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DONOVAN PASHA AND SOME PEOPLE OF EGYPT

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 2.

FIELDING HAD AN ORDERLY THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE A TREATY OF PEACE AT THE MERCY OF TIBERIUS ALL THE WORLD'S MAD

FIELDING HAD AN ORDERLY

His legs were like pipe-stems, his body was like a board, but he was straight enough, not unsoldierly, nor so bad to look at when his back was on you; but when he showed his face you had little pleasure in him. It seemed made of brown putty, the nose was like india-rubber, and the eyes had that dull, sullen look of a mongrel got of a fox-terrier and a bull- dog. Like this sort of mongrel also his eyes turned a brownish-red when he was excited.

You could always tell when something had gone wrong with Ibrahim the Orderly, by that curious dull glare in his eyes. Selamlik Pasha said to Fielding that it was hashish; Fielding said it was a cross breed of Soudanese and fellah. But little Dicky Donovan said it was something else, and he kept his eye upon Ibrahim. And Dicky, with all his faults, could screw his way from the front of a thing to the back thereof like no other civilised man you ever knew. But he did not press his opinions upon Fielding, who was an able administrator and a very clever fellow also, with a genial habit of believing in people who served

him: and that is bad in the Orient.

As an orderly Ibrahim was like a clock: stiff in his gait as a pendulum, regular as a minute. He had no tongue for gossip either, so far as Fielding knew. Also, five times a day he said his prayers—an unusual thing for a Gippy soldier-servant; for as the Gippy's rank increases he soils his knees and puts his forehead in the dust with discretion. This was another reason why Dicky suspected him.

It was supposed that Ibrahim could not speak a word of English; and he seemed so stupid, he looked so blank, when English was spoken, that Fielding had no doubt the English language was a Tablet of Abydos to him. But Dicky was more wary, and waited. He could be very patient and simple, and his delicate face seemed as innocent as a girl's when he said to Ibrahim one morning: "Ibrahim, brother of scorpions, I'm going to teach you English!" and, squatting like a Turk on the deck of the Amenhotep, the stern-wheeled tub which Fielding called a steamer, he began to teach Ibrahim.

"Say 'Good-morning, kind sir,'" he drawled.

No tongue was ever so thick, no throat so guttural, as Ibrahim's when he obeyed this command. That was why suspicion grew the more in the mind of Dicky. But he made the Gippy say: "Good-morning, kind sir," over and over again. Now, it was a peculiar thing that Ibrahim's pronunciation grew worse every time; which goes to show that a combination of Soudanese and fellah doesn't make a really clever villain. Twice, three times, Dicky gave him other words and phrases to say, and practice made Ibrahim more perfect in error.

Dicky suddenly enlarged the vocabulary thus: "An old man had three sons: one was a thief, another a rogue, and the worst of them all was a soldier. But the soldier died first!"

As he said these words he kept his eyes fixed on Ibrahim in a smiling, juvenile sort of way; and he saw the colour—the brownish-red colour— creep slowly into Ibrahim's eyes. For Ibrahim's father had three sons: and certainly one was a thief, for he had been a tax-gatherer; and one was a rogue, for he had been the servant of a Greek money-lender; and Ibrahim was a soldier!

Ibrahim was made to say these words over and over again, and the red fire in his eyes deepened as Dicky's face lighted up with what seemed a mere mocking pleasure, a sort of impish delight in teasing, like that of a madcap girl with a yokel. Each time Ibrahim said the words he jumbled them worse than before. Then Dicky asked him if he knew what an old man was, and Ibrahim said no. Dicky said softly in Arabic that the old man was a fool to have three such sons—a thief and a rogue and a soldier. With a tender patience he explained what a thief and a rogue were, and his voice was curiously soft when he added, in Arabic: "And the third son was like you, Mahommed—and he died first."

Ibrahim's eyes gloomed under the raillery—under what he thought the cackle of a detested Inglesi with a face like a girl, of an infidel who had a tongue that handed you honey on the point of a two-edged sword. In his heart he hated this slim small exquisite as he had never hated Fielding. His eyes became like little pots of simmering blood, and he showed his teeth in a hateful way, because he was sure he should glut his hatred before the moon came full.

Little Dicky Donovan knew, as he sleepily told Ibrahim to go, that for months the Orderly had listened to the wholesome but scathing talk of Fielding and himself on the Egyptian Government, and had reported it to those whose tool and spy he was.

That night, the stern-wheeled tub, the Amenhotep, lurched like a turtle on its back into the sands by Beni Hassan. Of all the villages of Upper Egypt, from the time of Rameses, none has been so bad as Beni Hassan. Every ruler of Egypt, at one time or another, has raided it and razed it to the ground. It was not for pleasure that Fielding sojourned there.

This day, and for three days past, Fielding had been abed in his cabin with a touch of Nilotic fever. His heart was sick for Cairo, for he had been three months on the river; and Mrs. Henshaw was in Cairo—Mrs. Henshaw, the widow of Henshaw of the Buffs, who lived with her brother, a stone's-throw from the Esbekieh Gardens. Fielding longed for Cairo, but Beni Hassan intervened. The little man who worried Ibrahim urged him the way his private inclinations ran, but he was obdurate: duty must be done.

Dicky Donovan had reasons other than private ones for making haste to Cairo. During the last three days they had stopped at five villages on the Nile, and in each place Dicky, who had done Fielding's work of inspection for him, had been met with unusual insolence from the Arabs and fellaheen, officials and others; and the prompt chastisement he rendered with his riding-whip in return did not tend to ease his mind, though it soothed his feelings. There had been flying up the river strange rumours of trouble down in Cairo, black threats of rebellion— of a seditious army in the palm of one man's hand. At the cafes on the Nile, Dicky himself had seen strange gatherings, which dispersed as he came on them.

For, somehow, his smile had the same effect as other men's frowns.

This evening he added a whistle to his smile as he made his inspection of the engine-room and the galley and every corner of the Amenhotep, according to his custom. What he whistled no man knew, not even himself. It was ready-made. It might have been a medley, but, as things happened, it was an overture; and by the eyes, the red-litten windows of the mind of Mahommed Ibrahim, who squatted beside the Yorkshire engineer at the wheel, playing mankalah, he knew it was an overture.

As he went to his cabin he murmured to himself "There's the devil to pay: now I wonder who pays?" Because he was planning things of moment, he took a native drum down to Fielding's cabin, and made Fielding play it, native fashion, as he thrummed his own banjo and sang the airy ballad, "The Dragoons of Enniskillen." Yet Dicky was thinking hard all the time.

Now there was in Beni Hassan a ghdzeeyeh, a dancing-woman of the Ghawazee tribe, of whom, in the phrase of the moralists, the less said the better. What her name was does not matter. She was well-to-do. She had a husband who played the kemengeh for her dancing. She had as good a house as the Omdah, and she had two female slaves.

Dicky Donovan was of that rare type of man who has the keenest desire to know all things, good or evil, though he was fastidious when it came to doing them. He had a gift of keeping his own commandments. If he had been a six-footer and riding eighteen stone—if he hadn't been, as Fielding often said, so "damned finicky," he might easily have come a cropper. For, being absolutely without fear, he did what he listed and went where he listed. An insatiable curiosity was his strongest point, save one. If he had had a headache—though he never had—he would at once have made an inquiry into the various kinds of headache possible to mortal man, with pungent deductions from his demonstrations. So it was that when he first saw a dancing-girl in the streets of Cairo he could not rest until by circuitous routes he had traced the history of dancing- girls back through the ages, through Greece and the ruby East, even to the days when the beautiful bad ones were invited to the feasts of the mighty, to charm the eyes of King Seti or Queen Hatsu.

He was an authority on the tribe of the Ghawazee, proving, to their satisfaction and his own, their descent from the household of Haroon al Rashid. He was, therefore, welcome among them. But he had found also, as many another wise man has found in "furrin parts," that your greatest safety lies in bringing tobacco to the men and leaving the women alone. For, in those distant lands, a man may sell you his nuptial bed, but he will pin the price of it to your back one day with the point of a lance or the wedge of a hatchet.

Herebefore will be found the reason why Dicky Donovan—twenty-five and no moustache, pink-cheeked and rosy-hearted, and "no white spots on his liver"—went straight, that particular night, to the house of the chief dancing-girl of Beni Hassan for help in his trouble. From her he had learned to dance the dance of the Ghawazee. He had learned it so that, with his insatiable curiosity, his archaeological instinct, he should be able to compare it with the Nautch dance of India, the Hula-Hula of the Sandwich Islanders, the Siva of the Samoans.

A half-hour from the time he set his foot in Beni Hassan two dancing- girls issued from the house of the ghdzeeyeh, dressed in shintiydn and muslin tarah, anklets and bracelets, with gold coins about the forehead —and one was Dicky Donovan. He had done the rare thing: he had trusted absolutely that class of woman who is called a "rag" in that far country, and a "drab" in ours. But he was a judge of human nature, and judges of human nature know you are pretty safe to trust a woman who never trusts, no matter how bad she is, if she has no influence over you. He used to say that the better you are and the worse she is, the more you can trust her. Other men may talk, but Dicky Donovan knows.

What Dicky's aunt, the Dowager Lady Carmichael, would have said to have seen Dicky flaunting it in the clothes of a dancing-girl through the streets of vile Beni Hassan, must not be considered. None would have believed that his pink-and-white face and slim hands and staringly white ankles could have been made to look so boldly handsome, so impeachable. But henna in itself seems to have certain qualities of viciousness in its brownish-red stain, and Dicky looked sufficiently abandoned. The risk was great, however, for his Arabic was too good and he had to depend upon the ghdzeeyeh's adroitness, on the peculiar advantage of being under the protection of the mistress of the house as large as the Omdah's.

From one cafe to another they went. Here a snakecharmer gathered a meagre crowd about him; there an 'A'l'meh, or singing-girl, lilted a ribald song; elsewhere hashish-smokers stretched out gaunt, loathsome fingers towards them; and a Sha'er recited the romance of Aboo Zeyd. But Dicky noticed that none of the sheikhs, none of the great men of the village, were at these cafes; only the very young, the useless, the licentious, or the decrepit. But by flickering fires under the palm- trees were groups of men talking and gesticulating; and now and then an Arab galloped through the street, the point of his

long lance shining. Dicky felt a secret, like a troubled wind, stirring through the place, a movement not explainable by his own inner tremulousness.

