answered in similar English. “It was your fault. I saw you.”

“You saw me? You, whose ancestors for fourteen generations carried garbage and swept foul streets, what is it to you? On your way yourself!”

The Arab turned aside with a disgusted grunt.

“It is useless to talk to one who knows not the decency of dress.”



He walked several steps, stopped suddenly, and looked back at the woman with piercing eyes. She was not attractive. Her white hair straggled in strings around her face, she walked boldly along the streets like a man, and shunned a veil. Nevertheless there was something about her that attracted the Arab, and excited the curiosity of Dave.

The strained condition lasted a bare second, and then the man moved on. Immediately the woman shoved up mysteriously against Dave, and whispered:

“Meet me on the east bank of the Tigris, near the line of trees where you dropped me. Be there in two hours. Bring the plane and we will be on our way.”

Before Dave could recover from his astonishment the woman was moving down the street muttering to herself in Arabic.

Dave did not speak at once. He realized that the mysterious movement was unnecessary unless there was something secret behind it.

“The woman was Saladin,” he finally said to Will. “He wants us to meet him at the spot where we landed him when we came to Bagdad.”

“Saladin? That old hag?”

Will could not believe it, and stared at the disappearing form.

“Rather safely disguised,” Dave grinned. “What shall we do?”

“We are sewed up,” Will murmured disgruntledly. “I wish we were not. We seem to have gotten into something very mysterious and also dangerous. After having had that experience with the little fat vizier and the raw-boned Arabian chief I am for letting Arabia alone.”

“And this Saladin seems to be about as deep into the mire as Hassan Atejan and Es-Daud.”

“But we have taken his money; we belong to him now as long as we cannot prove that he is acting a criminal; and we must stick to our promises.”

Muttering their disgust at being inveigled into a secret mission the two boys went back to their hotel, arranged their affairs, and made their way to their airplane. They found the plane surrounded by Hassan Atejan’s police.

“Look at that!” Dave ejaculated. “If we get the Bird of the Occident away from those fellows we will have to play a smooth game.”

“But once in the air,” Will cheered, “we can

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easily keep the appointment with Saladin without being caught.”

“It doesn’t look much like freedom,” Dave grumbled, “and Hassan Atejan promised us that we should have our liberty, and that we could go wherever we pleased.”

“Suppose we steal it from under their noses?”

“Fine. Suppose you twist their noses around on the other side of their heads so they will not see us take the plane.”

This humorous remark put both in a good humor, and they walked boldly up to the plane. They expected the Arabian soldiers to stop them when they put their hands on the fuselage door. But they did not make a move in this direction.

“The ground ahead is fairly level,” Will whispered.

“But the engine is as cold as an iceberg.”

“Just the same I am going to get in and see what they will do—just send her around several times.”

“How about gas?”

“Will tell you later.”

Will moved slowly and entered the cabin of the plane; Dave followed, looking back to see if the

soldiers intended to keep them out. Will entered the control room and looked at the gas indicator. It showed the tanks full of gas.

“I do not understand that,” he reflected, scratching his head with his finger. “We were up a day and a night with Hassan Atejan. That should have exhausted our supply of fuel. Now she is full again.”

“Maybe Hassan Atejan had a stroke of big heart, and paid us back for the fuel we used when we took him on that sight-seeing trip.”

“Be that as it may, I notice that these soldiers have not stepped up to us and put their hands on our shoulders, and that they have not congregated between us and the open space. We might slide out of that space before they could stop us.”

“Looks funny. There must be a bug under the chip.”

Will put his hand on the starter and pressed. Dave stuck his head out of the window, and looked at the soldiers. The leader waved a friendly hand.

“I really believe that that brown person is telling us to ‘go in safety.’ At least his move of the hand indicates that we can meander off to the river and wash our undershirts.”

The engine of the Bird of the Occident was permitted to revv up without the soldiers moving toward them, or getting in the road. Will glanced out of the plane, saw that the space ahead was still open, and started to taxi. Now, if ever, the Arabs would have to stop them.

They did not make a move. On the contrary they waved them a friendly farewell.

Will shot up into the air; Dave stepped down into the cabin and looked around. On one of the seats he found a letter, addressed in neat English to:

Will and Dave Hope, Sirs: I keep true to my promise. Your plane has been guarded by my men and you are free to leave any time. In the box in the aisle you will find the chessmen, and the wrist watch. Allah go with you.

HASSAN ATEJAN, *Vizier*.

When he opened the box he found the gifts, and upon examining them by the light of the sun he discovered that they were very costly.

“Look at this,” he called out to Will, taking the box into the control room. “Our Arabian vizier has made us both rich.”

Will gave a single glance at the golden chess-

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men and jeweled case, and turned back to his work of flying. "Haven't time to look now," he returned. "I have to make a landing on the other side of that line of trees."

They skimmed the river, and dropped like a bird on the other side, landing in the exact place where they had left Saladin.

Scarcely had the wheels come to a skidding standstill when Saladin, still disguised as an old woman, ran out from behind some bushes, and dashed toward the Bird of the Occident.

"Halt! Stop!"

The command came in sharp Arabic from the leader of a company of soldiers which had been stationed on the place to catch Saladin. But the disguised man did not heed the order. Pantingly he ran toward the plane while the soldiers broke into a run. Patently they had orders not to shoot. This was fortunate for Saladin.

Will looked out at the chase dubiously. This was an unlawful act. Officers of the law were chasing Saladin. He turned an inquiring eye on his brother, who had taken the second control seat.

"I do not like that," he whispered. "It looks like bucking the law."

"We have taken his money," Dave insisted, "and we cannot desert him honorably now."

"We did not promise to violate the laws of a country to please him."

"We should have known that he wouldn't give twenty-five thousand dollars for a quiet, peaceable ride in the air. Pull the stick the second he gets inside. He is almost here."

Saladin spurred ahead of the chasing soldiers, caught the door frame and leaped into the airplane. Dave pulled the stick, and the Bird of the Occident taxied across an open space away from the soldiers, and shot upward.

"There you are, Mr. Saladin," Dave greeted, stepping out of the control room into the cabin. "We have stood up to our promises but it looks to us as if you are messing us up with violations of the law. First we meet you disguised as a young woman; next you virtually knock over a policeman to get into our plane."

"Allah be with thee always," Saladin returned religiously, and sealed his lips.

Dave gave him a disgusted look.

"Now where do you wish to be taken? We are still subject to your orders."

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“To Amman, formerly the city of the Ammonites—descendants of Lot—now the capital city of Emir Abdullah Ibn Hussein, sherif of Transjordan. It is a very nice place, and has many historic attractions. True you will not find it in its ancient glory but Emir Abdullah has done much to make it a pleasant summer capital. In the winter however he makes his capital on the bank of the Jordan in a tent city in order to make the Arabs believe that he is not turning into an Englishman.”



## Saladin Gets More Mysterious

**T**HE first part of their journey was a repetition of the Bagdad empire. Scattered ruins, Arabs in tents, cattle and sheep, every man his own policeman (on the lands west of the Euphrates), with his long-barreled rifle and his slender flock; camel drivers, peasants working in very small patches of land, boys herding sheep and goats on the hillsides; occasionally long caravans of mules and horses and camels. Beyond the ancient lines of Mesopotamia they swept over the Syrian Desert—miles and miles of barren waste, once in a while a band of Bedouins and a caravan; in all an isolated stretch of sand and desert that was surprising in a country where every foot should have been under cultivation to support the people.

“The land made desolate,” Dave murmured. “Truly the Arab is not a builder. Wherever he puts his authority he tears down, and lives on pillage or desert toll.”

Saladin sat in his seat grim, silent, with eyes

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fixed on the earth below him. Dave watched him silently and wondered. But he gave no intimation of his purpose in watching the earth, and he had no explanation for his strange conduct.

He had bought them; paid them good money, and he expected to be obeyed.

Hour after hour passed, and still the desert. Then came mountains; beyond the mountains a caravan trail along which shuffled long lines of camels heavily laden—vast numbers of travelers enroute to the great sandy Nefood, or Dahna Desert, and on to the Gulf of Oman, or, perhaps, India.

Then more level land, and finally the Jordan River and the Jordan Valley. Will had made a miscalculation and they approached an iron bridge across the Jordan. It is said that an automobile can coast from the City of Jerusalem to this iron bridge, which now divides Palestine from the buffer kingdom set up by England and presented to Emir Abdullah in order to keep the peace with the Arabs.

At this point the Bird of the Occident turned down the Jordan Valley, and shot a thousand feet over the heads of shuffling camels that snorted at

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the hum of the engines, and sometimes stampeded, the drivers howling and cursing in Arabic. The heat of this traveled route from Damascus to Mecca came up in waves, and to avoid the heat Will drifted eastward and approached his destination by way of Es-Salt. This is a city sitting on the steep hills of Gilead. Elevated several thousand feet above the sea level it is cool and pleasant compared to the scorching and parched valley of the Jordan.

“A fertile and alluvial land.” Saladin spoke for the first time since he had begun this journey. “‘Balm of Gilead,’ now a land of raisins, grapes and fruits.”

Will circled Es-Salt, thinking that it was Amman.

“Where shall we land?” he inquired as the plane lowered.

“Not here,” Saladin scoffed. “Amman is further south.”

“I have read that Amman is very much like the City of Bisbee, Arizona,” Dave explained. “There is a creek in a deep valley or mountain canyon, and the houses are built up along the hillsides, with curving streets like those

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around Brewery Gulch and Tombstone Canyon.”

They came in view of Amman with its tortuous, curving streets and houses seemingly piled on each other, and were circling around.

“We will land——”

Saladin paused with his hand extended to indicate a secret landing place, and looked anxiously out of the window.

Rising in the air were five airplanes, big bombing planes, that formed into a V when in the air and darted toward the Bird of the Occident. Will started to change his course to avoid them.

“Do not try to escape,” Saladin cautioned. “They are English planes of a military order, and might shoot you down.”

When Will learned this he slowed down and loafed along. The English planes came up with a loud noise, divided and surrounded the Bird of the Occident, two planes arranging themselves on each side of the Americans, and the fifth plane still leading the course.

Will and Dave looked out of their plane and saw English airmen seated in the other planes with light machine guns in their hands. There was no menace in the way they handled the guns but both

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lads concluded that it would not be wise to contest English authority.

While still flying in a V formation, an English officer leaned out of the window of one of the side planes, and pointed downward. His movement was obeyed by all the planes, the lead plane directing the course.

The formation passed over Amman, which the two boys now saw was built over a deep gulch through which meandered the creek. It was a funny looking city. One could lean out of a window of a house built on a street half way up the hill and look straight down into the chimney of his neighbor's house. Circling the city the planes landed in a small place fifteen or twenty miles away on the extensively traveled route to Mecca. Near the caravan route there was a railroad. The landing was made in front of a hangar of an English encampment on the outskirts of the town.

When the Bird of the Occident came to a stop, having made a much more graceful landing than the English planes notwithstanding the nervousness Will was feeling over the air arrest, it was surrounded by English soldiers. At the head of the soldiers was a hollow-eyed, middle-aged man,

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bronzed by desert winds, thin with constant vigils, yet immaculately clean in white linen, white shoes, and creased trousers. His hair, while thick, was grey, and his eyes were cold, biting blue.

"I am Allencourte," he announced with a military salute. "You are under arrest."

"Why are we under arrest?" Will had deserted the control and had advanced to the door of the fuselage. "We have done no unlawful thing."

"First, you are in the Kingdom of Transjordan dressed like an American, and that is——"

"But we have passports."

Will drew out his papers and extended them to the Englishman. The officer shook his head.

"As far as the Jordan River bridge those papers would serve you nicely. Beyond the bridge I fear that they are of little moment. This country belongs to his excellency, Emir Abdullah Ibn Hussein. Step inside."