At last they went to the largest cafe beside the Mosque of Hoseyn. He saw the Sheikh-el-beled sitting on his bench, and, grouped round him, smoking, several sheikhs and the young men of the village. Here he and the ghdzeeyeh danced. Few noticed them; for which Dicky was thankful; and he risked discovery by coming nearer the circle. He could, however, catch little that they said, for they spoke in low tones, the Sheikh-el- beled talking seldom, but listening closely.

The crowd around the cafe grew. Occasionally an Arab would throw back his head and cry: "Allahu Akbar!" Another drew a sword and waved it in the air. Some one in front of him whispered one startling word to a camel-driver.

Dicky had got his cue. To him that whisper was as loud and clear as the "La ilaha illa-llah!" called from the top of a mosque. He understood Ibrahim the Orderly now; he guessed all—rebellion, anarchy, massacre. A hundred thoughts ran through his head: what was Ibrahim's particular part in the swaggering scheme was the first and the last of them.

Ibrahim answered for himself, for at that moment he entered the burning circle. A movement of applause ran round, then there was sudden silence. The dancing-girls were bid to stop their dancing, were told to be gone. The ghazeeyeh spat at them in an assumed anger, and said that none but swine of Beni Hassan would send a woman away hungry. And because the dancing-girl has power in the land, the Sheikh-el-beled waved his hand towards the cafe, hastily calling the name of a favourite dish. Eyes turned unconcernedly towards the brown clattering ankles of the two as they entered the cafe and seated themselves immediately behind where the Sheikh-el-beled squatted. Presently Dicky listened to as sombre a tale as ever was told in the darkest night. The voice of the tale-teller was that of Ibrahim, and the story was this: that the citadel at Cairo was to be seized, that the streets of Alexandria were to be swept free of Europeans, that every English official between Cairo and Kordofan was to be slain. Mahommed Ibrahim, the spy, who knew English as well as Donovan Pasha knew Arabic, was this very night to kill Fielding Bey with his own hand!

This night was always associated in Dicky's mind with the memory of stewed camel's-meat. At Ibrahim's words he turned his head from the rank steam, and fingered his pistol in the loose folds of his Arab trousers. The dancing-girl saw the gesture and laid a hand upon his arm.

"Thou art one against a thousand," she whispered; "wait till thou art one against one."

He dipped his nose in the camel-stew, for some one poked a head in at the door—every sense in him was alert, every instinct alive.

"To-night," said Mahommed Ibrahim, in the hoarse gutturals of the Bishareen, "it is ordered that Fielding Bey shall die—and by my hand, mine own, by the mercy of God! And after Fielding Bey the clean-faced ape that cast the evil eye upon me yesterday, and bade me die. 'An old man had three sons,' said he, the infidel dog, 'one was a thief, another a rogue, and the third a soldier—and the soldier died first.' 'A camel of Bagdad,' he called me. Into the belly of a dead camel shall he go, be sewn up like a cat's liver in a pudding, and cast into the Nile before God gives tomorrow a sun."

Dicky pushed away the camel-stew. "It is time to go," he said.

The ghdzeeyeh rose with a laugh, caught Dicky by the hand, sprang out among the Arabs, and leapt over the head of the village barber, calling them all "useless, sodden greybeards, with no more blood than a Nile shad, poorer than monkeys, beggars of Beni Hassan!" Taking from her pocket a handful of quarter-piastres, she turned on her heels and tossed them among the Arabs with a contemptuous laugh. Then she and Dicky disappeared into the night.

II

When Dicky left her house, clothed in his own garments once more, but the stains of henna still on his face and hands and ankles, he pressed into the ghazeeyeh's hand ten gold-pieces. She let them fall to the ground.

"Love is love, effendi," she said. "Money do they give me for what is no love. She who gives freely for love takes naught in return but love, by the will of God!" And she laid a hand upon his arm.

"There is work to do!" said Dicky; and his hand dropped to where his pistol lay—but not to threaten her. He was thinking of others.

"To-morrow," she said; "to-morrow for that, effendi," and her beautiful eyes hung upon his.

"There's corn in Egypt, but who knows who'll reap it to-morrow? And I shall be in Cairo to-morrow."

"I also shall be in Cairo to-morrow, O my lord and master!" she answered.

"God give you safe journey," answered Dicky, for he knew it was useless to argue with a woman. He was wont to say that you can resolve all women into the same simple elements in the end.

Dicky gave a long perplexed whistle as he ran softly under the palms towards the Amenhotep, lounging on the mud bank. Then he dismissed the dancing-girl from his mind, for there was other work to do. How he should do it he planned as he opened the door of Fielding's cabin softly and saw him in a deep sleep.

He was about to make haste on deck again, where his own nest was, when, glancing through the window, he saw Mahommed Ibrahim stealing down the bank to the boat's side. He softly drew-to the little curtain of the cabin window, leaving only one small space through which the moonlight streamed. This ray of light fell just across the door through which Mahommed Ibrahim would enter. The cabin was a large one, the bed was in the middle. At the head was a curtain slung to protect the sleeper from the cold draughts of the night.

Dicky heard a soft footstep in the companionway, then before the door. He crept behind the curtain. Mahommed Ibrahim was listening without. Now the door opened very gently, for this careful Orderly had oiled the hinges that very day. The long flabby face, with the venomous eyes, showed in the streak of moonlight. Mahommed Ibrahim slid inside, took a step forward and drew a long knife from his sleeve. Another move towards the sleeping man, and he was near the bed; another, and he was beside it, stooping over. . .

Now, a cold pistol suddenly thrust in your face is disconcerting, no matter how well laid your plans. It was useless for the Orderly to raise his hand: a bullet is quicker than the muscles of the arm and the stroke of a knife.

The two stood silent an instant, the sleeping man peaceful between them. Dicky made a motion of his head towards the door. Mahommed Ibrahim turned. Dicky did not lower his pistol as the Orderly, obeying, softly went as he had softly come. Out through the doorway, up the stairs, then upon the moonlit deck, the cold muzzle of the pistol at the head of Mahommed Ibrahim.

Dicky turned now, and faced him, the pistol still pointed.

Then Mahommed Ibrahim spoke. "Malaish!" he said. That was contempt. It was Mahommedan resignation; it was the inevitable. "Malaish—no matter!" he said again; and "no matter" was in good English.

Dicky's back was to the light, the Orderly's face in the full glow of it. Dicky was standing beside the wire communicating with the engineer's cabin. He reached out his hand and pulled the hook. The bell rang below. The two above stood silent, motionless, the pistol still levelled.

Holgate, the young Yorkshire engineer, pulled himself up to the deck two steps of the ladder at a time. "Yes, sir," he said, coming forward quickly, but stopping short when he saw the levelled pistol. "Drop the knife, Ibrahim," said Dicky in a low voice. The Orderly dropped the knife.

"Get it, Holgate," said Dicky; and Holgate stooped and picked it up. Then he told Holgate the story in a few words. The engineer's fingers tightened on the knife.

"Put it where it will be useful, Holgate," said Dicky. Holgate dropped it inside his belt.

"Full steam, and turn her nose to Cairo. No time to lose!" He had told
Holgate earlier in the evening to keep up steam.

He could see a crowd slowly gathering under the palm-trees between the shore and Beni Hassan. They were waiting for Mahommed Ibrahim's signal.

Holgate was below, the sailors were at the cables. "Let go ropes!"
Dicky called.

A minute later the engine was quietly churning away below; two minutes later the ropes were drawn in; half a minute later still the nose of the Amenhotep moved in the water. She backed from the Nile mud, lunged free.

"An old man had three sons; one was a thief, another a rogue, and the worst of the three was a soldier—and he dies first! What have you got to say before you say your prayers?" said Dicky to the Orderly.

"Mafish!" answered Mahommed Ibrahim, moveless. "Mafish—nothing!" And he said "nothing" in good English.

"Say your prayers then, Mahommed Ibrahim," said Dicky in that voice like a girl's; and he backed a little till he rested a shoulder against the binnacle.

Mahommed Ibrahim turned slightly till his face was towards the east. The pistol now fell in range with his ear. The Orderly took off his shoes, and, standing with his face towards the moon, and towards Mecca, he murmured the fatihah from the Koran. Three times he bowed, afterwards he knelt and touched the deck with his forehead three times also. Then he stood up. "Are you ready?" asked Dicky.

"Water!" answered Mahommed Ibrahim in English. Dicky had forgotten that final act of devotion of the good Mahommedan. There was a filter of Nile-water near. He had heard it go drip-drip, drip-drip, as Mahommed Ibrahim prayed.

"Drink," he said, and pointed with his finger. Mahommed Ibrahim took the little tin cup hanging by the tap, half filled it, drank it off, and noiselessly put the cup back again. Then he stood with his face towards the pistol.

"The game is with the English all the time," said Dicky softly.

"Malaish!" said Mahommed. "Jump," said Dicky.

One instant's pause, and then, without a sound, Ibrahim sprang out over the railing into the hard-running current, and struck out for the shore. The Amenhotep passed him. He was in the grasp of a whirlpool so strong that it twisted the Amenhotep in her course. His head spun round like a water-fly, and out of the range of Dicky's pistol he shrieked to the crowd on the shore. They burst from the palm-trees and rushed down to the banks with cries of rage, murder, and death; for now they saw him fighting for his life. But the Amenhotep's nose was towards Cairo, and steam was full on, and she was going fast. Holgate below had his men within range of a pistol too. Dicky looked back at the hopeless fight as long as he could see.

Down in his cabin Fielding Bey slept peacefully, and dreamed of a woman in Cairo.

THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

In spite of being an Englishman with an Irish name and a little Irish blood, Dicky Donovan had risen high in the favour of the Khedive, remaining still the same Dicky Donovan he had always been—astute but incorruptible. While he was favourite he used his power wisely, and it was a power which had life and death behind it. When therefore, one day, he asked permission to take a journey upon a certain deadly business of justice, the Khedive assented to all he asked, but fearing for his safety, gave him his own ring to wear and a line under his seal.

With these Dicky set forth for El Medineh in the Fayoum, where his important business lay. As he cantered away from El Wasta, out through the green valley and on into the desert where stands the Pyramid of Maydoum, he turned his business over and over in his mind, that he might study it from a hundred sides. For miles he did not see a human being— only a caravan of camels in the distance, some vultures overhead and the smoke of the train behind him by the great river. Suddenly, however, as he cantered over the crest of a hill, he saw in the desert-trail before him a foot-traveller, who turned round

hastily, almost nervously, at the sound of his horse's feet.