He bowed politely and waved his hand toward a plastered building and an open door. The two lads followed him into an office where he seated himself at a mahogany table. Before speaking again he drummed thoughtfully on the table with his fingers. Presently he gave Will a keen glance

out of his cold eyes. Will felt as if a frost had struck him.

“Where is the Talisman?”

Will stared at him wonderingly.

“I know nothing of a Talisman. My brother and I are two simple American boys touring the——”

“Who flew across the Pacific Ocean, thus making a splendid reputation for courage and resourcefulness,” the officer finished. “It was a brave deed, and I congratulate you, but I sincerely hope that you are not going to spoil your reputation by doing something that you will forever regret.” He rose and bowed solemnly to the two boys. “This is a grey horse of another color. We must have that Talisman.”

“You speak in riddles.” Will’s curiosity was rising in spite of his indignation. “I have just informed you that we have no such article, and I do not know what you are talking about.”

“If we had it,” Dave grinned amiably, “we wouldn’t know how to play on it. Is it a musical instrument or a corkscrew?”

Allencourte rose to his feet, and paced the floor. Soon he paused to look outside.

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"Roll that plane into the hangar," he called out in a commanding voice. "Be careful with it. I do not wish to damage it now but occasion may arise that will force me to have it cut to pieces."

He turned back to the desk and sat down.

"Now, boys," he continued briskly, "the Talisman. No foolishness. His Majesty's government will not stand for evasion. A match may set Arabia afire. Out with it!"

Dave drew a chair up to the table, sat down and crossed his legs.

"Did you say that you might order the Bird of the Occident cut to pieces?"

"It was not an idle remark. We must have the Talisman—the real thing."

"This is the second time I have heard about that 'Talisman,'" Dave observed thoughtfully. "I heard an Arab chieftain tell Hassan Atejan, high grand vizier of King Ghazi, that the Talisman had gone on. Now just what is it, and where did it go? You seem to know a lot that we do not know."

"Do not badger me!" thundered Allencourte. "Talk up, or I will have that plane searched. If we do not find it easily I will have to slit the wings and fuselage into strips. We are going——"



Just as it seemed to Will and Dave that the officer would certainly order their plane cut up in spite of their protests, Saladin, who came into the room dressed as the Arab woman, stepped from the side door to the desk.

"I wouldn't do that, general," Saladin said quietly. "It would not be fair to two nice boys."

"You wouldn't?" General Allencourte stared at the newcomer in amazement. "Who are you, hag?"

Saladin made a swift, almost imperceptible sign with an arm movement, his fingers crossed peculiarly.

"AH!" Allencourte leaped to his feet in surprise. "Come into the inner office."

Opening the side door he led Saladin inside and closed the door. The two remained in the inner office for some time. When the English officer came out he left Saladin inside.

"Sergeant Burton," Allencourte called to a soldier marching back and forth in front of the building with a gun on his shoulder, "take these two lads to the hotel for a day and a night. Also guard their plane well. When I wish to see them I will call them."

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“Shall I put a guard over them?”

“Not necessary. They will not leave without their plane, and I want them to have perfect liberty and be well protected and cared for. Do not let Abdullah’s men jump them and take them away.”

As they stepped out of the English office into the arms of Sergeant Burton his face twinkled with a wide grin.

“I don’t think you’ll go far from this ’ere ’otel,” he remarked prophetically. “ ’Is grace called the turn all right. As long as ’e ’olds that sight seein’ ship of yours you’ll be seein’ ’im.”

## Presented at Court

**T**HE hotel was not very promising in appearance. It was a one-story flat building constructed around a courtyard. In the courtyard were sheep, goats, mules, camels, and a sweating mob of dirty, unwashed desert travelers.

“If you want me to I’ll ’ang around and see that you aren’t ’urt,” Sergeant Burton offered when they stopped in front of the gate that led into the courtyard and entrance of the hotel. “Them lads hain’t so gentle.”

He pointed at a body of Bedouins who had come in from the desert, and were seated around the courtyard smoking their nargiles and sipping cups of bitter coffee.

“Doesn’t look very dangerous to me,” Dave ventured.

“Not dangerous if I stick around, but this ’ere ’ouse is a lot of wild ’ilarity if you aren’t carryin’ passes from ’is nibs, Mr. Abdullah.”

“The commander said that we were not under arrest.”

"Not under arrest, but when night comes this 'ere place might fly up and 'it you. Best let me 'ang around."

"You can hang around if you wish to but we are not in the least afraid."

Sergeant Burton saluted, and turned back toward the military camp. He did not intend to make himself conspicuous but it was his duty to see that these boys did not come to harm. Will and Dave passed through the gate into the hotel. They were met on the inside of the courtyard by a bedlam-like howl from half a dozen different nationalities. A boy came running up to them; behind him came several men who wanted to steal pancakes, live chickens, milk or sheep.

"We want a room, boy."

The boy bowed elaborately to Dave.

"With a bath in it," Will added.

Again the Arabian boy bowed obsequiously.

"You had better tip him," Dave suggested.

Will took out a coin and handed it to the servant. The boy stuck the coin in his mouth, bit at it, and bowed three times almost to the ground. Then he guided the two boys across the courtyard

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to a spot where the yard was shaded by a high wall.

“Service. I say service!” Will looked around at the braying donkeys, the creaking carts, the smelling sheep. “But we want something better.”

He handed another coin to the hotel servant. The boy smiled audibly, and spoke to another boy who came running toward them. This last boy was carrying in his arms a large urn filled with water. Placing the vessel at Dave’s feet he looked up inquiringly.

“What do you suppose he is after?” Dave asked humorously. “Is he offering me wine or water, or——”

“That is your bath,” Sergeant Burton shouted through the open door. He had returned when the two lads were not watching for him. “Dive in and make yourself comfortable.”

“Dive into that thing?” Dave gazed at the urn as if it was a prize for spelling. “I do not see how I can unlock the door.”

Sergeant Burton came into the courtyard, cupped his hands and the hotel servant poured some of the water into the hollow of his hands; then the soldier washed his face with the water

in his hands. Accomplishing this much toward a bath he drew out a large handkerchief and dried his face.

"There you are!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "All you 'ave to do is to jump in. The water is fine."

"But I have an idea," Will objected plaintively, "that more of my body than my neck and face is dirty. How about getting that stuff on my back?"

"Strip off me b'y and fly at it."

"Take off my clothes before all these people, and bathe in a handful of water?"

Will was shocked.

"And the water leaking through your fingers like the Niagara Falls," Dave sniggered. "You know what I am going to do? I am going to wander off to the creek with a cake of soap in my hand, and give the soap a chance."

Will washed his face and hands with the water the boy poured into his hands from the jar.

"We want the bridal chamber," he announced severely. "Make it spick and span, rosebuds and butterflies."

"You needn't bring in the warming pan," Dave chirped.

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It was 125° in the shade.

“’Ow about eats?” Sergeant Burton dickered. “Maybe if you ’unt in the ’en ’ouse you’ll find a cooked egg.”

The servant boy conducted them to a buffet lunch. Will sat down and looked around inquiringly.

“Waiter, bring me a knife.”

Sergeant Burton laughed long and loudly.

“Me b’y, did you know that Harabs think Hallah gave you fingers for a purpose? Try them on.”

By the time they had finished eating it was bed time.

“Now for that bridal chamber.” Will got up with a piece of roast beef in his hands gnawing gingerly. “Have the bed soft and downy.”

The bridal chamber proved to be the roof of the rectangle building, and was occupied by sixty or seventy other guests, many of whom snored like fire engines and who had neglected to take advantage of the bathing facilities. In addition the air was filled with nice, friendly mosquitoes. The beds consisted of blankets spread on the roof.

During the night the proprietor amused him-

self by walking back and forth on the roof and calling in a loud, nasal voice the time of the departure of trains and caravans. Just before day a number of small Arab boys went about in the courtyard shouting their prayers while they packed their mules and camels. When they lay down the air was hot and terribly sultry. Before daylight a sand storm and gale was blowing, and they had to cover their heads with their blankets to keep warm.

The next morning they were down from the roof bright and early to partake of their buffet lunch.

“Sleep well?” Dave inquired of Will with grave solicitude.

“Sure. The only thing that broke into my soundless slumber was some one calling on Gabriel about every ten minutes to get up and catch a train, or go out and harness a camel; or a new bunch of travelers coming in and trying to park their camels on the roof on the foot of my blanket. Aside from this, and the fact that down in the courtyard there were four hundred and twenty-one grown men and a little boy telling the rest of the guests that they should get up and see that the



she camels were shod for the desert trip to the pearly gates, it was a quiet night."

"Fine service," Dave admitted. "When I get back I am going to buy the Biltmore or the Ambassador, and show the Americans how to run a real hotel."

When they finished their morning meal they stepped out into the courtyard again. It was still a bedlam of noises and smells—Turks, Jews, Arabs, Greeks, Syrians, Hindoos, Nubians, Egyptians vieing with each other in acclaiming the glories of the morning to Allah, Mahomet, and several other of the faithful. Sergeant Burton came into the yard as they were thinking of leaving. In his hands he held some paper notices which he began to tack up on the wall of the building.

The papers were printed in Arabic.

"What is all the big noise about?" Dave cajoled. "You are as secret about it as if you were trying to give your mother-in-law a dose of castor oil."

The sergeant stood back and surveyed his work triumphantly.

"I generally charge for translating but being

as you are young and 'opeful I'll break the news to you free of 'ouse-'old expense. It reads:

**FOR THE LIVING BODY OF ALI ABA**

One mule

One he-camel

One she-camel.

**YOU WILL KNOW HIM BY**

His bent nose

His left ear, which is  
cut off.

**ALLENOURTE**

Commander English

Army

The two American lads looked at each other queerly.

"Old Bent Nose," Will grunted.

"The mystery deepens," Dave giggled. "The plot thickens. Is he a thief, an assassin, or just a good humored desert bandit?"

"I aren't sayin', me b'y. 'E's wanted. That's enough." Throwing down the rest of the papers he had in his arms, he took the arm of each of the lads. "'Is royal nibs wants to see you. I think 'e wants to introduce you to the king."

He laughed uproariously.

They made no resistance, and followed him to the front door of the English commander's office. Here they met General Allencourte. He gave them a mysterious glance, and pointed at an automobile.

"Get in, lads," he invited, "and we will go to see Emir Abdullah Ibn Hussein."

"Be careful 'ow you play marbles with this 'ere 'Abdullah," Sergeant Burton cautioned in a whisper. "'E fudges, 'e does."

"I—I— believe I would rather not," Dave objected lamely. "The last king I met had a lot of ways about him that I didn't like. In fact, he sent a man around with me who repeatedly reminded me that my head wasn't on straight."

"Abdullah is all right when he is in a good humor," the English commander reassured.

"But—but—just for argument's sake let us say he isn't in a good humor when we call."

"Oh, well——"

Allencourte paused, and smiled slightly, his thin lips splitting suggestively. Dave glanced toward Sergeant Burton. Burton was standing perfectly erect with his hand at a salute. He

noted that the commander was looking the other way and made a quick jerk with his forefinger across his throat.

“Let us hope,” Will said with a sickly smile, “that we meet him when he is in a good humor.”

“Transjordan is a haven for political exiles and beggars,” the English commander explained sociably as the automobile dashed past a large flag pole from which floated a gorgeous flag with three broad black, white and green stripes representing the dynasties of Ommiad, Abbaside and Fatimite, and with a triangular red pennant along the base of the staff which signified the Hachimite dynasty from which Abdullah had descended. “They come in here from the numerous French mandates, from Damascus, Syria, and other countries under the cover of darkness, flying from the French persecutions. They receive a friendly reception from the Arabs, are fed and clothed, and later are given transportation and passports into other countries.”

“In Bagdad the beggars are cripples, crippled in childhood,” Will faltered. “Begging seems to be a profession there, and is followed from generation to generation.”

“These exiles are men in higher walks of life. They are poets, lawyers, officers of the army who have come into trouble because of their politics, students, and men and women of high class. They are really maintained by England as Abdullah makes provision for them out of his treasury and in the long run England has to keep his treasury full as Transjordan is an English mandate.”

They passed into the main street of Amman, a street that circled the base of the steep side of a mountain at one time crowned with a large Greek citadel. This citadel the lads afterwards ascertained was a mass of ruins and broken façades. On, up in a winding way, back and forth, climbing a steep incline, running along a narrow ledge with houses leaning out over the street and seemingly prepared to fall into the gulch.

In the center of the city they passed the ruins of a great mosque; near this mosque they came to the destroyed arch of a large Roman theater. At a sudden curve they passed over a stone bridge. Here were the broken benches of the ancient Amphitheater of Rome. Goats and sheep were herded in the galleries where once the gayest

throng of Romans watched the sports of their day; solemn-faced Bedouins sat on Greek marble columns and drank their coffee.

“The Ammonites, descendants of Lot,” Allencourte informed them, “called this city Rabbath Ammon; the creek that divides the gulch is still called Naht Amman. The giant iron bed of Og was a trophy for the Rabbath Ammon period. It has had as its rulers, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Romans, Crusaders, Arabs, and yet it is not as large as Es-Salt. Raisins and wine have made the country famous.”

The automobile wound around a blind curve past houses hanging like spiders' nests against the sides of the cliff and came in view of the palace. Will and Dave were surprised to see it. It was not nearly as handsome as Ghazi's palace at Bagdad.

“Before entering the palace,” General Allencourte said with his cold smile, “I wish to make an explanation. You will do well to heed what I say.”

His brittle blue eyes snapped, and he gave each of the lads a searching gaze.

“Abdullah is a different man from Ghazi. He

is a picturesque Bedouin chieftain. He is one of the Arabs who says that 'we have lost our palaces and cities and are living in tents; we are free, and we believe that some time Arabia will be free.' Some time——"

"All this political conversation is a mystery to us," Will interrupted. "I cannot see why——"

"That word 'some time,' " the commander continued slowly, "is significant. It means that he will lie in wait by the side of Es-Daud, and when the time comes join the Arabs and strike for a powerful and united Mohammedan Empire. I tell you this in order that you may watch your speech in the court of Abdullah. I shall present you simply as two American flyers making a trip around the world. Just remember what I tell you that talk before Abdullah Ibn Hussein will be very dangerous to the peace of Arabia. If you know anything, forget it."

As he finished the caution in a whisper they were ushered into the marble halls of Abdullah's palace by a dignitary in gorgeous uniform. This man bowed low before the English commander and secretly, behind his back, smiled softly. Will and Dave caught the smile, and thought that the

Arab might be carrying a hidden dagger to plunge into the Englishman's back.

The thought caused them to shiver. They were beginning to realize that intrigue and mystery lay deep in this Arabian court, and both made up their minds that they would watch for an attack on General Allencourte and give him all the aid they could.

"You stay on his left, and I will hang around his right," Will whispered. "If they strike at him we will know it before the dagger lands, and will call out."

"I have come, your majesty," Allencourte announced as he stopped before a man on the throne, "to introduce to you two very distinguished American airmen. They are young but they have made a world record that will stand high for years among aviators."

"Will and Dave Hope," the sherif of Transjordan returned with an open smile. "I have heard of them, and wished to meet them."

He gave them a banquet; he called forth his best dancers and gave them an afternoon of entertainment; and through it all he watched them closely.



“Why are we here?” Will asked his brother in a whisper. “Why all this parade for us? I do not like the way that king bores us with his sharp black eyes.”

His questions were to gather stronger import.

There came a lull in the dancing, and for a short time the great entertainment hall was still. The quietness of the chamber was broken by the entrance of a man clothed in rich court costume. He was escorted by the gorgeously uniformed servant. He came up to the throne and stopped.

Before the servant could announce his name the king stood up and extended his hand, caught the newcomer in a friendly grasp, and assisted him to a vacant chair by his side. The man smiled sweetly at General Allencourte and sat down.

The man by the side of the king had a bent nose, and his left ear was lopped off.

“Bent Nose,” Dave whispered in a tone of awe.

General Allencourte bowed gravely to the king, and then to the man by his side, and excusing himself, took the hand of each boy and backed out of the audience chamber before the king had time to introduce the newcomer. The king followed them with a queer smile.

"Your friend, Ali Aba," Will remarked to General Allencourte, as they came to the end of the stairway that led to the street. "One mule, one he-camel, and one she-camel. General, shall we wait until he comes out and grab him?"

"Yes, he is the man I wanted," General Allencourte returned softly. "Now I'm not so anxious."

The automobile trip back to their hotel was made without further comment, and General Allencourte continued on to the military encampment after dropping them off.

"More mystery." Dave stood in the road and watched the general's automobile disappear. "Now why did Commander Allencourte take us to see King Abdullah?"

"I am not a good horse doctor but I can guess."

"Out with it."

"He had no excuse for calling on the king, and made us his excuse."

"But why did he want to make us his excuse?"

"He wanted to see if that Bent Nose person was hanging around the palace."

"Boy, you're a genius. But what is it all about? We meet Bent Nose in Teheran. He is peeping around a tent at us. We meet him again trying

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to steal a ride in the Bird of the Occident. He is put out and steals a ride in Mr. Curtis's plane, and gets to Bagdad in time to have us arrested. For some reason he cannot make his arrest stick after we save the grand vizier from that Bedouin's threat of death. Now we find an English commander offering a reward for him as if he were a peasant while he sits on the throne and thumbs his fingers at the English. Why all the mystery?"

"I do not get it." Will shook his head decidedly. "These Arabs must live detective thriller lives."

"I'll venture Bent Nose is mixed up in it somehow," Dave mused. "It certainly looks funny."

"Maybe he is the Talisman," Will ventured.

"Impossible. That Talisman is something a man can carry in his pocket, or something that can be hidden in the cover of an airplane. Allencourte spoke of splitting the Bird of the Occident into pieces to get it."

"That is true. Oh, well, let's eat."

"Eat? Didn't you get enough to eat at the king's banquet? I'm full up for a week."

"I didn't eat much. I was too busy keeping an eye open for a nice little jail or a hidden dagger."

## Bent Nose Goes South

**S**EVERAL days passed, and Will and Dave were still at the hotel. At first they hated the place but as the days passed and General Allencourte seemed determined to hold their airplane they made the best of the situation, and began to enjoy the medley stream of life that poured into and out of the hotel.

Now they were seriously thinking of purchasing a camel, and in order to observe them they sat down on a stone bench near the hotel and watched the caravans as they approached from the north and departed toward the south. Just at the moment in which we meet them again they were interested in an unusual long caravan which had stopped at the hotel the night before, and was lining up to proceed southward.

Piled high on camels, horses, and mules were large bundles of merchandise, men, women and children. One by one the camels shuffled out of the place and on toward Mecca. Will was wav-

ing his hand at four children piled on one camel, and Dave was studying the motions of the animal.

“Camels,” Dave observed reflectively, “are slightly different from an automobile.”

“Just how, brother mine? An automobile travels, a camel does also.”

“True. But an automobile has three shifts, and a camel only one. A camel, in fact, will travel four hundred thousand miles in low gear, and you can’t change its shift.”

“You were never far out on the desert on a camel with a pole stuck out in front of its head, and a bunch of alfalfa stuck on the pole.”

“Say, Bright One, that is not a bad idea. Let’s buy a bale of alfalfa when we get our camels.”

“Well, you read about swift camels.”

“Yes, and that is as near one as you will ever get. But at the same time I would like to ride one. I have ridden nearly everything, from a Texas bronc to a wild airplane, and I would like to get on a cam——”

Will nudged his brother excitedly. A Bedouin came riding around the corner of the hotel on a white camel, and pushed into the caravan.

“Look at him. Same old——”

“Bent Nose as I live, and this time dressed like a common Arab with patches on the seat of his tunic. Let’s take him to General Allencourte.”

“But the English general said that he did not want him after he saw him at the king’s court.”

“Just the same that reward paper is still sticking up in the hotel courtyard.

“That does not spell anything. Sergeant Burton is just too lazy to take it down.”

The two lads settled back on their stone bench and watched the caravan disappear. Then Will got up and led the way toward the headquarters of General Allencourte.

“Are you going to try to collect that reward for Bent Nose?” Dave clucked inquiringly. “You might use the he-camel but I am speaking for the she-camel. I think she-camels will be easier to ride.”

“Bent Nose is more to us than you think but I am not going to interest myself in his arrival and departure. I am going to see if I can locate that fellow Saladin. There is something funny about that man.”

“Is he a man or a woman? Sometimes I think that he’s a man; then I think he’s a woman.”

“Man or woman, he has a lien on the Bird of the Occident, and holds us to take him anywhere he wishes to go.”

“Well, we will not take him far as long as that English general holds our airplane.”

“Just the same I want to see Saladin. I do not like our bargain with him. I want to free myself, and then perhaps we can get our plane back. I’ve a hunch that General Allencourte is holding the plane because of Saladin.”

“I suppose that you are going to walk right in on that English general and inform him that if he doesn’t come clean you will turn the United States army on him, or call a Chicago policeman.”

“I am going to talk to him about both Saladin and Bent Nose.”

But when they got to the English army camp the general was not there.

“’E’s gone to Jerusalem,” Sergeant Burton informed them. “Can I ’elp you?”

“How about this woman who came here with us from Bagdad? We want to see her. We have business with her.”

“She just shuffled hoff,” Sergeant Burton said pleasantly. “Maybe you’ll find ’er at Es-Salt

pullin' up the balm of Gilead, or playing chess with some of the long whiskered Harabs. She 'as a lot of mannish ways."

"I do not like the way you dodge," Will thundered. "How do you expect us to find her if she is scattered all over the sherifian kingdom of Transjordania? Besides, she is not a woman. She is a man."

"Is that so? That's funny. I'll 'ave to tell 'is nibs about that. 'E'll be interest."

This was all they could get out of Sergeant Burton.

"How about our airplane? Can we have it now?"

"That's funny too. 'Is nibs he says to me says 'e: 'If those b'ys want their airship tell them to wait until I come back!' Now why do you suppose 'e said that?"

And Sergeant Burton smiled amiably.

Will and Dave turned away in disgust. Had they thought of telling Sergeant Burton that they had seen Bent Nose, or Ali Aba, leaving in a caravan they would have discovered that they could have gotten very rapid action. But they did not think of Bent Nose as being of any more im-



portance to them or to General Allencourte.

They returned to the hotel and bought a camel, and for four days they rode around looking at the country. Finally, after seeing Es-Salt and the Jordan Valley by camel back, they rode into Amman, and left their camel in a public courtyard while they walked around looking at the strange things to be seen.

They stopped within the old Roman amphitheatre, and watched the Arab workmen removing the debris with a view of redeeming some of the galleries where boys were herding goats.

“These Arabs are hard workers.”

Dave was looking at an Arab who had been standing in one place for ten minutes with his hands on the top of a long-handled shovel and his chin resting on his hands.

“He is interested in something up there in that coffee shop on the street above which leads to the Greek Acropolis. Suppose we investigate.”

They left the excavations and ran hurriedly up the winding road. Presently they arrived at a coffee shop, the seats of which were ancient Greek pillars.

“Dog of an unbeliever!” howled an Arab.

“Son of a pig, whose grandfather was a dog of a Christian,” came the answer.

“Son of a monkey.”

“Three generations of he-camels, you can’t play chess. Go rob a caravan.”

“Looks like a nice prospect for a war,” Dave pointed out with a grin. “I am interested.”

The two ran up to the scene and stopped. On one of the marble pillars of the Greek Acropolis sat a band of Bedouins. They were grim, desert-tanned, hard faced. In front of them stood a young man with a fez on his head.

“Better rob a caravan than steal at chess, dog of a Christian.”