It was the figure of a slim, handsome youth, perhaps twenty, perhaps thirty. The face was clean-shaven, and though the body seemed young and the face was unlined, the eyes were terribly old. Pathos and fanaticism were in the look, so Dicky Donovan thought. He judged the young Arab to be one of the holy men who live by the gifts of the people, and who do strange acts of devotion; such as sitting in one place for twenty years, or going without clothes, or chanting the Koran ten hours a day, or cutting themselves with knives. But this young man was clothed in the plain blue calico of the fellah, and on his head was a coarse brown fez of raw wool. Yet round the brown fez was a green cloth, which may only be worn by one who has been a pilgrimage to Mecca.

"Nehar-ak koom said—God be with you!" said Dicky in Arabic.

"Nehar-ak said, efendi—God prosper thy greatness!" was the reply, in a voice as full as a man's, but as soft as a woman's—an unusual thing in an Arab. "Have you travelled far?" asked Dicky.

"From the Pyramid of Maydoum, effendi," was the quiet reply.

Dicky laughed. "A poor tavern; cold sleeping there, Mahommed."

"The breath of Allah is warm," answered the Arab. Dicky liked the lad's answer. Putting a hand in his saddle-bag, he drew out a cake of dourha bread and some onions—for he made shift to live as the people lived, lest he should be caught unawares some time, and die of the remembrance of too much luxury in the midst of frugal fare.

"Plenty be in your home, Mahommed!" he said, and held out the bread and onions.

The slim hands came up at once and took the food, the eyes flashed a strange look at Dicky. "God give you plenty upon your plenty, effendi, and save your soul and the souls of your wife and children, if it be your will, effendi!"

"I have no wife, praise be to God," said Dicky; "but if I had, her soul would be saved before my own, or I'm a dervish!" Then something moved him further, and he unbuttoned his pocket—for there really was a button to Dicky's pocket. He drew out a five-piastre piece, and held it down to the young Arab. "For the home-coming after Mecca," he said, and smiled.

The young Arab drew back. "I will eat thy bread, but no more, effendi," he said quickly.

"Then you're not what I thought you were," said Dicky under his breath, and, with a quick good-bye, struck a heel into the horse's side and galloped away toward El Medineh.

In El Medineh Dicky went about his business—a bitter business it was, as all Egypt came to know. For four days he pursued it, without halting and in some danger, for, disguise himself as he would in his frequenting of the cafes, his Arabic was not yet wholly perfect. Sometimes he went about in European dress, and that was equally dangerous, for in those days the Fayoum was a nest of brigandage and murder, and an European—an infidel dog—was fair game.

But Dicky had two friends—the village barber, and the moghassil of the dead, or body-washer, who were in his pay; and for the moment they were loyal to him. For his purpose, too, they were the most useful of mercenaries: for the duties of a barber are those of a valet-de-chambre, a doctor, registrar and sanitary officer combined; and his coadjutor in information and gossip was the moghassil, who sits and waits for some one to die, as a raven on a housetop waits for carrion. Dicky was patient, but as the days went by and nothing came of all his searching, his lips tightened and his eyes became more restless. One day, as he sat in his doorway twisting and turning things in his mind, with an ugly knot in his temper, the barber came to him quickly.

"Saadat el basha, I have found the Englishwoman, by the mercy of Allah!"

Dicky looked at Achmed Hariri for a moment without stirring or speaking; his lips relaxed, his eyes softening with satisfaction.

"She is living?"

"But living, saadat el basha."

Dicky started to his feet. "At the mudirieh?"

"At the house of Azra, the seller of sherbet, saadat el basha."

"When did she leave the mudirieh?"

"A week past, effendi."

"Why did she leave?"

"None knows save the sister of Azra, who is in the harem. The Englishwoman was kind to her when she was ill, and she gave her aid."

"The Mudir has not tried to find her?"

"Will the robber make a noise if the horse he has stolen breaks free, effendi?"

"Why has she not flown the place?"

"Effendi, can the broken-winged bird fly!"

"She is ill?" He caught the barber by the arm.

"As a gazelle with an arrow in its breast."

Dicky's small hand tightened like a vice on the barber's thin arm. "And he who sped the arrow, Achmed Hariri?"

Achmed Hariri was silent.

"Shall he not die the death?"

Achmed Hariri shrank back.

Dicky drew from his pocket a paper with seals, and held it up to the barber's eyes. The barber stared, drew back, salaamed, bowed his head, and put a hand upon his turban as a slave to his master.

"Show me the way, Mahommed," said Dicky, and stepped out.

Two hours later Dicky, with pale face, and fingers clutching his heavy riding-whip fiercely, came quickly towards the bridge where he must cross to go to the mudirieh. Suddenly he heard an uproar, and saw men hurrying on in front of him. He quickened his footsteps, and presently came to a house on which had been freshly painted those rough, staring pictures of "accidents by flood and field," which Mecca pilgrims paint on their houses like hatchments, on their safe return—proclamation of their prestige.

Presently he saw in the grasp of an infuriated crowd the Arab youth he had met in the desert, near the Pyramid of Maydoum. Execrations, murderous cries arose from the mob. The youth's face was deathly pale, but it had no fear. Upon the outskirts of the crowd hung women, their robes drawn half over their faces, crying out for the young man's death. Dicky asked the ghaflir standing by what the youth had done.

"It is no youth, but a woman," he answered—"the latest wife of the Mudir. In a man's clothes—"

He paused, for the head sheikh of El Medineh, with two Ulema, entered the throng. The crowd fell back. Presently the Sheikh-el-beled mounted the mastaba by the house, the holy men beside him, and pointing to the Arab youth, spoke loudly:

"This sister of scorpions and crocodiles has earned a thousand deaths. She was a daughter of a pasha, and was lifted high. She was made the wife of Abbas Bey, our Mudir. Like a wanton beast she cut off her hair, clothed herself as a man, journeyed to Mecca, and desecrated the tomb of Mahomet, who hath written that no woman, save her husband of his goodness bring her, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

He paused, and pointed to the rough pictures on the walls. "This morning, dressed as a man, she went in secret to the sacred purple pillar for barren women in the Mosque of Amrar, by the Bahr-el-Yusef, and was found there with her tongue to it. What shall be done to this accursed tree in the garden of Mahomet?"

"Cut it down!" shouted the crowd; and the Ulema standing beside the Sheikh-el-beled said: "Cut down for ever the accursed tree."

"To-morrow, at sunrise, she shall die as a blasphemer, this daughter of Sheitan the Evil One," continued the holy men.

"What saith the Mudir?" cried a tax-gatherer. "The Mudir himself shall see her die at sunrise,"

answered the chief of the Ulema.

Shouts of hideous joy went up. At that moment the woman's eyes met Dicky's, and they suddenly lighted. Dicky picked his way through the crowd, and stood before the Sheikh-el-beled. With an Arab salute, he said:

"I am, as you know, my brother, a friend of our master the Khedive, and I carry his ring on my finger." The Sheikh-el-beled salaamed as Dicky held up his hand, and a murmur ran through the crowd. "What you have done to the woman is well done, and according to your law she should die. But will ye not let her tell her story, so it may be written down, that when perchance evil voices carry the tale to the Khedive he shall have her own words for her condemnation?"

The Ulema looked at the Sheikh-el-beled, and he made answer: "It is well said; let the woman speak, and her words be written down."

"Is it meet that all should hear?" asked Dicky, for he saw the look in the woman's eyes. "Will she not speak more freely if we be few?"

"Let her be taken into the house," said the Sheikhel-beled. Turning to the holy men, he added: "Ye and the Inglesi shall hear."

When they were within the house, the woman was brought in and stood before them.

"Speak," said the Sheikh-el-beled to her roughly. She kept her eyes fixed on Dicky as she spoke: "For the thing I have done I shall answer. I had no joy in the harem. I gave no child to my lord, though often I put my tongue to the sacred pillar of porphyry in the Mosque of Amrar. My lord's love went from me. I was placed beneath another in the harem. . . . Was it well? Did I not love my lord? was the sin mine that no child was born to him? It is written that a woman's prayers are of no avail, that her lord must save her at the last, if she hath a soul to be saved. . . . Was the love of my lord mine?" She paused, caught a corner of her robe and covered her face.

"Speak on, O woman of many sorrows," said Dicky. She partly uncovered her face, and spoke again: "In the long night, when he came not and I was lonely and I cried aloud, and only the jackals beyond my window answered, I thought and thought. My brain was wild, and at last I said: 'Behold, I will go to Mecca as the men go, and when the fire rises from the Prophet's tomb, bringing blessing and life to all, it may be that I shall have peace, and win heaven as men win it. For behold! what is my body but a man's body, for it beareth no child. And what is my soul but a man's soul, that dares to do this thing!' . . ."

"Thou art a blasphemer," broke in the chief of the Ulema.

She gave no heed, but with her eyes on Dicky continued:

"So I stole forth in the night with an old slave, who was my father's slave, and together we went to Cairo. . . . Behold, I have done all that Dervishes do: I have cut myself with knives, I have walked the desert alone, I have lain beneath the feet of the Sheikh's horse when he makes his ride over the bodies of the faithful, I have done all that a woman may do and all that a man may do, for the love I bore my lord. Now judge me as ye will, for I may do no more."

When she had finished, Dicky turned to the Sheikhel-beled and said: "She is mad. Behold, Allah hath taken her wits! She is no more than a wild bird in the wilderness."

It was his one way to save her; for among her people the mad, the blind, and the idiot are reputed highly favoured of God.

The Sheikh-el-beled shook his head. "She is a blasphemer. Her words are as the words of one who holds the sacred sword and speaks from the high pulpit," he said sternly; and his dry lean face hungered like a wolf's for the blood of the woman.

"She has blasphemed," said the Ulema.

Outside the house, quietness had given place to murmuring, murmuring to a noise, and a noise to a tumult, through which the yelping and howling of the village dogs streamed.

"She shall be torn to pieces by wild dogs," said the Sheikh-el-beled.

"Let her choose her own death," said Dicky softly; and, lighting a cigarette, he puffed it indolently into the face of the Arab sitting beside him. For Dicky had many ways of showing hatred, and his tobacco was strong. The sea has its victims, so had Dicky's tobacco.