The remark came casually from the lips of one of the Bedouins who was lighting a cigarette.

“You play chess like you smoke tobacco, son of seven generations of unbelieving desert rats. If Es-Daud knew you were smoking you would never play chess again.”

The Bedouin sprang to his feet, slammed the cigarette on the ground and stamped on it.

“That for you, son of a rat dealer.”

“If I could travel with you on the Holy Pilgrimage perhaps Es-Daud would not hear of it?”

"Travel with me, dog of a Turk—never!"

The young man who wore the fez stepped back, lifted his hat and wiped the perspiration from his brow. This exposed his face to the two boys.

"Saladin!" they exclaimed in unison.

The man turned on them fiercely.

"Who told you to speak? Hold your tongues!"

"Ah!" The cigarette smoker turned his searching eyes on the man with the fez. "Saladin! Why call him Saladin when he claims to be Hissar Bayezid, a Turkish worker in leather? No, dog of a Christian, whose father was a Jew, I travel not with you."

As one man the Bedouins got up, and strode haughtily away.

"Now see what you have done," Saladin snarled angrily. "I was on the verge of accomplishing a great work, and you ruin everything."

"What have we ruined? If you are honest, and acting within the law, why all this mystery?" Dave walked up to the man and caught the lapel of his coat angrily. "For your sake we are held up, for your sake our airplane is sequestered, and our lives cast in shadows. Now is the time when you have got to do some talking."

Saladin quieted down and looked at Will.

"Dave said it!" Will declared emphatically. "We have got to get in on this mystery."

"I am not at liberty to tell you anything. It is not my secret. But I can tell you this. I am looking for a Bent Nose man with his ear cut off."

"You will never find him in Amman, nor among the Bedouins on the desert near this place."

"Those Bedouins are Wahabi, and I reason that I should find him somewhere among them. Why do you say that I will not?"

"Because we saw him join a caravan four days ago, and go southward."

"Is that so?"

Saladin stroked his smooth chin.

"It is true."

"Then we haven't a moment to lose. We must follow him. Come, we will go to Allencourte's camp."

Before the two lads could recover from their astonishment he was leading the way on a half run to an automobile which he had hidden. Into this machine he lifted the boys, and then took the wheel. In a moment more the three were speeding around curves and along the main streets of

Amman like a fire engine through the traffic of a big city.

But Saladin proved a skillful driver, and they drove up to General Allencourte's headquarters in less than half an hour.

"Hurry!" Saladin ordered as if in the habit of being obeyed. "Get out your plane. We must be on our way."

"Get out our plane?" Will looked at the man in dismay. "Say, we have been trying to get out that plane for two weeks."

Saladin ran into the office and returned with General Allencourte. The English commander waved his hands at the soldier in front of the hangar.

"Roll out that American plane!" he shouted. "No time to lose."

"Is she tanked up?" Saladin inquired as the nose of the Bird of the Occident appeared in the doorway. "Oil, gas, engine going good, revved up, and everything in flying condition?"

"All ready. I have had her kept in ship-shape for an emergency."

"Fine. We are on our way. Jump in, lads."

Wonderingly the two American boys obeyed.

Saladin spoke like a cultured Englishman, and they were astonished at the promptness with which Allencourte obeyed him.

Will took the control and Dave turned pathetically to Saladin.

"We've got to get to the mystery of this," he declared. "We have been running around in the dark long enough."

"You may never get to the bottom of it," Saladin responded bruskiy. "You are paid to obey, not talk." He leaned forward and shouted at Will, who had pressed the starter. "Follow that caravan route south."

The Bird of the Occident lifted swiftly. Until it was in the air, and sailing majestically Dave and Will expected the English general to call out some command to them. The idea that Saladin was hand and glove in with the English seemed so strange that they could not believe it.

How could he be, and at the same time be chasing all over Arabia on some kind of a foolish errand connected with desert sheikhs?

## A Long-Barreled Rifle

**W**ITH a slight movement of his feet Will turned the nose of the Bird of the Occident southward, and the plane sped swiftly along the track of the caravan route. For several moments no one spoke. Presently Saladin pointed west.

“I believe that it will be best to go as far west as the Dead Sea, and then along the heavier traveled route that comes down the Jordan Valley along the foothills. Notwithstanding the heat it is a route of heavy traffic both day and night.”

“If you are thinking of overtaking Bent Nose I am guessing no,” Dave remarked. “He is a wary individual and has four days start. Certainly we will not catch up with him this early in the pursuit.”

Saladin did not reply. Sailing high the plane soon brought the waters of the Dead Sea in range of the binoculars which Saladin now held in his

hand and used to survey the earth that was passing quickly beneath them.

"Do you suppose that sea is the pillar of salt that Lot's wife turned into?" Dave asked curiously, as he caught a glimpse of the waters. "If it is she was a mighty big woman."

"I am not thinking of Lot's wife just now," Saladin snorted sharply. "I am looking for Ali Aba. Follow the meanderings of the travel route and tell Will to lower altitude so that I can study each caravan carefully; at the same time ask him to slow up until we can barely keep up in the air. I need lots of time for this job."

The three in the plane could see the waters of the Dead Sea from the elevation of the plane but the Sea was not visible from the caravan route. Will turned the plane at the point where the railroad crossed the caravan route and followed the long line of camels shuf-shuffling slowly along. There was hardly a break in the traffic, although it was composed of one caravan after another.

"I tell you that you are wasting your time," Dave insisted. "Bent Nose has been on the road for four days."

"You do not know how long he has been on the



road," Saladin snapped. "He could have started and turned back, or made a side journey out on the desert. I am following my hunch and I want this plane to fly low."

Rebuked thus Dave got a book, and left Saladin to his self-imposed vigil.

Hour after hour passed by, yet Saladin maintained that constant watch through his field glasses. Notwithstanding the fact that the road was alive with mules, donkeys, horses, camels, and foot travelers—thousands and thousands of the followers of Mohammed on a holy pilgrimage to Mecca, and other thousands of merchants and traders with their camels loaded down with boxes and merchandise in immense bundles—Saladin did not seem to miss a single individual.

There was no Mussulman in a high tower to call these people to prayers but when the hour for prayers approached the camels stopped, the vast procession paused, and like a mighty wave of ocean water the cry rolled up and down the line:

"Allah Akabar! God is God, and Mahomet is his Prophet. To prayers! To prayers!"

And as one man the travelers sprang from the backs of their horses, mules and camels, and threw

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themselves on the ground with outstretched arms. And notwithstanding the fact that the swiftly moving plane, with its loud humming engine, flashed over caravan after caravan, frightening the camels, in some instances stampeding them, the devout prayer-like attitude was maintained until the prayers were finished.

They came to Akaba eah-Shamiyeh, and Saladin took the glasses from his eyes with a vexed thought and stepped to the stairway leading to the control room.

"I am making a mistake," he said to Will. "He may have gone into the Sinai Peninsular. Change due west until you intersect the line of travel to Akaba."

Over a long stretch of desert, the heat of which came up to the Bird of the Occident as if emanating from superheated chimneys, again to intersect a line of travel meandering between the main traffic to Medina and the Gulf of Akaba. In Arabia the air is clear, the vision far reaching. During this uninterrupted flight the two American lads could look westward and see that wedge of granite between Arabia and Egypt, arid, adamantine, not a sign of a tree or a shade except from

great rocks that offered weary men surcease from the breathless heat.

Beyond, in the dim, shadowy distance of the west, in the midst of steep granite mountains, lay the Monastery of St. Catharine, and a pathway leading the pilgrims zigzagging up the steep slopes to the summit of the Mount of the Decalogue; along that long trek of Moses and Aaron and the Children of Israel were ranges after ranges of rock, veiled in hazy mists of desert sky, visited only by pilgrims on camels; and on the east, across the plains they were speeding over, were shepherds herding their flocks, and Arabs in desert tents.

Such is the Sinai Peninsular. But it was not to the trek of Moses and Aaron that the two boys were to go.

Saladin permitted a detour from the line of general trek toward the Gulf of Akaba, while he searched back and forth for a bent nosed man riding a camel of milk whiteness.

That he would bring back the living body of that man to present to General Allencourte did not enter the minds of Will and Dave Hope. They were afraid, sore afraid, that if Saladin

found his man and got the opportunity, a dead man would be left at the place of meeting.

They had expressed this fear to each other under their breath, and they continued on because Saladin had bought their transportation but deep in their hearts hoping that there would be no meeting.

Before night they turned back again to the main caravan route to Medina. Night overtook them on the plains near the village of Kat Medawara. But they did not enter the village, or fly by night along the misty lanes of night travel.

“Down,” Saladin called, pointing his finger to a level stretch of hard soil close to the desert sand. “We will land near that camp.”

Will, weary with a long day’s drive, made the landing with a feeling of relief. When he got out of the airplane he stood gazing silently at the scene in front of him. It was a vast town on the march—a long string of mules, horses and camels winding like a snake over the desert as far as the eye could see in either direction.

The campers composed a pilgrim caravan. They were not in a hurry. They did not fear for their lives or property. King Hussein and his

son Abdullah, by agreement with the Wahabi, had made travel safe throughout Arabia. The pilgrims who faced real danger came out of Africa, from far off Timbucto—through the Soudan. They crossed wild deserts, they carried their lives in their hands each day, often they gave up all their wealth and sometimes their fairest daughters to the bandits who lay in wait for them.

Dave and Will remembered reading about these desert attacks as they stood side by side gazing silently at the loads being dumped from the backs of the camels, saw the camp fires glow up comfortably, and the women and children slip down from their mounts laughing, and chatting while the camel drivers with their sing-song cries turned their animals out to feed on the scanty vegetation.

In the midst of a roar of confusion the shades of evening fell, and loud rang the commanding cry:

“Allah akbar! God is God, and Mahomet is His Prophet. To Prayers! To Prayers!”

And then silence—intense silence out of turmoil and shouts, and men, women and children throwing themselves on the sand with outstretched hands.

"Why don't you pray?" Dave inquired, turning sharp eyes on Saladin.

"It is not my religion," Saladin returned abruptly. "But these people are entitled to their belief. Why gibe them?"

"I am not gibing them," Dave protested. "I am trying to find out what manner of man you are."

"I am my own man," Saladin said, cutting him off. "Your investigations are annoying."

Again bedlam and laughter, dancing on the sand dunes barefooted; Bedouins and merchants, pilgrims and traders, the men in long tunics and cloaks, with brown faces looking at each other and speaking slowly and calmly, others wildly excited, all at work pitching their tents while the women boiled meat and heated coffee.

"Come with Allah," greeted a smiling cameleer, stepping up to the two boys, "share coffee with me."

The two lads turned to Saladin. He bowed his head in assent, and the three sat down to an evening meal of boiled meat, brown bread and coffee, with the cameleer and his four wives, and sixteen laughing, smiling brown children.

When the supper was finished they did not in-

sult the generous Arab stranger by offering money, but each one made a handsome coin present to the sixteen children.

“El hamd el Allah!” the Arab children shouted in unison. “Never before have we met such rich and generous strangers!”

The supper over came the traditional Arabian camp fires, men, women and little ones gathered around the dying embers; stories were told of Arabian genii, followed by the smoking of pipes, games of chess in the moonlight—a light bright enough to read by—and sacred readings from the Koran; then more conversation in low tones, and more coffee sipping. Finally all wrapped round their heads the long cloaks, thrust their feet toward the dying fires, and sought sleep.

Through it all, from fire to fire, Saladin stalked silent and grim, looking into the face of each Arab—hunting for a man with a bent nose and his left ear lopped off—ultimately to return to the Bird of the Occident with a look of discouragement on his face.

“What does he want with Bent Nose?” Dave asked in a whisper as the man with a fez headgear finally entered the Bird of the Occident to retire

for the night. "He gives me the nervous prostration."

"I can't imagine," Will replied drowsily.