"The way of her death shall be as we choose," said the Sheikh-el-beled, his face growing blacker, his eyes enlarging in fury.

Dicky yawned slightly, his eyes half closed. He drew in a long breath of excoriating caporal, held it for a moment, and then softly ejected it in a cloud which brought water to the eyes of the Sheikh-el-beled. Dicky was very angry, but he did not look it. His voice was meditative, almost languid as he said:

"That the woman should die seems just and right—if by your kindness and the mercy of God ye will let me speak. But this is no court, it is no law: it is mere justice ye would do."

"It is the will of the people," the chief of the Ulema interjected. "It is the will of Mussulmans, of our religion, of Mahomet," he said.

"True, O beloved of Heaven, who shall live for ever," said Dicky, his lips lost in an odorous cloud of 'ordinaire.' "But there be evil tongues and evil hearts; and if some son of liars, some brother of foolish tales, should bear false witness upon this thing before our master the Khedive, or his gentle Mouffetish —"

"His gentle Mouffetish" was scarcely the name to apply to Sadik Pasha, the terrible right-hand of the Khedive. But Dicky's tongue was in his cheek.

"There is the Mudir," said the Sheikh-el-beled: "he hath said that the woman should die, if she were found."

"True; but if the Mudir should die, where would be his testimony?" asked Dicky, and his eyes half closed, as though in idle contemplation of a pleasing theme. "Now," he added, still more negligently, "I shall see our master the Khedive before the moon is full. Were it not well that I should be satisfied for my friends?"

Dicky smiled, and looked into the eyes of the Mussulmans with an incorruptible innocence; he ostentatiously waved the cigarette smoke away with the hand on which was the ring the Khedive had given him.

"Thy tongue is as the light of a star," said the bright-eyed Sheikh-el- beled; "wisdom dwelleth with thee." The woman took no notice of what they said. Her face showed no sign of what she thought; her eyes were unwaveringly fixed on the distance.

"She shall choose her own death," said the Sheikhel-beled; "and I will bear word to the Mudir."

"I dine with the Mudir to-night; I will carry the word," said Dicky; "and the death that the woman shall die will be the death he will choose."

The woman's eyes came like lightning from the distance, and fastened upon his face. Then he said, with the back of his hand to his mouth to hide a yawn:

"The manner of her death will please the Mudir. It must please him."

"What death does this vulture among women choose to die?" said the Sheikh-el-beled.

Her answer could scarcely be heard in the roar and the riot surrounding the hut.

A half-hour later Dicky entered the room where the Mudir sat on his divan drinking his coffee. The great man looked up in angry astonishment—for Dicky had come unannounced-and his fat hands twitched on his breast, where they had been folded. His sallow face turned a little green. Dicky made no salutation.

"Dog of an infidel!" said the Mudir under his breath.

Dicky heard, but did no more than fasten his eyes upon the Mudir for a moment.

"Your business?" asked the Mudir.

"The business of the Khedive," answered Dicky, and his riding-whip tapped his leggings. "I have come about the English girl." As he said this, he lighted a cigarette slowly, looking, as it were casually, into the Mudir's eyes.

The Mudir's hand ran out like a snake towards a bell on the cushions, but Dicky shot forward and caught the wrist in his slim, steel-like fingers. There was a hard glitter in his eyes as he looked down into the eyes of

the master of a hundred slaves, the ruler of a province.

"I have a command of the Khedive to bring you to Cairo, and to kill you if you resist," said Dicky. "Sit still—you had better sit still," he added, in a soothing voice behind which was a deadly authority.

The Mudir licked his dry, colourless lips, and gasped, for he might make an outcry, but he saw that Dicky would be quicker. He had been too long enervated by indulgence to make a fight.

"You'd better take a drink of water," said Dicky, seating himself upon a Louis Quinze chair, a relic of civilisation brought by the Mudir from Paris into an antique barbarism. Then he added sternly: "What have you done with the English girl?"

"I know nothing of an English girl," answered the Mudir.

Dicky's words were chosen as a jeweller chooses stones for the ring of a betrothed woman. "You had a friend in London, a brother of hell like yourself. He, like you, had lived in Paris; and that is why this thing happened. You had your own women slaves from Kordofan, from Circassia, from Syria, from your own land. It was not enough: you must have an English girl in your harem. You knew you could not buy her, you knew that none would come to you for love, neither the drab nor the lady. None would lay her hand in that of a leprous dog like yourself. So you lied, your friend lied for you—sons of dogs of liars all of you, beasts begotten of beasts! You must have a governess for your children, forsooth! And the girl was told she would come to a palace. She came to a stable, and to shame and murder."

Dicky paused.

The fat, greasy hands of the Mudir fumbled towards the water-glass. It was empty, but he raised it to his lips and drained the air.

Dicky's eyes fastened him like arrows. "The girl died an hour ago," he continued. "I was with her when she died. You must pay the price, Abbas Bey." He paused.

There was a moment's silence, and then a voice, dry like that of one who comes out of chloroform, said: "What is the price?"

The little touch of cruelty in Dicky's nature, working with a sense of justice and an ever-ingenious mind, gave a pleasant quietness to the inveterate hate that possessed him. He thought of another woman—of her who was to die to-morrow.

"There was another woman," said Dicky: "one of your own people. She was given a mind and a soul. You deserted her in your harem—what was there left for her to think of but death? She had no child. But death was a black prospect; for you would go to heaven, and she would be in the outer darkness; and she loved you! A woman's brain thinks wild things. She fled from you, and went the pilgrimage to Mecca. She did all that a man might do to save her soul, according to Mahomet. She is to die to-morrow by the will of the people—and the Mudir of the Fayoum."

Dicky paused once more. He did not look at the Mudir, but out of the window towards the Bahr-el-Yusef, where the fellaheen of the Mudir's estate toiled like beasts of burden with the barges and the great khiassas laden with cotton and sugar-cane.

"God make your words merciful!" said the Mudir. "What would you have me do?"

"The Khedive, our master, has given me your life," said Dicky. "I will make your end easy. The woman has done much to save her soul. She buries her face in the dust because she hath no salvation. It is written in the Koran that a man may save the soul of his wife. You have your choice: will you come to Cairo to Sadik Pasha, and be crucified like a bandit of your own province, or will you die with the woman in the Birket-el-Kurun to-morrow at sunrise, and walk with her into the Presence and save her soul, and pay the price of the English life?"

"Malaish!" answered the Mudir. "Water," he added quickly. He had no power to move, for fear had paralysed him. Dicky brought him a goolah of water.

The next morning, at sunrise, a strange procession drew near to the Birket-el-Kurun. Twenty ghaffirs went ahead with their naboots; then came the kavasses, then the Mudir mounted, with Dicky riding beside, his hand upon the holster where his pistol was. The face of the Mudir was like a wrinkled skin of lard, his eyes had the look of one drunk with hashish. Behind them came the woman, and now upon her face there was only a look of peace. The distracted gaze had gone from her eyes, and she listened without a tremor to the voices of the wailers behind.

Twenty yards from the lake, Dicky called a halt—Dicky, not the Mudir. The soldiers came forward and put heavy chains and a ball upon the woman's ankles. The woman carried the ball in her arms to the very verge of the lake, by the deep pool called "The Pool of the Slaughtered One."

Dicky turned to the Mudir. "Are you ready?" he said.

"Inshallah!" said the Mudir.

The soldiers made a line, but the crowd overlapped the line. The fellaheen and Bedouins looked to see the Mudir summon the Ulema to condemn the woman to shame and darkness everlasting. But suddenly Abbas Bey turned and took the woman's right hand in his left.

Her eyes opened in an ecstasy. "O lord and master, I go to heaven with thee!" she said, and threw herself forward.

Without a sound the heavy body of the Mudir lurched forward with her, and they sank into the water together. A cry of horror and wonder burst from the crowd.

Dicky turned to them, and raised both hands.

"In the name of our master the Khedive!" he cried.

Above the spot where the two had sunk floated the red tarboosh of the Mudir of the Fayoum.

A TREATY OF PEACE

Mr. William Sowerby, lieutenant in the Mounted Infantry, was in a difficult situation, out of which he was little likely to come with credit—or his life. It is a dangerous thing to play with fire, so it is said; it is a more dangerous thing to walk rough-shod over Oriental customs. A man ere this has lost his life by carrying his shoe-leather across the threshold of a mosque, and this sort of thing William Sowerby knew, and of his knowledge he heeded. He did not heed another thing, however; which is, that Oriental ladies are at home to but one man in all the world, and that your acquaintance with them must be modified by a mushrabieh screen, a yashmak, a shaded, fast-driving brougham, and a hideous eunuch.

William Sowerby had not been long in Egypt, he had not travelled very far or very wide in the Orient; and he was an impressionable and harmless young man whose bark and bite were of equal value. His ideas of a harem were inaccurately based on the legend that it is necessarily the habitation of many wives and concubines and slaves. It had never occurred to him that there might be a sort of family life in a harem; that a pasha or a bey might have daughters as well as wives; or might have only one wife—which is less expensive; and that a harem is not necessarily the heaven of a voluptuary, an elysium of rosy-petalled love and passion. Yet he might have known it all, and should have known it all, if he had taken one-fifth of the time to observe and study Egyptian life which he gave to polo and golf and racquets. Yet even if he had known the life from many stand-points he would still have cherished illusions, for, as Dicky Donovan, who had a sense of satire, said in some satirical lines, the cherished amusements of more than one dinner table:

"Oh, William William Sowerby
Has come out for to see
The way of a bimbashi
With Egyptian Cavalree.
But William William Sowerby
His eyes do open wide
When he sees the Pasha's chosen
In her "bruggam" and her pride.
And William William Sowerby,
He has a tender smile,
Which will bring him in due season
To the waters of the Nile

And the cheery crocodile!"

It can scarcely be said that Dicky was greatly surprised when Mahommed Yeleb, the servant of "William William Sowerby," came rapping at his door one hot noon-day with a dark tale of disaster to his master. This was the heart of the thing—A languid, bored, inviting face, and two dark curious eyes in a slow-driving brougham out on the Pyramid Road; William's tender, answering smile; his horse galloping behind to within a discreet distance of the palace, where the lady alighted, shadowed by the black-coated eunuch. The same thing for several days, then a device to let the lady know his name, then a little note half in Arabic, half in French, so mysterious, so fascinating—William Sowerby walked on air! Then, a nocturnal going forth, followed by his frightened servant, who dared not give a warning, for fear of the ever-ready belt which had scarred his back erstwhile; the palace wall, an opening door, the figure of his master passing through, the closing gate; and then no more— nothing more, for a long thirty-six hours!