The second day was a repetition of the first. In the afternoon they arrived over Medina. The two lads expected their guide to instruct them to land at this place. Instead he pointed toward Mecca. Both lads knew Mecca to be a city about forty-five miles from Jidda on the Red Sea. It is a city of about sixty thousand permanent people and an uncounted horde of pilgrims that lies amid barren hills. The road from Mecca to Medina joins the Waddy Fatima, at Zeima.

It was near Zeiman that the stop was to be made for the second night. Zeima is at the end of the valley in which lie the gardens of Sola. It is famous for its hot springs and as a health resort. Beyond Zeima stretches the desert, extending northeastward.

On the edge of the desert they came to a great city of tents.

"There," Saladin announced, "is our destination. I must be put down in that city of tents. I shall rake them with a fine tooth comb, and before I have finished I shall get my man."



He brought this out like a detective hunting a criminal, and was so positive that the two lads thought of the stories they had heard of the mounted men of Canada.

“Land just beyond that last tent,” he continued, “and if it is possible come to a stop in the shadow of the tent so that I may have a chance of getting away unobserved.”

Will did not like this order. Again it flashed over him that Saladin played fast and loose with law, but while grumbling to himself he made the landing.

Saladin did not wait for the plane to come to a stop. He jumped to the earth and ran hurriedly behind the tent, and doubled and dodge around until he was lost to view.

While the two boys were looking at the vanishing form of Saladin, twenty or more Arabs rose up almost out of the ground, and surrounded their airplane.

“Are they King Hussein’s soldiers?” Will gasped in fear. “Get your hand on your passport.”

King Hussein, it will be remembered, was the Arab sherif king England had placed in con-

trol of Hedjaz, the capital of which was Mecca.

"They are not soldiers," Dave replied anxiously. "They are clothed in the costumes of desert Bedouins. I should think that King Hussein's men would be garbed in uniforms."

"What do you think they can want with us? It hardly looks natural that the Arabs we have been camping with, sipping coffee with and playing chess with on the desert, would be interested in making us prisoners."

"Perhaps they are just looking at the plane."

But it was not curiosity that prompted the gathering of Bedouins around the Bird of the Occident. The leader of the Arabs, a large, bony man, opened the door of the plane and put his head inside. In his hands he carried a long-barreled rifle.

"All right, excellencies," he said coldly. "One who never sleeps awaits thee."

## Es-Daud and Bent Nose

**T**HE point where the Bird of the Occident had landed was near the cultivated area, and they were led back on the desert through a long line of tents. From the air the tent city did not appear large. On the ground it seemed to extend on indefinitely.

As they departed they looked back anxiously at their airplane. A company of Bedouins had been left to guard it. This gave them some relief. At least thieves would not be permitted to steal it or cut it to pieces.

They were marched down a dry wash lined on each side with tents, and out on to the sandy desert where their feet sank deep into the sand with each step.

“Do you know,” Dave drawled plaintively, “that I am not a fast walker. True my legs come down even on both sides but they come down so hard that they stick in this sand and seem to grow there. If you march me much faster I will not be able to come back.”

“Perhaps my lord may not come back. That is with Allah.”

The man spoke icily in broken English.

“So you speak English, but strange I do not like your pronunciation. It has a peculiar death rattle attachment.”

The man did not respond, and presently they were ushered into the largest tent visible. It was divided into apartments and richly furnished with Persian carpets, rugs, and articles of Arabian value. In the center of this tent there was a large apartment fitted up for the head of the Bedouins. To Will and Dave it looked like the middle of a big three-ring circus, with camels, elephants, and horses feeding in the side tents.

In the center of this tent, seated on a raised platform covered with soft rugs, there was a man. He sat in a large upholstered chair, ornamented like a king's throne. Their escort led them up to this man and salaamed obsequiously.

*“Ugglot!”*

It was the Bedouin invitation to approach. The man with them pushed the two boys forward.

“They are here, emir. Allah inspire thee.”

Respectfully they drew back.

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“Who are you?” The inquiry was fired at them like a popgun by a man who did not look up from a book he was reading. “Allah inspire you to speak the truth.”

The boys looked at the book the man held. It was the Koran, and he was turning the leaves as regularly as if two Hope boys did not live.

“We are two American flyers touring the world.” Dave made the answer quietly. “And we came to Mecca to see the pilgrims.”

The man on the platform placed the book on a table by his side, and looked up. When he saw Dave he smiled. Dave rather liked the smile now. When he had first seen that smile it looked as cold as death. Now it held a kind welcome.

“Allah be praised. My brave American lad. Now, perhaps, I can repay a part of my great obligation.”

Dave smiled. He felt better. The man was Es-Daud, and he was in a fine Bedouin humor over something.

“Glad to meet you again,” both boys answered, and paused.

“Just why, my lads, did you not fly on to Mecca? It is barely twenty miles away, and there

are landing places for airplanes in the valley and on some of the hills.”

The query was a poser. The lads had an intuition that it would not do to inform the Bedouin chief that they had brought a passenger, and that he wanted to land at Zeima for some secret purpose; besides the very last thing that they would do would be to betray Saladin. In fact, a betrayal could not have been pulled out of them with a camel.

“Well, you see——”

A curtain moved aside at the far end of the large compartment and a man moved in noiselessly and seated himself by Es-Daud’s side.

“Ask them,” this man broke in, “what became of the man or woman who rode with them from Amman in their airplane.”

Will gave the speaker a startled glance.

“Bent Nose,” he exclaimed thoughtlessly.

The man frowned. He was elaborately costumed in the garb of an Arabian prince. There were jewels around his neck and hands, on his head was a rich, bejeweled headgear; around his waist there was a broad green sash in which had been thrust a jeweled scimitar.

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“Dog of a Christian,” he burst out angrily, “dost thou dare to speak insultingly to a prince of Arabia?”

Will attempted to placate the man.

“I—I—do not know any other name for you.”

“I owe you something for that heavenly air ride you gave me,” sneered the Arab.

“Go easy!” Es-Daud frowned at the other Arab, and turned with a smile to Will. “His name might be Ali Aba, and if you can take him back to Amman you might get from Allencourte one mule, one he-camel, and one she-camel. But I give you fair warning. He will be a hard man to take back into captivity without a regiment of soldiers.”

“So you were in that hotel where we ate with our fingers,” Dave added gently. “That was not a fair deal. You could have sneaked up to us, and invited us to eat and sleep in your tent—where living would have been better.”

“I was there, true; disguised as a beggar but my sleeping quarters were not quite so elaborate as they are here. I slept in the courtyard between two sheep.”

“Just what do you want with us?” Dave in-

quired curiously. He was asking himself why this man who was the leader of the Wahabis, the most powerful of the desert tribes, should be going around disguised as a beggar and spying on the English. "It seems to me that the longer we remain in Arabia the deeper grows its mysteries."

"For centuries and centuries," Bent Nose inserted, "Arabia has been a land of mystery. It would be indeed strange if two American lads could come in and solve all of our mysteries at the beginning."

"I am not satisfied that I have your right name."

Dave bowed courteously to Bent Nose.

"Permit me." Es-Daud stood up. "Sheikh Ali Aba Said, kinsman of His Eminence Haj Amin Hussein, presiding spirit of the Supreme Council of the Moslem World."

This grandiloquent introduction slipped from Dave like water from a duck's back. Not so with Will. Will, since he came to Arabia, had been reading up on Moslem history and conditions, and when he heard that Bent Nose was a man high in authority and closely connected with the head of Mohammedan religion he became seriously alarmed. They had not treated him with much



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dignity when he was stealing a ride in the Bird of the Occident.

“Just what would Commander Allencourte do with all those high sounding words if he caught this gentleman?” Dave asked flippantly.

The question caused a smile to pass slowly over Bent Nose’s face. It caused Dave to think that he was not so fierce after all.

“He might turn me over to that distinguished flyer, Dave Hope, to take for another ride in his airplane. That would be about as severe as ordering my head cut off.”

“I apologize.” Dave gave a grimace at the turn of the conversation. “But I appeal to you. You had no business trying to steal a ride.”

“I forgive you,” the Arab responded gravely. “By the way, where is the individual who was with you at the time? Remember this is the second time I have asked that question at this hearing.”

“I do not know.”

Dave could make the statement truthfully. He had no more idea of the present whereabouts of Saladin than the Arab had. Abi Aba frowned, and this time his heavy eyebrows carried a threat.

“I can easily forgive you for jolting me around

a little, but I must have the truth about this person. Did you or did you not bring this individual with you from Amman?"

Dave was ready for the question, and had his reply on his lips.

"You can't do all the questioning," he rejoined. "It looks to me as if there was some kind of a hen on here. First I catch you stealing a ride; second Hassan Atejan makes me a prisoner at your request; next I meet this gentleman and Hassan Atejan in the air busily engaged in trying to give Allah a chance to pass on their merits prematurely; then Hassan Atejan drops me like a pile of bricks, and I drop into Amman for a quiet sight-seeing tour, and the English commander grabs me, sequesters my airplane and puts me to sleep on a roof where I am charged double for rent; and now I come down here to take a look at the way Mohammedans go on a pilgrimage, and your men make me a prisoner and put me through the third degree. What is it all about?"

"He brought the person down in his airplane. I am sure of it," Es-Daud put in. "But I rather like the artful way he can dodge."

"We are fools," Ali Aba exclaimed savagely.

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“Just as we came up I thought I saw a shadow dart away from that airplane. I was looking for a woman, this shadow was a man, and he is the person we want.”

“What do you want with him?” Will demanded harshly, unthoughtedly. “We want to know what it is all about.”

“There you are, Prince.” Es-Daud smiled good humoredly. “Hunt up the man, and bring him here as quick as you can. Then the field will be wide open. As for these lads,” he stopped and stood up and patted Dave kindly on the shoulder, “they shall be my especial guests. Both are brave, fair-minded, resourceful, smart, and I am going to see that they enjoy their visit to the Holy City, and are not hurt while they are here. When they go back to America I want them to carry kind thoughts of Es-Daud.”

Bent Nose bowed himself ceremoniously out of the tent, and Es-Daud linked his arms in the arms of the two lads.

“I am going to treat you like Hassan Atejan did. Understand me, lads, there is method in my madness. You shall be my guests but you shall be allowed to go where you wish and when you wish.

But to be sure that you are not hurt I shall have some of my men take care of you, and your airplane will be held until we see fit to release it. In case you should find yourself in danger send out a shout. You may not see my men but they will be near at hand and armed and ready to protect you."

"But we do not need outside help. We will be able to defend ourselves."

Es-Daud shook his head.

"The outside world may think that Mecca is a holy city but there are many secret thieves, secret murderers, secret rascals, who will stoop to any crime. In fact, it is one of the most wicked places in the world, and there is a whisper that there is even secret slavery going on here. But rest easy. You are now in the hands of the secret police of the Wahabis. But——"

He paused for several seconds and looked thoughtfully at the floor. When he lifted his eyes they were solemn and grave.

"I am afraid that your passenger will not go back with you."

"You intend to kill him?" Will gasped in frightened tones.

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“I have not said so. I expect to catch him and get him out of the way. It is imperative that this be done. I hope that he will not put up such a resistance that it will cost him his life but he is in the path of a very holy cause.”

## Another Demand for the Talisman

**T**HE two American flyers were strolling down the Mas'a. From earliest times this had been the scene of the liveliest bazaars of Mecca. It is the sacred course between the two eminences—Merwa and Safa. It is a broad street running southeast and northwest across the barren valley in which Mecca is located. In the center of the city the Great Mosque—the largest and most beloved of Mohammedan buildings—is spread across this thoroughfare.

While the city has a general picturesque aspect the rest of the place presents little individual interest.

The two boys had discovered this after a week around the Holy City. They had climbed the hill to look at the palace and fort that overlooked the city, they had wandered up and down the barren valley, they had sought the dark spots of the underworld of the holy city, and now they were

walking idly along looking at the four and five storied houses with terraced roofs and projecting windows. Already they had visited the great bazaars, and had noted the fact that the traders preyed on the tourists and pilgrims for fortunes, and yet they had only peeped into the sinks of iniquity as a matter of curiosity.

Through it all behind them followed Es-Daud's police, armed and watchful but unobtrusive. It was the whisper in their ears that did much to keep them out of dangerous places.

"Remember," Es-Daud whispered to them with his mouth against their heads as they were leaving his tent, "you are at liberty to go anywhere, but there is no end of iniquity in Mecca. There are vile traders who come in out of the darkest regions of Africa and remote corners of Asia. They keep alive a secret trade in slaves in spite of the strict measures of his Majesty, Sherif Hussein. *Be careful.* Do not step into a pit. My men will watch but they might get to you too late. There are liquors in Mecca that destroy the minds of men for a long time. Drink some of this liquor and you may wake in the darkest regions of Africa."

Hence they peeped into the doors of these evil places, and drew back hastily.

Laughing at the antics of a monkey brought in by a pilgrim, who was pushing his way with half-shaved head to the open space around the Great Mosque, they heard a loud hubbub behind them. When they looked back they saw the crowds in the street parting hurriedly, and the shouting of hoarse Arabian voices.

“What is going on back there?” Dave asked of his brother. “Did you see anything out of the way?”

“Not a thing. Let us go back and see what has caused the turmoil.”

They pushed back as far as they could, and met a choked condition of pedestrianism. All were talking excitedly.

“What caused the excitement?”

Dave stopped in front of a stall where rich robes were sold and spoke to the merchant. It happened that the man understood some English.

“It is outrageous! It is shameful!” the merchant burst out. “A ragamuffin from the deserts of Africa did a most evil deed. His excellency, Emir Abi Aba Said, of Belad Eş-Zohm, was coming



down the street on the way to an audience with King Hussein. He was not only garbed in his richest court costume but he carried under his arm a costly present for the king—when, lo! Allah rebuke him! this ruffian from off the desert—a man as black as night and as powerful as a giant genii—sprang out. With a heavy blow from his cudgel he knocked down the emir's body guard, and before his excellency could run or put up a fight this ruffian sprang upon, struck him a vicious blow with his club, and jerked out of his arms the handsome presents that were meant for King Hussein."

"And the police, I suppose," Dave put in, "were down at the coffee house sipping coffee and playing chess?"

"Just so," declared the merchant, "and the result was unfortunate. The vile criminal was able to rob the great sheikh, and get away. Now they are hunting for him high and low but he has disappeared.

Will caught Dave's arm and led him aside.

"His eminence who was robbed was Bent Nose. Let's get away from here. We may be accused of helping the robber."

The two ran fleet-footed back to the square in

front of the Great Mosque. Here they paused again to watch the thousands of pilgrims wrangling and pushing for a chance to enter the gate and kiss the Black Stone.

The Great Mosque is an immense rectangle with coned towers, and the sacred buildings are scattered around a space of land enclosed in a wall. The largest open space inside of the rectangle lies near the Black Stone. This stone is a small black mass a span long of volcanic or meteoric origin. It was placed in the Black Corner at a height that enables a man of ordinary size to kiss it. The tradition concerning it is to the effect that it is a stone handed Abraham by the Angel Gabriel.

There is a space of ten spans between the Black Stone and the door on the east side. The man's height from the ground is called the *Multazam* and the pilgrim offers his donation with his breast against the stone. The *Hijr*, or floor, is paved with mosaic. Near by are the graves of Ishmael and Hagar. Here the mob struggles for an opportunity, after kissing the stone, to fall down on the floor with arms outstretched on the graves to howl out prayers.

The two American lads got inside and were

leaning against a marble wall watching the hysteria of religion.

“They honestly believe that that is getting them to heaven,” Dave remarked thoughtfully. “And Es-Daud believes it, and Bent Nose believes it. How any sensible person can think that gets him closer to God I cannot conceive.”

“They are taught to believe from their youth up—just like we were taught to believe the Bible.”

“True, but look how they come here. Nearly all of them come with their hair straggling in an uncombed mass around their shoulders, they are dirty and ragged, and smelly, and they pray with a forty-horse power motor until they think that they are good enough to get up and have their heads shaved and some sweet smelling stuff put on them by their priests.”

“That is better than going always without a shave, and the perfumes are strong enough to kill the body odors.”

“There is a lot of water running to waste down in the valley in the creek. They might give that a chance, and afterwards the perfumes would not have such a hard job to kill the smells.”

A man garbed in the costume of a Moslem

priest came out of a building, gazed over the vast congregation of people, discovered the two boys leaning against the wall, and walked up to them.

"Come!" he commanded. "You are wanted."

"Not us," Will protested. "We just got here. Our heads aren't shaved yet."

The man frowned belligerently.

"Which indicates that you have no business inside the walls of the Great Mosque. Come!"

Several men quietly surrounded them and enforced the priest's orders. They were escorted into a building, to be stopped at the threshold.

"You should feel honored," sneered the priest. "There is always a great scramble to get into this place. You are inside the Ka'ba."

He waved his arms around. The boys saw that the walls half way up were of beautiful variegated marble, the other parts were silver; the roof was veiled with colored silk. Between three pillars hung thirteen silver lamps. It was daylight outside but inside these lights were necessary to dispel the gloom. At one corner, which they were informed was the Iraq Corner, there was a stairway leading up to the roof. At the door where they stood there was a chest filled with Korans.

"Allah forgive you if you lie." The priest approached Will and hissed the words at him. "Now tell me where I will find it."

"Find what?" Will interrogated in astonishment. "We are the ones who are looking at things. Your people have them all."

"That is the Door of Mercy." The priest's frown was fierce and cruel. "It is known as Babel-Rahma. You, of course, are infidel dogs, but even so there is yet a chance for you if you enter that door. Speak the truth. Where is the Talisman?"

"I am fed up on that Talisman noise."

As he answered Dave started to sit down on the chest of Korans. Instantly the priest grabbed him with a grip of steel and lifted him, into an upright position.

"Do not sit down on that chest. You will die."

Dave looked down at the books with considerable awe but he couldn't see anything extremely hazardous about a chest of books.

"I will take the chance. I am tired."

He started to sit down again. This time the priest yanked him vigorously by the collar.

"Stand up and deliver the Talisman. We have

heard from Amman; we knew that you were on the way. You came here to rob his sweet excellency of the most sacred of treasures; and your man did it a short while since on the public street. Give me that Talisman!"

"I do not know anything about your old Talisman, and I do not care about it. Go find it yourself. I am certainly weary with all this mysterious talk. I have heard so much about the thing that I am dizzy. The wheels in my head are going around like a circular saw."

"I may order you thrown into Zamzam."

"Shucks!" Dave did not have the least idea what Zamzam was but he was not going to be bluffed. "Go on with your tossing."

"I may force you to stand by Zamzam, and draw water for pilgrims all the rest of your life. It is a dangerous task and you may fall in any time. It is a very deep well from which Hagar drew water for Ishmael."

"Pshaw, I am not afraid of a well of water."

"You will have to draw up the water when it rises every full moon and dash it over the young people when they come there to worship. It will be hard work. Where is that Talisman?"

"I wish I had it," Dave sighed. "By this time I would have given it to four hundred and forty-nine Arabs and one little Syrian girl."

"You make fun of me! You shame me! I was the one it should have been sent to. See! I will show you the sign of——"

"Nay, distinguished and mighty one, show no signs."

The two American lads looked toward the door. In the threshold stood Ali Aba. He looked rather the worse for the attack that had been made on him in the streets. His garments were torn, his left eye was black, and his right shoulder was humped as if he had been hit on the shoulder.

"And why, thou polluted one, thou son of a dog," snorted the priest; "yea, why should I not show signs?"

Bent Nose stepped forward and whispered several sentences into the priest's ear.

"Ah!" the exclamation was long drawn out. "Ten thousand pardons, your excellency, I did not know thee. I was on the verge of making a mess of things." He shoved Will and Dave dexterously out of the open door. "Avaunt! Get out! Stay out. No unbelieving dog is allowed

within these sacred portals. Your presence will no longer be tolerated.”

Surprised at the turn of affairs the two lads stood for a moment gazing at the open door. They were glad to get out. They were beginning to think that the Moslem priest was crazy, but for a time they were too surprised at the appearance of Bent Nose and his influence over the priest to move.

When they finally came to their senses they scurried out of the Great Mosque as if *Shaitan* was after them.

“I know one thing,” Dave muttered when they were safe outside, and saw Es-Daud’s guards again, “either we are crazy or these Arabs are all crazy. I haven’t heard a thing since I got to Arabia but ‘give me that Talisman.’ Tell me, gentle brother, what this Talisman is?”

“It must be some kind of a religious image,” Will returned with a puzzled air. “I guess that they think that it has fallen into our hands, and that we are holding out on them.”

“But if it is a religious image why did General Allencourte want it?”

“Ask me an easy one.”



## An Aged Pilgrim

**T**HE road to Taif was crowded. The pilgrims were following in the footsteps of the farewell pilgrimage of the Prophet Mahomet. Incidentally they would be present at the great fair on the plains of Arafa where there would be a genuine Arab market with numerous religious ceremonies—and by shrewd barter they might make their pilgrimage profitable.

There were many in that large concourse who attended with the full expectation of going away with pockets well filled. True, when they got to Mina they would throw seven stones at the *jamarat el akaba*—stones directed at the devil in the name of Allah. But when the *hajj* was finished they would be casting sly glances at the prospect of an easier life. They would be forever cleansed by their pilgrimage, and their sins would be things of the past while their pockets would be full.

Will and Dave were not making a religious pilgrimage. It was a journey of curiosity. Under ordinary circumstances they would not have been

attracted to this holy city of Islam but having come they were getting all the pleasure from the visit they could.

“That old ragamuffin ahead of us seems to be bent double with his great sins.”

Will pointed to an aged man who seemed to have come out of Africa recently. He was dark skinned, dirty, clothed in rags, and his head encased in a tremendous roll that had long since assumed the color of the Sahara Desert. He was walking bent far over; his knees shook and trembled with age and feebleness; and over his shoulders he carried a heavy load in a bundle.

“What do you suppose he can be carrying?” Dave indicated the burden on the man’s shoulders. “From the way he hunches over one would think that he was carrying a ton of rock.”

“Probably stuff as useless as rock. I expect he has a lot of stuff that he is taking to the fair in the hope of selling it. I will venture that his entire bundle is not worth thirty cents.”

“The rest of the pilgrims think that his burden is worthless. There are some children making fun of him.”

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“Let us stop them.”

“And butt into something. I am for being wise enough to let other people alone.”

At this moment an Arab boy caught up with the old man, and put his hand on the dirty bundle.

“*Etrush!*” howled the man angrily. “Son of *Shaitan*, begone to thy *Kafila!*”

The lad laughed and started to grasp the bundle. The old man drew it aside as if it were filled with diamonds, and snorted in impotent rage, at the same time attempting to push the lad. But his legs trembled so that the boy was not moved perceptibly. At this the people laughed, and many of them stopped to watch the sport.

“I will stop it,” Will snapped. “The old man is helpless.”

“And dive into a lot of trouble,” Dave cautioned.

Without heeding Dave’s caution Will stepped up to the Arab boy and placed his hand on his shoulder.

“Get, yamoose, skip! Is it a part of your religion to annoy an old man who is on his way to give respect to his God and prophet?”

The lad jerked back and started to snap at

Will but his father came forward, and caught his hand, leading him away in a rebuking way. As the man and his son moved on the crowd lingered a second and then continued in the procession, leaving the old man standing with his legs bent and fumbling with his pack. He looked so forlorn and hopeless that Will stepped up to him.

"Let me carry your burden, friend," he said courteously. "I am young and will relieve you."