Mahommed Yeleb's face would have been white if his skin had permitted— it was a sickly yellow; his throat was guttural with anxiety, his eyes furtive and strained, for was he not the servant of his master, and might not he be marked for the early tomb if, as he was sure, his master was gone that way?

"Aiwa, efendi, it is sure," he said to Dicky Donovan, who never was surprised at anything that happened. He had no fear of anything that breathed; and he kept his place with Ismail because he told the truth pitilessly, was a poorer man than the Khedive's barber, and a beggar beside the Chief Eunuch; also, because he had a real understanding of the Oriental mind, together with a rich sense of humour.

"What is sure?" said Dicky to the Arab with assumed composure; for it was important that he should show neither anxiety nor astonishment, lest panic seize the man, and he should rush abroad with grave scandal streaming from his mouth, and the English fat be in the Egyptian fire for ever. "What is sure, Mahommed Yeleb?" repeated Dicky, lighting a cigarette idly.

"It is as God wills; but as the tongue of man speaks, so is he—Bimbashi Sowerby, my master—swallowed up these thirty-six hours in the tomb prepared for him by Selamlik Pasha."

Dicky felt his eyelids twitch, and he almost gave a choking groan of anxiety, for Selamlik Pasha would not spare the invader of his harem; an English invader would be a delicate morsel for his pitiless soul. He shuddered inwardly at the thought of what might have occurred, what might occur still.

If Sowerby had been trapped and was already dead, the knowledge would creep through the bazaars like a soft wind of the night, and all the Arab world would rejoice that a cursed Inglesi, making the unpardonable breach of their code, had been given to the crocodiles, been smothered, or stabbed, or tortured to death with fire. And, if it were so, what could be done? Could England make a case of it, avenge the life of this young fool who had disgraced her in the eyes of the world, of the envious French in Cairo, and of that population of the palaces who hated her because Englishmen were the enemies of backsheesh, corruption, tyranny, and slavery? And to what good the attempt? Exists the personal law of the Oriental palace, and who may punish any there save by that personal law? What outside law shall apply to anything that happens within those mysterious walls? Who shall bear true witness, when the only judge is he whose palace it is? Though twenty nations should unite to judge, where might proof be found—inside the palace, where all men lie and bear false witness?

If Sowerby was not dead, then resort to force? Go to Selamlik Pasha the malignant, and demand the young officer? How easy for Selamlik Pasha to deny all knowledge of his existence! Threaten Selamlik—and raise a Mahommedan crusade? That would not do.

Say nought, then, and let Sowerby, who had thrust his head into the jaws of the tiger, get it out as best he might, or not get it out, as the case might be?

Neither was that possible to Dicky Donovan, even if it were the more politic thing to do, even if it were better for England's name. Sowerby was his friend, as men of the same race are friends together in a foreign country. Dicky had a poor opinion of Sowerby's sense or ability, and yet he knew that if he were in Sowerby's present situation—living or dead— Sowerby would spill his blood a hundred useless times, if need be, to save him.

He had no idea of leaving Sowerby where he was, if alive; or of not avenging him one way or another if dead. But how that might be he was not on the instant sure. He had been struck as with a sudden blindness by the news, though he showed nothing of this to Mahommed Yeleb. His chief object was to inspire the Arab with confidence, since he was probably the only man outside Selamlik's palace who knew the thing as yet. It was likely that Selamlik Pasha would be secret till he saw whether Sowerby would be missed and what inquiry was made for him. It was important to Dicky, in the first place, that

this Mahommed Yeleb be kept quiet, by being made a confidant of his purposes so far as need be, an accomplice in his efforts whatever they should be. Kept busy, with a promise of success and backsheesh when the matter was completed, the Arab would probably remain secret. Besides, as Dicky said to himself, while Mahommed kept his head, he would not risk parading himself as the servant of the infidel who had invaded the Pasha's harem. Again, it was certain that he had an adequate devotion to his master, who had given him as many ha'pence as kicks, and many cast-off underclothes and cigarettes.

Thus it was that before Dicky had arranged what he should do, though plans were fusing in his brain, he said to Mahommed Yeleb seriously, as befitting the crime Sowerby had committed—evenly, as befitted the influence he wished to have over the Arab: "Keep your tongue between your teeth, Mahommed. We will pull him through all right."

"But, effendi, whom God honour, for greatness is in all thy ways, friend of the Commander of the Faithful as thou art—but, saadat el basha, if he be dead?"

"He is not dead. I know it by the eyes of my mind, Mahommed—yea, by the hairs of my head, he is not dead!"

"Saadat el basha, thou art known as the truth-teller and the incorruptible—this is the word of the Egyptian and of the infidel concerning thee. I kiss thy feet. For it is true he hath deserved death, but woe be to him by whom his death cometh! And am I not his servant to be with him while he hath life, and hath need of me? If thou sayest he is alive, then is he alive, and my heart rejoices."

Dicky scarcely heard what the Arab said, for the quick conviction he had had that Sowerby was alive was based on the fact, suddenly remembered, that Selamlik Pasha had only returned from the Fayoum this very morning, and that therefore he could not as yet have had any share in the fate of Sowerby, but had probably been sent for by the Chief Eunuch. It was but an hour since that he had seen Selamlik Pasha driving hastily towards his palace.

His mind was instantly made up, his plans formed to his purpose.

"Listen, Mahommed," he said to the Arab. "Listen to each word I say, as though it were the prayer to take thee into Paradise. Go at once to Selamlik Pasha. Carry this ring the Khedive gave to me—he will know it. Do not be denied his presence. Say that it is more than life and death; that it is all he values in the world. Once admitted, say these words: 'Donovan Pasha knows all, and asks an audience at midnight in this palace. Until that hour Donovan Pasha desires peace. For is it not the law, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? Is not a market a place to buy and sell?'"

Four times did Dicky make the Arab repeat the words after him, till they ran like water from his tongue, and dismissed him upon the secret errand with a handful of silver.

Immediately the Arab had gone, Dicky's face flushed with excitement, in the reaction from his lately assumed composure. For five minutes he walked up and down, using language scarcely printable, reviling Sowerby, and setting his teeth in anger. But he suddenly composed himself, and, sitting down, stared straight before him for a long time without stirring a muscle. There was urgent need of action, but there was more urgent need of his making no mistake, of his doing the one thing necessary, for Sowerby could only be saved in one way, not many.

It was useless to ask the Khedive's intervention—Ismail dared not go against Selamlik in this. Whatever was done must be done between Selamlik Pasha, the tigerish libertine, and Richard Donovan, the little man who, at the tail end of Ismail's reign, was helping him hold things together against the black day of reckoning, "prepared for the devil and all his angels," as Dicky had said to Ismail on this very momentous morning, when warning him of the perils in his path. Now Dicky had been at war with Selamlik ever since, one day long ago on the Nile, he and Fielding had thwarted his purposes; and Dicky had earned the Pasha's changeless hatred by calling him "Trousers"—for this name had gone up and down throughout Egypt as a doubtful story travels, drawing easy credit everywhere. Those were the days when Dicky was irresponsible. Of all in Egypt who hated him most, Selamlik Pasha was the chief. But most people hated Selamlik, so the world was not confounded by the great man's rage, nor did they dislike Dicky simply because the Pasha chose to do so. Through years Selamlik had built up his power, until even the Khedive feared him, and would have been glad to tie a stone round his neck and drop him into the Nile. But Ismail could no longer do this sort of thing without some show of reason—Europe was hanging on his actions, waiting for the apt moment to depose him.

All this Dicky knew, and five minutes from the time Mahommed Yeleb had left him he was on his way to Ismail's palace, with his kavass behind him, cool and ruminating as usual, now answering a salute in Turkish fashion, now in English, as Egyptians or Europeans passed him.

II

There was one being in the Khedive's palace whose admiration for Dicky was a kind of fetish, and Dicky loathed him. Twice had Dicky saved this Chief Eunuch's life from Ismail's anger, and once had he saved his fortune—not even from compassion, but out of his inherent love of justice. As Dicky had said: "Let him die—for what he has done, not for something he has not done. Send him to the devil with a true bill of crime." So it was that Dicky, who shrank from the creature whom Ministers and Pashas fawned upon—so powerful was his unique position in the palace—went straight to him now to get his quid-pro-quo, his measure for measure.

The tall, black-coated, smooth-faced creature, silent and watchful and lean, stepped through the doorway with the footfall of a cat. He slid forward, salaamed to the floor-Dicky wondered how a body could open and shut so like the blade of a knife—and, catching Dicky's hand, kissed it.

"May thy days be watered with the dew of heaven, saadat el basha," said the Chief Eunuch.

"Mine eyes have not seen since thy last withdrawal," answered Dicky blandly, in the high-flown Oriental way.

"Thou hast sent for me. I am thy slave."

"I have sent for thee, Mizraim. And thou shalt prove thyself, once for all, whether thy hand moves as thy tongue speaks."

"To serve thee I will lay down my life—I will blow it from me as the wind bloweth the cotton flower. Have I not spoken thus since the Feast of Beiram, now two years gone?"

Dicky lowered his voice. "Both Mustapha Bey, that son of the he-wolf Selamlik Pasha, still follow the carriage of the Khedive's favourite, and hang about the walls, and seek to corrupt thee with gold, Mahommed Mizraim?"

"Saadat el basha, but for thy word to wait, the Khedive had been told long since."

"It is the sport to strike when the sword cuts with the longest arm, O son of Egypt!"

The face of Mizraim was ugly with the unnatural cruelty of an unnatural man. "Is the time at hand, saadat el basha?"

"You hate Selamlik Pasha?"

"As the lion the jackal."

Dicky would have laughed in scorn if he might have dared—this being to class himself with lions! But the time was not fit for laughter. "And the son of Selamlik Pasha, the vile Mustapha Bey?" he asked.

"I would grind him like corn between the stones! Hath he not sent messages by the women of the bazaar to the harem of my royal master, to whom God give glory in heaven? Hath he not sought to enter the harem as a weasel crawls under a wall? Hath he not sought to steal what I hoard by a mighty hand and the eye of an eagle for Ismail the Great? Shall I love him more than the dog that tears the throat of a gazelle?" The gesture of cruelty he made was disgusting to the eyes of Dicky Donovan, but he had in his mind the peril to Sowerby, and he nodded his head in careless approval, as it were.