The man jerked back as if angered, glanced hurriedly around, discovered that they were not seen except by the two Arabs who were following the American lads by command of Es-Daud, and whispered.

"Hist!"

The word came in English, and again the old man looked quickly at the two Arab guards. They were too far away to hear him.

"I am Saladin," he continued. "Near Arafa there is a long, level stretch of ground that offers a landing for a flying plane. The multitude will stand on Arafa until sunset shouting *Labbeyka* and saying prayers. At sundown there will be a great rush for Muzdalifa, where the night will be spent in prayer. This rush will cause so much con-

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fusion that there will be little or no official observation. Go to your plane, steal it out if you can, and tonight fly to that level stretch. Land shortly after the rush leaves Arafa. I will be there to meet you if it is possible. If it is not possible I will be dead or a prisoner. So make a desperate effort to get your plane there."

The men behind Dave pressed forward. They wanted to hear what the beggar was saying to Will although they were not actually suspicious. Will saw them and took his cue from a wink made by Saladin.

"I asked you, friend," he shouted in the man's ear, "if you would like to have me carry your burden?"

Saladin began to mumble loudly in Arabic, and pushed Will away with his hand.

"He says for you to go and not try to steal his offering," one of the Arab guards explained in broken English. "He is afraid of every dog of an unbeliever he sees, and that his burden contains all he has to complete his vows."

"Tell him that I do not want his old rags," Will affirmed heatedly. "If he is afraid I will steal from him he can carry it himself."

"That is what he intends to do," the Arab responded dryly.

Will turned to Dave.

"It was nice of you to offer to carry his burden," the guard continued. "I like you for that."

"To be frank," Will returned, "I am not crazy to carry it. It looks heavy, and I am getting tired. How far is it to this Arafa they are talking about?"

As he made the inquiry he saw Saladin slyly disappear in the crowd. There was admiration in his eyes. Saladin was a brave man and a great actor.

"It is half a day's journey on foot, and then into the night."

"Entirely too far for me to walk. What do you say, Dave, to getting the airplane and looking the ceremonies over from the air, or going back and resting."

"Resting! The show hasn't commenced yet."

"I have learned enough to know that all we will see if we keep in this procession will be a lot of people shouting. We heard that at the Great Mosque where they kissed the Black Stone. It is not worth walking all day to see."

The Arab guards fell back courteously but they

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both looked at each other shocked when they heard Will speak so carelessly about the holy pilgrimage.

“You needn’t outrage our Arab friends,” Dave snapped. “Can you not see that they do not like such talk? They are of the faithful, and we should be courteous and polite to them, respecting their views.”

The two Arab guards heard this, and smiled at Dave. It did much to relieve the strain of anger that was arising in their hearts against the two Christian boys. While they were speaking to each other with their heads turned Will slipped up to Dave and put his mouth to his brother’s ear.

“That was Saladin. He wants us to go back to the Bird of the Occident, try to get it out from under Es-Daud’s eyes, and go to a certain place to help him get away from here. I will explain later.” Aloud he said: “Of course I did not intend to say anything that would hurt the feelings of our two friends; nor did I think of criticizing their religion. They have a right to their belief but I am getting weary with watching things. We have seen the shops; we have visited nearly all of the sacred places; I have bought myself rich

with curiosities and Arabian art goods; and I am about ready for a long rest."

"Pshaw! I am not so tired but at the same time I will admit that walking all day and part of the night does not appear as interesting as it did when we started out. Just the same that ancient Arabian fair will certainly be something to see."

"How about flying the Bird of the Occident around for a time, and later on going by air to Arafa? It would be easier."

Will asked this with a beating heart? Would the Arabs resist? Were they being held prisoners by Es-Daud in a way that would prevent them from taking out their plane? Could they put up the plea that they wanted a better view of the Holy City and its surroundings than they could get from the earth, and get the Bird of the Occident into the air?

Their two guards did not speak, or make a move that indicated that they cared. As far as the two lads were concerned they could get as much information out of the well of Hagar as they could out of their guards.

"I wouldn't try it unless Emir Es-Daud agreed," Dave replied carelessly. He was quick



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to catch on and take his cue. "The Emir has been mighty nice to us, and if he thought that we were up to anything that would hurt him he would not want us to take the air."

"Suppose we go back and ask him?"

"All right."

It was not far from the place where they had tied the horses that Es-Daud had loaned them for sight-seeing. They were quite weary with walking, however, when they got to the animals, and it was with relief that they mounted to go back to the tent city of Es-Daud.

But this city was two hours' ride distant, and the ride back was not easy, especially as they were on tenterhooks, and a nervous strain over the possibility of getting into the air.

Would Es-Daud fall for such a simple scheme? Both boys could hardly think so. Es-Daud had demonstrated repeatedly that he was a smart and thoughtful man.

## Bent Nose Rides Again

**S**ADDLE-WORN and weary they finally arrived at Es-Daud's headquarters. Long since they had been impressed with the power and greatness of this desert sheikh. Around his tent there were thousands of desert Bedouins, armed men, and few women. Ever since their arrival this show of arms had mystified the two American lads.

Why should a Bedouin chief come to Mecca with a powerful retinue of men who plainly exhibited their fighting qualities? It was ostensibly a holy pilgrimage, but the Arabs were not following in the footsteps of the prophet. They were hanging lazily around their tents, and the few women who were with them were kept busy cooking food for them.

This was a question that was not answered for them, and they put it down as another Arabian mystery.

When they got to the tent where Es-Daud had housed the Bird of the Occident for them they

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both would have welcomed a long sleep, but affairs had reached such an important point that they dared not take a rest.

They did not know what Saladin wanted to do but they had given their promise to him, and with true American loyalty they had made up their minds to stick to him, and get him away if they could.

"If we are going to see that religious ceremony at Arafah today," Will observed as he swung down from his horse, "we had better call on Emir Es-Daud immediately."

"I am not in a great hurry," Dave protested mildly. "I would just as soon rest."

"Pshaw! We can't go back to America without seeing all there is to see, and it takes work to see things. I am told that this ceremony of following in the last footsteps of the prophet takes place only once a year. If we do not see it now we will never see it."

"Just as you say. It isn't far to Sheikh Es-Daud's tent."

All this was for the benefit of the two Arab guards who were still sticking close to their heels. If they had a report to make to their chief the

two lads wanted it to be a very favorable report.

They called on the Bedouin chieftain, and found him in his tent playing with his two children in a very homelike and pleasant way.

"We want to take our plane out, and fly around some," Will explained when the big man stood up to receive them. "We cannot see the things we wish to see by riding around. It is too big a job. But you have so many of your men around the Bird of the Occident that we would not attempt to go up without first getting your permission."

"You are wise," Es-Daud, returned dryly. "But I think that I can arrange the matter for you."

Leaving his children in the care of a Bedouin woman he went with them to the Bird of the Occident tent.

"Roll it out into the open," Es-Daud commanded when he stopped and shoved back the flaps of the tent. "The effendi wishes to fly."

A dozen Bedouins hurried to obey the order, gazing wonderingly at the two lads. Their wonder was shared by the two lads when the chieftain continued:

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“Fill it up with gasoline and oil.”

The two boys really had no idea that Es-Daud would let them have their plane. What did this sudden courteous acquiescence to their wishes mean?

The two boys, however, did not allow their amazement to interfere with their acts. Both sprang into the cabin of the airplane hurriedly when it was full of gas. But their anticipation was changed to chagrin quickly. Es-Daud waved his hand, and from the side of the tent an armed Arab appeared.

“Enter thou, my friend,” Es-Daud said slyly, “and see that no harm befalls our guests.”

A man ran forward, and sprang into the fuselage. He was heavily armed with a scimiter and a German automatic. When he sat down the gun seemed to come out of his pocket accidentally. When the two lads looked at him their faces grew white.

The man was Emir Ali Aba Said, and there was a very sly smirk on his face.

“Put up the gun, Brother Ali Aba,” Es-Daud suggested. “These lads are guests.”

Ali Aba thrust the gun back into his inner

pocket but the sly smile did not leave his face. The two boys looked at each other in consternation. They had an engagement to meet Saladin at dark, or near dusk, at Arafa; their only chance of filling their obligation was to get away with their airplane. With this Arab seated in one of the seats, armed and smiling slyly at them, it seemed impossible to accomplish their task.

Yet if they did not take the plane up into the air now they would never be able to get it off the ground.

Had this been a trap set by two bright Arabs to get into contact with Saladin? Did Ali Aba think that they would some time attempt to fly the Bird of the Occident into the air and go to meet Saladin? His acts indicated that he had deliberately planned the move.

Will entered the control seat and pressed the starter. The engine caught the spark and began to roar loudly, throwing a back slip so strong that the Bedouins in the rear ran aside to escape it. This gave Will a little encouragement, and he grinned and permitted the engine to revv up. When it was warm enough he pulled the stick slowly, and the plane began to gradually rise.

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As they sailed over the long line of Bedouin tents Dave slipped into the dual control seat, and nodded his head backward at the Arab chieftain.

“Bent Nose.”

Will giggled a little. Ali Aba heard the giggle, and stuck his head into the control room. There was a heavy frown on his brown face.

*“No stunts!”*

He tapped his scimiter suggestively, and returned to his seat.

“We might do some jiggling if we had Saladin aboard,” Will ventured. “Even if he had his old gun out we could give him an unexpected start.”

“How will you ever get Saladin aboard with Bent Nose inside watching like a hawk?”

“We will have to take some kind of a chance,” Will continued with whispered conversation. “We must fool Bent Nose into thinking that everything is all right—that all we are trying to do is to make a sight-seeing flight.”

The sun was two hours high when the Bird of the Occident sailed majestically over the vast milling procession of pilgrims. The appearance of the plane was so startling to the Bedouins from

the Soudan and other remote places that they stopped their *Labbeyka* to look up affrighted at the monster in the sky.

Was this Mahomet, their prophet, returned from the seventh heaven to do them honor?

A mighty shout went up from the hosts below.

“Allah Akbar! God is God, and this is Mahomet, his Prophet!”

But the religious fervor did not last long. There were men present in that assemblage who knew all about flying machines. They were Wahabis, who had come in great numbers to take the holy city away from Sherif Hussein, and who had been whipped back by the English with bombs and bombing airplanes. These warriors explained to the badly frightened pilgrims the nature of the flying monster, and all again turned to their religious worship.

While flying over the scene they noted carefully the lay of the land, and calculated the manner of landing on the level stretch Saladin had told them about. When they had the face of the country fixed in their minds so that they could return and make a landing by moonlight if necessary they flew over the mountains back to Mecca,



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circled around the holy city several times, made side trips over the palace and the ancient holy hills, and finally sped down the barren valley toward Jidda on the Red Sea.

From Mecca to Jidda is a two-days' journey by camel. The Bird of the Occident made the trip in half an hour. When they got to the Red Sea they flew up and down the coast for some time, and gave Ali Aba a view of the seaport and sea that was strange and wonderful to him. By this time Ali Aba was beginning to think that he was having his trouble for nothing. So far there had been no suspicious act on the part of the two boys. They had acted as if all on earth that interested them was a view of the surroundings of the holy city from the air. And all this time they were wondering how they were going to get rid of Bent Nose.

Thus, when they finally turned back toward Arafat, the Arab was lulled into neglect. He had watched them with eagle eyes to see if they made any attempt to communicate with any person on the ground during their various meanderings in the sky. They had not, and he was now beginning to think that his trap had failed. Thus,

when the shades of evening began to fall, and they turned the nose of the Bird of the Occident toward Arafa his suspicions were nil.

When they arrived over Arafa the holy spot was almost vacant. The vast assemblage of pilgrims had rushed into the village to get coffee and prepare for the last night of holy worship, have their heads shaved, and be properly cleansed of their sins. Will tilted the plane earthward.

“What are you going to do?” Ali Aba demanded sharply, sticking his head into the control room. “The plane is descending.”