"Then, Mizraim, thou son of secrecy and keeper of the door, take heed to what I say, and for thine honour and my need do as I will. Thou shalt to-night admit Mustapha Bey to the harem—at the hour of nine o'clock!"

"Saadat el basha!" The eunuch's face was sickly in its terrified wonder.

"Even so. At nine."

"But, saadat—"

"Bring him secretly, even to the door of the favourite's room; then, have him seized and carried to a safe place till I send for him."

"Ah, saadat el basha—" The lean face of the creature smiled, and the smile was not nice to see.

"Let no harm be done him, but await my messenger, Mahommed Yeleb, and whatsoever he bids you

to do, do it; for I speak."

"Ah, saadat el basha, you would strike Selamlik Pasha so—the great beast, the black river pig, the serpent of the slime....!"

"You will do this thing, Mizraim?"

"I shall lure him, as the mirage the pilgrim. With joy I will do this, and a hundred times more."

"Even if I asked of thee the keys of the harem?" asked Dicky grimly.

"Effendi, thou wouldst not ask. All the world knows thee. For thee the harem hath no lure. Thou goest not by dark ways to deeds for thine own self. Thou hast honour. Ismail himself would not fear thee."

"See, thou master of many, squeak not thy voice so high. Ismail will take thy head and mine, if he discovers to-night's business. Go then with a soft tread, Mizraim. Let thy hand be quick on his mouth, and beware that no one sees!"

III

Upon the stroke of midnight Dicky entered the room where Selamlik Pasha awaited him with a malicious and greasy smile, in which wanton cruelty was uppermost. Selamlik Pasha knew well the object of this meeting. He had accurately interpreted the message brought by Mahommed Yeleb. He knew his power; he knew that the Englishman's life was in his hands to do with what he chose, for the law of the harem which defies all outside law was on his side. But here he was come to listen to Dicky Donovan, the arrogant little favourite, pleading for the life of the English boy who had done the thing for which the only penalty was death.

Dicky showed no emotion as he entered the room, but salaamed, and said:
"Your Excellency is prompt. Honour and peace be upon your Excellency!"
"Honour and the bounty of the stars be upon thee, saadat el basha!"

There was a slight pause, in which Dicky seated himself, lighted a cigarette, and summoned a servant, of whom he ordered coffee. They did not speak meantime, but Dicky sat calmly, almost drowsily, smoking, and Selamlik Pasha sat with greasy hands clasping and unclasping, his yellow eyes fixed on Dicky with malevolent scrutiny.

When the coffee was brought, the door had been shut, and Dicky had drawn the curtain across, Selamlik Pasha said: "What great affair brings us together here, saadat el basha?"

"The matter of the Englishman you hold a prisoner, Excellency."

"It is painful, but he is dead," said the Pasha, with a grimace of cruelty.

Dicky's eyes twitched slightly, but he answered with coolness, thrusting his elbow into the cushions and smoking hard: "But, no, he is not dead. Selamlik Pasha has as great an instinct for a bargain as for revenge. Also Selamlik Pasha would torture before he kills. Is it not so?"

"What is your wish?"

"That the man be set free, Excellency."

"He has trespassed. He has stolen his way into the harem. The infidel dog has defiled the house of my wives."

"He will marry the woman, with your permission, Excellency. He loved her—so it would seem."

"He shall die—the dog of an infidel!"

Dicky was now satisfied that Sowerby was alive, and that the game was fairly begun. He moved slowly towards his purpose.

"I ask his life, as a favour to me. The Khedive honours me, and I can serve you betimes, Excellency."

"You called me 'Trousers,' and all Egypt laughed," answered the Pasha malignantly.

"I might have called you worse, but I did not. You may call me what you will—I will laugh."

"I will call you a fool for bringing me here to laugh at you, who now would kiss Selamlik Pasha's shoe. I would he were your brother. I would tear out his fingernails, pierce his eyes, burn him with hot irons, pour boiling oil over him and red cinders down his throat—if he were your brother."

"Remember I am in the confidence of the Khedive, Pasha."

"Ismail! What dare he do? Every Egyptian in the land would call him infidel. Ismail would dare do nothing." His voice was angrily guttural with triumph.

"England will ask the price of the young man's life of you, Excellency."

"England dare not move—is thy servant a fool? Every Mussulman in the land would raise the green flag—the Jehad would be upon ye!"

"He is so young. He meant no ill. The face of your daughter drew him on. He did not realise his crimen—or its penalty."

"It is a fool's reasoning. Because he was a stranger and an infidel, so has he been told of dark things done to those who desecrate our faith."

"Had he been an Egyptian or a Turk—"

"I should slay him, were he Ismail himself. Mine own is mine own, as Mahomet hath said. The man shall die—and who shall save him? Not even the Sultan himself."

"There are concessions in the Fayoum—you have sought them long."

"Bah!"

"There is the Grand Cordon of the Mejidieh; there is a way to it, Excellency."

"The man's blood!"

"There is a high office to be vacant soon, near to the person of the Khedive, with divers moneys and loans—"

"To see Donovan Pasha cringe and beg is better."

"There is that mercy which one day you may have to ask for yourself or for your own—"

"The fool shall die. And who shall save him?"

"Well, I will save him," said Dicky, rising slowly to his feet.

"Pish! Go to the Khedive with the tale, and I will kill the man within the hour, and tell it abroad, and we shall see where Donovan Pasha will stand to-morrow. The Khedive is not stronger than his people—and there are the French, and others!" He spat upon the floor at Dicky's feet. "Go, tell the Khedive what you will, dog of an Englishman, son of a dog with a dog's heart!" Dicky took a step forward, with an ominous flare of colour in his cheek. There was a table between him and Selamlik Pasha. He put both hands upon it, and leaning over said in a voice of steel:

"So be it, then. Shall I go to the Khedive and say that this night Mustapha Bey, eldest and chosen son of Selamlik Pasha, the darling of his fat heart, was seized by the Chief Eunuch, the gentle Mizraim, in the harem of his Highness? Shall I tell him that, Trousers?"

As Dicky spoke, slowly, calmly, Selamlik Pasha turned a greenish-yellow, his eyes started from his head, his hand chafed the air.

"Mustapha Bey—Khedive's harem!" he stammered in a husky voice.

"By the gentle Mizraim, I said," answered Dicky. "Is Mustapha Bey's life worth an hour's purchase? Is Selamlik Pasha safe?"

"Is—is he dead?" gasped the cowardly Egyptian, furtively glancing towards the door. Suddenly he fell back fainting, and Dicky threw some water in his face, then set a cup of it beside him.

"Drink, and pull yourself together, if you would save yourself," said Dicky.

"Save—save myself," said Selamlik Pasha, recovering; then, with quick suspicion, and to gain time, added quickly: "Ah, it is a trick! He is not a prisoner—you lie!"

"I have not a reputation for lying," rejoined Dicky quietly. "But see!" he added; and throwing open a door, pointed to where the Chief Eunuch stood with Mahommed Yeleb, Mustapha Bey gagged and bound between them. Dicky shut the door again, as Selamlik Pasha shrank back among the cushions, cowardice incarnate.

"You thought," said Dicky with a soft fierceness" you thought that I would stoop to bargain with Selamlik Pasha and not know my way out of the bargain? You thought an Englishman would beg, even for a life, of such as you! You thought me, Donovan Pasha, such a fool!"

"Mercy, Excellency!" said Selamlik, spreading out his hands.

Dicky laughed. "You called me names, Selamlik—a dog, and the son of a dog with a dog's heart. Was it wise?"

"Is there no way? Can no bargain be made?"

Dicky sat down, lighting a cigarette.

"To save a scandal in Egypt," answered Dicky drily, "I am ready to grant you terms."

"Speak-Excellency."

"The life of the Englishman for the life of your son and your own. Also, the freedom of the six Circassian slaves whom you house now at Beni Hassan, ready to bring to your palace. Also, for these slaves two hundred Turkish pounds apiece. Also, your written word that you will bring no more slaves into Egypt. Is the bargain fair?"

"Mizraim may still betray us," said Selamlik, trembling, with relief, but yet apprehensive.

"Mizraim is in my power—he acts for me," said Dicky. "Whose life is safe here save my own?"

"Malaish! It shall be as your will is, Excellency," answered Selamlik Pasha, in a shaking voice; and he had time to wonder even then how an Englishman could so outwit an Oriental. It was no matter how Mustapha Bey, his son, was lured; he had been seized in the harem, and all truth can be forsworn in Egypt, and the game was with this Donovan Pasha.

"Send to your palace, commanding that the Englishman be brought here," said Dicky. Selamlik Pasha did so.

Sowerby of the Mounted Infantry was freed that night, and the next day Dicky Donovan had six Circassian slaves upon his hands. He passed them over to the wife of Fielding Bey with whom he had shared past secrets and past dangers.

Selamlik Pasha held his peace in fear; and the Khedive and Cairo never knew why there was a truce to battle between Dicky Donovan and that vile Pasha called Trousers.

AT THE MERCY OF TIBERIUS

In a certain year when Dicky Donovan was the one being in Egypt who had any restraining influence on the Khedive, he suddenly asked leave of absence to visit England. Ismail granted it with reluctance, chiefly because he disliked any interference with his comforts, and Dicky was one of them—in some respects the most important.

"My friend," he said half petulantly to Dicky, as he tossed the plans for a new palace to his secretary and dismissed him, are you not happy here? Have you not all a prince can give?"

"Highness," answered Dicky, "I have kith and kin in England. Shall a man forget his native land?" The Khedive yawned, lighted a cigarette, and murmured through the smoke: "Inshallah! It might be pleasant—betimes."

"I have your Highness's leave to go?" asked Dicky. "May God preserve your head from harm!" answered Ismail in farewell salutation, and, taking a ring from his finger set with a large emerald, he gave it to Dicky. "Gold is scarce in Egypt," he went on, "but there are jewels still in the palace—and the Khedive's promises-to-pay with every money- barber of Europe!" he added, with a cynical sneer, and touched his forehead and his breast courteously as Dicky retired.