“I am going to land down there, and take a look from the ground.”

Will made the declaration nonchalantly. Ali Aba accepted it. He could see no objection to a landing. He would keep his eyes open, and be prepared. Had the two lads taken a notion to sweep northward his thoughts would have been different. Quietly he returned to his seat in the cabin.

“What is the big idea?” Dave asked breathlessly. “You can’t take Saladin on until we get rid of Bent Nose. If you do there will be a big fight.”

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Will shrugged his shoulders.

“Something will have to be done. This is the time set to meet our passenger. If he can’t handle the situation when he gets aboard we are not to be blamed. He said that it *must* be done tonight. This is our only opportunity.”

Will brought the wheels of the plane artfully to the ground, and the plane began to taxi over the ground. At the moment they seemed to have the entire level space to themselves, but as the plane advanced Ali Aba looked out of the window, and saw an old man seated on a rock. He was a man bent over with age, and a heavy burden rolled up on his back. It seemed to Ali Aba as if the plane would knock the man over in the darkness.

“Look out!” he cried. “There is a man just in front of you. You are liable to hit him. He seems to be old and unable to get out of the way.”

Will swerved the plane slightly, and the plane came to a stop near the aged man.

“You just missed him by a hair,” Ali Aba shouted. “Now you had better——”

Dave stepped out of the dual control seat into the cabin, passed Ali Aba, and threw open the

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door as if he wanted to see if the plane had injured the man. The next second the old man nimbly caught the cowling and climbed into the cabin.

“Push him out! Push him out!” Ali Aba commanded harshly. “Do not let him get in here.”

But to Ali Aba’s astonishment Dave slammed the door on the old man, Will pulled the stick back slightly, gave the engine more gun, and the plane began to bump over the ground.

The aged man looked around, discovered Ali Aba and grunted.

“Push him out!” he shouted belligerently in Arabic-English, shaking his fist in Ali Aba’s face. “Son of a dog of an unbeliever, why push him out? Why break his neck on the hard ground?”

Will pulled the stick further backward, and the Bird of the Occident shot into the air.

“Emir,” Ali Aba said softly, “you had better have your brother stop this plane and push this man out.”

The Bird of the Occident soared aloft, circled over the glittering lights below, and shot forward with a sudden burst of speed that caused Ali Aba to fall back heavily against his seat.

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The old man faced Ali Aba threateningly.

“Push him out. Maybe you push him out?”

Ali Aba eyed the old man speculatively, and put his hand on his gun.

“It seems to me,” he said with a deadly calm, “that you are a very lively old man.”

“Hey, Will,” Dave called out with an audible grin, “Bent Nose again.”

The old man threw his bundle down on the floor.

“No more Bent Nose for me,” he announced in good English. “We will take this fellow along with us on a nice little ride to Jerusalem.”

Ali Aba jerked out his gun and covered Saladin.

“So you’re the spy I have been wanting to catch.”

“I do not think you will shoot,” Saladin responded with a smile. “Instead of being your prisoner you are my prisoner.”

He threw his bundle carelessly on the floor.

“We have fulfilled our promise to you,” Dave said to Saladin with some heat. “At the risk of being shot by this man we have completed our contract. You are up in the air, and on your way

to some other port. Now what does all this mean? Why did you wish to fly from Teheran to Bagdad, from Bagdad to Amman, from Amman to Mecca, from Mecca to Jerusalem?"

Saladin threw off the head gear of the Arab, lowered the long robe to the floor, and stood before them a tall, athletic young Englishman with broad forehead and piercing brown eyes.

"I have finally accomplished my purpose."

He stooped down in the face of Ali Aba's gun and opened the bundle he had thrown on the floor. Ali Aba, surprised in spite of previous suspicions, made no effort to use his gun.

Out of the bundle rolled a magnificently jeweled scimiter, several flags, a spearhead richly ornamented, and some jewels of princely value. "Sacred Scimiter of Mahomet, the symbol of a holy war, with the spear. Look at them, Ali Aba Said, and see your scheme of empire vanish—see your war moves go glimmering."

Ali Aba stared at the scimiter, and lowered his gun slightly. When he looked up he was looking into the muzzle of a gun held in Saladin's firm hand. Behind the gun there was a deadly menace in the steel-like eyes.

## 244      **The Sacred Scimiter**

“Put up your weapon,” the Englishman commanded. “Not the slightest move or I will blow your head off. You know just how important it is to me to do it.”

The gun in Ali Aba’s hand sank slowly to the floor. Before he could make a further move of resistance Saladin pounced on him, drew some irons from his pocket and snapped a pair of handcuffs around his wrists.

“That’s that!” The Englishman drew back with a sigh of relief. “He will give us no more trouble this trip.”

“There was no danger,” Dave remonstrated. “He couldn’t land without our help, and he would not have dared kill any of us.”

“You do not know him. He considers this a war. He would have dared anything. If he had been pushed just a little more he would have killed me, and forced you to return to Mecca. His party wants this scimiter—wants it badly. Es-Daud would kill quickly for it; and there are a hundred other Wahabi chieftains who would aid him.”

“Still I do not understand. Why all this gun play? I can see that you must be some kind of

an English officer or you would not be carrying handcuffs but I do not comprehend."

"Call your brother into the cabin."

Dave did so, and Will set the robot to guide the plane and obeyed the call.

"We left Teheran to get that stuff." Saladin pointed at the scimitar, flags and jewels. "To you those articles appear harmless, but to His Majesty's Government they mean war, murder, the slaughter of thousands of men and women. The weapon is the 'Scimitar of Mahomet.'" He paused and looked around, saw a water cooler in the corner and got up and washed the stain off his face. "Got a cigarette?"

"We do not smoke," Will answered.

"I do. Reach under my robe," Ali Aba said quietly. "Or release my hands and I will get it."

"Now wouldn't that please mamma?" Saladin laughed uproariously. "Just turn the gentleman loose, and bring on a nice little free for all fight. No thanks. I shall do without my smoke."

"You spoke of this curved blade as the 'Scimitar of Mahomet'? It was the second reference to it."

Will pointed inquiringly at the sword.



## 246      **The Sacred Scimiter**

“To make things plainer I will begin at the beginning. England, at the end of the World War was given mandate over Palestine and Arabia by the allied powers. His Majesty’s Government found another war on its hands to keep Arabia peaceful. Some of the thoughtful men of the kingdom finally hit on the plan of creating three buffer kingdoms in Arabia. They are Transjordan, Hedjaz and Iraq, or Mesopotamia. In order to satisfy the Arabian population England selected three of the Sherifian kings to place on the three thrones: Hussein, the leading monarch, they placed over Hedjaz; his son Abdullah they placed in control of Transjordan, and his oldest son, Feisal, they made king of Bagdad. Feisal has since died, and his son Ghazi is now king.”

“That is history, not news,” Will interposed slyly. “Give us news about that sword.”

“The Arabs of the desert did not like the idea of being bossed by Feisal and his two sons, and another war came up. The Wahabi were whipped back by the English, and now peace prevails. But it is peace that can be destroyed by a match. That Scimiter is the match.”

“Still I do not see where we come into the pic-

ture," Dave burst in. "And just at present we are the ones greatly interested."

"Later on you will see the picture." Saladin got up and took a drink of water from the cooler. "Pshaw, that water is brackish."

"It is fresh from the well of Hagar," Ali Aba explained. "Try the other cask."

"As I was explaining, this Arabian peace has barbs. England is afraid of its shadow. The Arabs want an independent empire stretching from Teheran through Arabia, and Egypt, and the Soudan, to the west coast of Africa. It is costing England fifty million dollars a year to keep down this war sentiment."

"Why doesn't England withdraw then, and let them have their country?" Dave demanded aggressively. "They have a right to their own country and their liberty."

Ali Aba smiled down his nose at Dave.

"I like that. It proves to me that I have been right all the time. You have been led into this without knowing it."

"Perhaps you are aware, Ali Aba, that England never draws out," Saladin insisted. "She has the reputation of being a bulldog, and if you

let her alone she will make this Arabian desert a pleasant and productive part of the world. All His Majesty's Government is getting out of this is an opportunity to spend money, but at the same time the king will stay with it even if your Arabian friends are standing around watching for a chance to drop a match in the dry grass."

"Just what have we been led into?" Will demanded of Saladin. "We have gone long enough in the dark."

"When I gave you that money to fly me around Asia I did it with a view of catching the man who was carrying the Scimiter of Mahomet and the other symbols of the holy war, which the Teheran shah had just sent out after having been instigated by Russian influence. I learned that some one would take the emblems to Bagdad. I made an effort to get there ahead of the man in order to notify the English authorities and try to stop the move. We missed the man, and I had to go on."

"I—I begin—to see," Will exclaimed in a bewildered way.

"Ali Aba was the man who carried them in a bundle beneath his robe when you gave him that

sky joy ride. Had I known it then the Scimiter would have been in my hands at the start and the war would have been over.”

Ali Aba smiled sneeringly.

“True, oh, spy! I went to Teheran to get the shah in line.”

“When we got to Bagdad,” Saladin continued, as if he had not been interrupted, “Ali Aba had arrived ahead of us, having stolen a ride in the big yellow plane. Thus he got to Ghazi’s ear before I arrived and informed the English authorities in Bagdad about what was going on. Fortunately Atejan Hassan is a strong man, wise and hopeful for the future of Arabia. He kept Ghazi from coming out in the open for a combine. Then Ali Aba went on to Amman. Here he got the best of us, and with the assurance from Abdullah that the Arabian holy war would gain the aid of Transjordan, he carried the emblems on to King Hussein. Hussein is ripe for the combine but I succeeded in spiking the guns of England’s enemies by knocking Ali Aba down and hi-jacking the emblems of holy war before he could get an audience with Hussein.”

Saladin sat down with a satisfied air.

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“Ah, I begin to see. And Es-Daud, he was——”

“He is really the biggest man in the intrigue. That tent city you saw camped around the hot spring district was a Bedouin effort to bulldoze and intimidate Hussein into joining the conspiracy. Had the emblems gotten to Hussein, by this time they would have been on the way to the Sou-dan and Egypt with Hussein lined up.”

“Just who are you, anyway? Of course I am beginning to think that you are a British——”

“Do not say spy,” Saladin objected mildly. I prefer to be called a member of the English Intelligence Bureau. My name is Sydney Allencourte. My brother is General Allencourte, whom you met at Amman.”

“Dave,” Will remarked casually, “you might make your calculation, and see if I am heading straight for Jerusalem. I think that is the city Mr. Allencourte wishes to go to.”

They landed in Jerusalem the next day at eleven o'clock. Will and Dave remained in the plane with Ali Aba while Sydney Allencourte took the precious Scimiter of Mahomet and the rest of the jewels into the office of the British

commander. He was not gone long. When he came back he stood on the ground and looked into the window at the two boys for some time without speaking.

"How about Emir Ali Aba Said?" Dave inquired presently. "Do you contemplate leaving him with us forever and forever?"

The Englishman took the key from his pocket and gravely unlocked the irons around the Arab's wrist.

"I regret, distinguished sir," he said with solemn courtesy, "that I felt forced to have to use this method of holding you. You are at liberty to go wherever you wish. If you think that you have been put to needless cost the English government will pay your way back to any point in Arabia."

"I shall not annoy your government," the Arabian prince said cuttingly, getting out of the plane. On the ground he turned to the two American boys. "Lads, I like you. May you walk ever in the shadow of Allah."

The three watched him disappear, and when he could be seen no longer from the Jerusalem hangar, Saladin turned to the boys with a happy smile.

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“The holy war is over,” he said. “Come in and let me introduce you to the commander of the English army. Now that he has the Scimiter of Mohammed in his hands he can prevent a declaration of a holy war. The presentation of the Scimiter is a part of the religious ceremony, and a declaration will not be made unless the Scimiter accompanies the assurance of an alliance.”

**THE END**