Outside the presence Dicky unbuttoned his coat like an Englishman again, and ten minutes later flung his tarboosh into a corner of the room; for the tarboosh was the sign of official servitude, and Dicky was never the perfect official. Initiative was his strong point, independence his life; he loathed the machine of system in so far as he could not command it; he revolted at being a cog in the wheel. Ismail had discovered this, and Dicky had been made a kind of confidential secretary who seldom wrote a line. By his influence with Ismail he had even more power at last than the Chief Eunuch or the valet-de-chambre, before whom the highest officials bowed low. He was hated profoundly by many of the household, cultivated by certain of the Ministers, fawned upon by outsiders, trusted by the Khedive, and entirely believed in by the few Englishmen and Frenchmen who worked for decent administration faithfully but without hope and sometimes with nausea.

It was nausea that had seized upon Dicky at last, nausea and one other thing—the spirit of adventure, an inveterate curiosity. His was the instinct of the explorer, his feet were the feet of the Wandering Jew. He knew things behind closed doors by instinct; he was like a thought- reader in the sure touch of discovery; the Khedive looked upon him as occult almost and laughed in the face of Sadik the Mouffetish when he said some evil things of Dicky. Also, the Khedive told the Mouffetish that if any harm came to Dicky there would come harm to him. The Khedive loved to play one man off against another, and the death of Sadik or the death of Dicky would have given him no pain, if either seemed necessary. For the moment, however, he loved them both after his fashion; for Sadik lied to him, and squeezed the land dry, and flailed it with kourbashes for gold for his august master and himself; and Dicky told him the truth about everything—which gave the Khedive knowledge of how he really stood all round.

Dicky told the great spendthrift the truth about himself; but he did not tell the truth when he said he was going to England on a visit to his kith and kin. Seized by the most irresistible curiosity of his life, moved by desire for knowledge, that a certain plan in his mind might be successfully advanced he went south and east, not west and north.

For four months Egypt knew him not. For four months the Khedive was never told the truth save by European financiers, when truths were obvious facts; for four long months never saw a fearless or an honest eye in his own household. Not that it mattered in one sense; but Ismail was a man of ideas, a sportsman of a sort, an Iniquity with points; a man who chose the broad way because it was easier, not because he was remorseless. At the start he meant well by his people, but he meant better by himself; and not being able to satisfy both sides of the equation, he satisfied one at the expense of the other and of that x quantity otherwise known as Europe. Now Europe was heckling him; the settling of accounts was near. Commissioners had been sent to find where were the ninety millions he had borrowed. Only Ismail and Sadik the Mouffetish, once slave and foster-brother, could reply. The Khedive could not long stave off the evil day when he must "pay the debt of the lobster," and Sadik give account of his stewardship. Meanwhile, his mind turned to the resourceful little Englishman with the face of a girl and the tongue of an honest man.

But the day Dicky had set for his return had come and gone, and Dicky himself had not appeared. With a grim sort of satisfaction, harmonious with his irritation, Ismail went forth with his retinue to the Dosah, the gruesome celebration of the Prophet's birthday, following on the return of the pilgrimage from Mecca. At noon he entered his splendid tent at one side of a square made of splendid tents, and looked out listlessly, yet sourly, upon the vast crowds assembled—upon the lines of banners, the red and green pennons embroidered with phrases from the Koran. His half-shut, stormy eyes fell upon the tent of the chief of the dervishes, and he scarcely checked a sneer, for the ceremony to be performed appealed to nothing in him save a barbaric instinct, and this barbaric instinct had been veneered by French civilisation and pierced by the criticism of one honest man. His look fell upon the long pathway whereon, for three hundred yards, matting had been spread. It was a field of the cloth of blood; for on this cloth dervishes returned from Mecca, mad with fanaticism and hashish, would lie packed like herrings, while the Sheikh of the Dosah rode his horse over their bodies, a pavement of human flesh

and bone.

As the Khedive looked, his lip curled a little, for he recalled what Dicky Donovan had said about it; how he had pleaded against it, describing loathsome wounds and pilgrims done to death. Dicky had ended his brief homily by saying: "And isn't that a pretty dish to set before a king!" to Ismail's amusement; for he was no good Mussulman, no Mussulman at all, in fact, save in occasional violent prejudices got of inheritance and association.

To-day, however, Ismail was in a bad humour with Dicky and with the world. He had that very morning flogged a soldier senseless with his own hand; he had handed over his favourite Circassian slave to a ruffian Bey, who would drown her or sell her within a month; and he had dishonoured his own note of hand for fifty thousand pounds to a great merchant who had served him not wisely but too well. He was not taking his troubles quietly, and woe be to the man or woman who crossed him this day! Tiberius was an hungered for a victim to his temper. His entourage knew it well, and many a man trembled that day for his place, or his head, or his home. Even Sadik the Mouffetish—Sadik, who had four hundred women slaves dressed in purple and fine linen—Sadik, whose kitchen alone cost him sixty thousand pounds a year, the price of whose cigarette ash-trays was equal to the salary of an English consul—even Sadik, foster-brother, panderer, the Barabbas of his master, was silent and watchful to-day.

And Sadik, silent and watchful and fearful, was also a dangerous man. As Sadik's look wandered over the packed crowds, his faded eyes scarce realising the bright-coloured garments of the men, the crimson silk tents and banners and pennons, the gorgeous canopies and trappings and plumes of the approaching dervishes, led by the Amir-el-Haj or Prince of the Pilgrims, returned from Mecca, he wondered what lamb for the sacrifice might be provided to soothe the mind of his master. He looked at the matting in the long lane before them, and he knew that the bodies which would lie here presently, yielding to the hoofs of the Sheikh's horse, were not sufficient to appease the rabid spirit tearing at the Khedive's soul. He himself had been flouted by one ugly look this morning, and one from Ismail was enough.

It did his own soul good now to see the dervish fanatics foaming at the mouth, their eyes rolling, as they crushed glass in their mouths and ate it, as they swallowed fire, as they tore live serpents to pieces with their teeth and devoured them, as they thrust daggers and spikes of steel through their cheeks, and gashed their breasts with knives and swords. He watched the effect of it on the Khedive; but Ismail had seen all this before, and he took it in the stride. This was not sufficient.

Sadik racked his brain to think who in the palace or in official life might be made the scapegoat, upon whom the dark spirit in the heart of the Khedive might be turned. His mean, colourless eyes wandered inquiringly over the crowd, as the mad dervishes, half-naked, some with masses of dishevelled hair, some with no hair at all, bleached, haggard, moaning and shrieking, threw themselves to the ground on the matting, while attendants pulled off their slippers and placed them under their heads, which lay face downwards. At last Sadik's eyes were arrested by a group of ten dervishes, among them one short in stature and very slight, whose gestures were not so excited as those of his fellows. He also saw that one or two of the dervishes watched the slight man covertly.

Five of the little group suddenly threw themselves upon the matting, adding their bodies to the highway of bones and flesh. Then another and another did the same, leaving three who, with the little man, made a fanatical chorus. Now the three near the little man began to cut themselves with steel and knives, and one set fire to his jibbeh and began to chew the flames. Yet the faces of all three were turned towards the little man, who did no more than shriek and gesticulate and sway his body wildly up and down. He was tanned and ragged and bearded and thin, and there was a weird brilliance in his eyes, which watched his companions closely.

So fierce and frenzied were the actions of those with him, that the attention of the Khedive was drawn; and Sadik, looking at his master, saw that his eyes also were intently fixed on the little man. At that instant the little man himself caught the eye of the Khedive, and Ismail involuntarily dropped a hand upon his sword, for some gesture of this dervish, some familiar turn of his body, startled him. Where had he seen the gesture before? Who was this pilgrim who did not cut and wound himself like his companions? Suddenly the three mad dervishes waved their hands towards the matting and shrieked something into his ear. The little man's eyes shot a look at the Khedive. Ismail's ferret eye fastened on him, and a quick fear as of assassination crossed his face as the small dervish ran forward with the other three to the lane of human flesh, where there was still a gap to be filled, and the cry rose up that the Sheikh of the Dosah had left his tent and was about to begin his direful ride.

Sadik the Mouffetish saw the Khedive's face, and suddenly said in his ear: "Shall my slave seize him, Highness whom God preserve?"

The Khedive did not reply, for at that moment he recognised the dervish; and now he understood that Dicky Donovan had made the pilgrimage to Mecca with the Mahmal caravan; that an infidel had desecrated the holy city; and that his Englishman had lied to him. His first impulse was to have Dicky seized and cast to the crowd, to be torn to pieces. Dicky's eyes met his without wavering—a desperate yet resolute look—and Ismail knew that the little man would sell his life dearly, if he had but half a chance. He also saw in Dicky's eyes the old honesty, the fearless straightforwardness—and an appeal too, not humble, but still eager and downright. Ismail's fury was great, for the blue devils had him by the heels that day; but on the instant he saw the eyes of Sadik the Mouffetish, and their cunning, cruelty, and soulless depravity, their present search for a victim to his master's bad temper, acted at once on Ismail's sense of humour. He saw that Sadik half suspected something, he saw that Dicky's three companions suspected, and his mind was made up on the instant—things should take their course—he would not interfere. He looked Dicky squarely in the face, and Dicky knew that the Khedive's glance said as plainly as words:

"Fool of an Englishman, go on! I will not kill you, but I will not save you. The game is in your hands alone. You can only avert suspicion by letting the Sheikh of the Dosah make a bridge of your back. Mecca is a jest you must pay for."

With the wild cry of a dervish fanatic Dicky threw himself down, his head on his arms, and the vengeful three threw themselves down beside him. The attendants pulled off their slippers and thrust them under their faces, and now the siais of the Sheikh ran over their bodies lightly, calling out for all to lie still—the Sheikh was coming on his horse.

Dicky weighed his chances with a little shrinking, but with no fear: he had been in imminent danger for four long months, and he was little likely to give way now. The three men lying beside him had only suspected him for the last three days, and during that time they had never let him out of heir sight. What had roused their suspicion he did not know: probably a hesitation concerning some Arab custom or the pronunciation of some Arab word—the timbre of the Arab voice was rougher and heavier. There had been no chance of escape during these three days, for his three friends had never left his side, and now they were beside him. His chances were not brilliant. If he escaped from the iron hoofs of the Sheikh's horse, if the weight did not crush the life out of his small body, there was a fair chance; for to escape unhurt from the Dosah is to prove yourself for ever a good Mussulman, who has undergone the final test and is saved evermore by the promise of the Prophet. But even if he escaped unhurt, and the suspicions of his comrades were allayed, what would the Khedive do? The Khedive had recognised him, and had done nothing—so far. Yet Ismail, the chief Mussulman in Egypt, should have thrown him like a rat to the terriers! Why he had acted otherwise he was not certain: perhaps to avoid a horrible sensation at the Dosah and the outcry of the newspapers of Europe; perhaps to have him assassinated privately; perhaps, after all, to pardon him. Yet this last alternative was not reasonable, save from the stand-point that Ismail had no religion at all.

Whatever it was to be, his fate would soon come, and in any case he had done what only one European before him had done—he had penetrated to the tomb of Mahomet at Mecca. Whatever should come, he had crowded into his short life a thousand unusual and interesting things. His inveterate curiosity had served him well, and he had paid fairly for the candles of his game. He was ready.

Low moans came to his ears. He could hear the treading hoofs of the Sheikh's horse. Nearer and nearer the frightened animal came; the shout of those who led the horse was in his ears: "Lie close and still, O brothers of giants!" he heard the ribs of a man but two from him break- he heard the gurgle in the throat of another into whose neck the horse's hoof had sunk. He braced himself and drew his breast close to the ground.

He could hear now the heavy breathing of the Sheikh of the Dosah, who, to strengthen himself for his ride, had taken a heavy dose of hashish. The toe of the Arab leading the horse touched his head, then a hoof was on him—between the shoulders, pressing-pressing down, the iron crushing into the flesh—down—down—down, till his eyes seemed to fill with blood. Then another hoof—and this would crush the life out of him. He gasped, and nerved himself. The iron shoe came down, slipped a little, grazed his side roughly, and sank between himself and the dervish next him, who had shrunk away at the last moment.

A mad act; for the horse stumbled, and in recovering himself plunged forward heavily. Dicky expected the hind hoofs to crush down on his back or neck, and drew in his breath; but the horse, excited by the cries of the people, drove clear of him, and the hind hoofs fell with a sickening thud on the back and neck of the dervish who had been the cause of the disaster.

Dicky lay still for a moment to get his breath, then sprang to his feet lightly, cast a swift glance of triumph towards the Khedive, and turned to the dervishes who had lain beside him. The man who had shrunk away from the horse's hoofs was dead, the one on the other side was badly wounded, and the

last, bruised and dazed, got slowly to his feet.

"God is great," said Dicky to him: "I have no hurt, Mahommed."

"It is the will of God. Extolled be Him who created thee!" answered the dervish, all suspicion gone, and admiration in his eyes, as Dicky cried his Allah Kerim—"God is bountiful!"

A kavass touched Dicky on the arm.

"His Highness would speak with you," he said. Dicky gladly turned his back on the long lane of frantic immolation and the sight of the wounded and dead being carried away. Coming over to the Khedive he salaamed, and kneeling on the ground touched the toe of Ismail's boot with his forehead.

Ismail smiled, and his eyes dropped with satisfaction upon the prostrate Dicky. Never before had an Englishman done this, and that Dicky, of all Englishmen, should do it gave him an ironical pleasure which chased his black humour away.

"It is written that the true believer shall come unscathed from the hoofs of the horse. Thou hast no hurt, Mahommed?"

"None, Highness, whose life God preserve," said Dicky in faultless Arabic, with the eyes of Sadik upon him searching his mystery.

"May the dogs bite the heart of thine enemies! What is thy name?" said Ismail.

"Rekab, so God wills, Highness."

"Thine occupation?"

"I am a poor scribe, Highness," answered Dicky with a dangerous humour, though he had seen a look in the Khedive's face which boded only safety.

"I have need of scribes. Get you to the Palace of Abdin, and wait upon me at sunset after prayers," said Ismail.

"I am the slave of your Highness. Peace be on thee, O Prince of the Faithful!"

"A moment, Mahommed. Hast thou wife or child?"

"None, Highness."

"Nor kith nor kin?" Ismail's smile was grim.

"They be far away, beyond the blessed rule of your Highness."

"Thou wilt desire to return to them. How long wilt thou serve me?" asked Ismail slowly.

"Till the two Karadh-gatherers return," answered Dicky, quoting the old Arabic saying which means for ever, since the two Karadh-gatherers who went to gather the fruit of the sant and the leaves of the selem never returned.

"So be it," said the Khedive, and, rising, waved Dicky away. "At sunset!"

"At sunset after prayers, Highness," answered Dicky, and was instantly lost in the throng which now crowded upon the tent to see the Sheikh of the Dosah arrive to make obeisance to Ismail.

That night at sunset, Dicky, once more clothed and shaven and well appointed, but bronzed and weatherbeaten, was shown into the presence of the Khedive, whose face showed neither pleasure nor displeasure.

"You have returned from your kith and kin in England?" asked Ismail, with malicious irony.

"I have no excuses, Highness. I have done what I set out to do."

"If I had given you to death as an infidel who had defiled the holy tomb and the sacred city—"

"Your Highness would have lost a faithful servant," answered Dicky. "I took my chances."

"Even now it would be easy to furnish—accidents for you."

"But not wise, Highness, till my story is told."

"Sadik Pasha suspects you."

"I suspect Sadik Pasha," answered Dicky.

"Of what?" inquired Ismail, starting. "He is true to me—Sadik is true to me?" he urged, with a shudder; for if Sadik was false in this crisis, with Europe clamouring for the payment of debts and for reforms, where should he look for faithful knavery?

"He will desert your Highness in the last ditch. Let me tell your Highness the truth, in return for saving my life. Your only salvation lies in giving up to the creditors of Egypt your own wealth, and also Sadik's, which is twice your own."

"Sadik will not give it up."

"Is not Ismail the Khedive master in Egypt?"

"Sit down and smoke," said Ismail eagerly, handing Dicky a cigarette.

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When Dicky left the Khedive at midnight, he thought he saw a better day dawning for Egypt. He felt also that he had done the land a good turn in trying to break the shameless contract between Ismail and Sadik the Mouffetish; and he had the Khedive's promise that it should be broken, given as Ismail pinned on his breast the Order of the Mejidieh.

He was not, however, prepared to hear of the arrest of the Mouffetish before another sunset, and then of his hugger-mugger death, of which the world talks to this day; though the manner of it is only known to a few, and to them it is an ugly memory.

ALL THE WORLD'S MAD

Up to thirty-two years of age David Hyam, of the village of Framley, in Staffordshire, was not a man of surprises. With enough of this world's goods to give him comfort of body and suave gravity of manner, the figure he cut was becoming to his Quaker origin and profession. No one suspected the dynamic possibilities of his nature till a momentous day in August, in the middle Victorian period, when news from Bristol came that an uncle in chocolate had died and left him the third of a large fortune, without condition or proviso.

This was of a Friday, and on the Saturday following David did his first startling act—he offered marriage to Hope Marlowe, the only Quaker girl in Framley who had ever dared to discard the poke bonnet even for a day, and who had been publicly reproved for laughing in meeting—for Mistress Hope had a curious, albeit demure and suggestive, sense of humour; she was, in truth, a kind of sacred minuet in grey. Hope had promptly accepted David, at the same time taunting him softly with the fact that he had recklessly declared he would never marry, even saying profanely that upon his word and honour he never would! She repeated to him what his own mother once replied to his audacious worldly protests:

"If thee say thee will never, never, never do a thing, thee will some day surely do it."

Then, seeing that David was a bit chagrined, Hope slipped one hand into his, drew him back within the door, lifted the shovel hat off his forehead, and whispered with a coquetry unworthy a Quaker maid:

"But thee did not say, friend David, thee would never, never, never smite thy friend on both cheeks after she had flouted thee."

Having smitten her on both cheeks, after the manner of foolish men, David gravely got him to his home and to a sound sleep that night. Next morning, the remembrance of the pleasant smiting roused

him to an outwardly sedate and inwardly vainglorious courage. Going with steady steps to the Friends' meeting-house at the appointed time, the Spirit moved him, after a decorous pause, to announce his intended marriage to the prettiest Quaker in Framley, even the maid who had shocked the community's sense of decorum and had been written down a rebel—though these things he did not say.

From the recesses of her poke bonnet Hope watched the effect of David's words upon the meeting; but when the elders turned and looked at her, as became her judges before the Lord, her eyes dropped; also her heart thumped so hard she could hear it; and in the silence that followed it seemed to beat time to the words like the pendulum of a clock: "Fear not- Love on! Fear not—Love on!" But the heart beat faster still, the eyes came up quickly, and the face flushed a deep, excited red when David, rising again, said that, with the consent of the community—a consent which his voice subtly insisted upon—he would take a long journey into the Holy Land, into Syria, travelling to Baalbec and Damascus, and even beyond as far as the desolate city of Palmyra; and then, afterwards, into Egypt, where Joseph and the sons of Israel were captive aforetime. He would fain visit the Red Sea, and likewise confer with the Coptic Christians in Egypt, "of whom thee and me have read to our comfort," he added piously, looking at friend Fairley, the oldest and heretofore the richest man in the community.

Friend Fairley rejoiced now that he had in by-gone days lent David books to read; but he rejoiced secretly, for though his old bookman's heart warmed at the thought that he should in good time hear, from one who had seen with his own eyes, of the wonders of the East, it became him to assume a ponderous placidity—for Framley had always been doubtful of his bookishness and its influence on such as David. They said it boded no good; there were those even who called Fairley "a new light," that schism in a sect.

These God-fearing, dull folk were present now, and, disapproving of David's choice in marriage, disapproved far more of its consequence; for so they considered the projected journey into the tumultuous world and the garish Orient. In the end, however, an austere approval was promised, should the solemn commission of men and women appointed to confer with and examine the candidates find in their favour—as in this case they would certainly do; for thirty thousand pounds bulked potently even in this community of unworldly folk, though smacking somewhat of the world, the flesh and the devil.

If David, however, would stand to the shovel hat, and if Hope would be faithful for ever to the poke bonnet and grey cloth, all might yet be well. At the same time, they considered that friend David's mind was distracted by the things of this world, and they reasoned with the Lord in prayer upon the point in David's presence.

In worldly but religiously controlled dudgeon David left the meeting- house, and inside the door of Hope's cottage said to his own mother and to hers some bitter and un-Quaker-like things against the stupid world— for to him as yet the world was Framley, though he would soon mend that.

When he had done speaking against "the mad wits that would not see," Hope laid her cool fingers on his arm and said, with a demure humour: "All the world's mad but thee and me, David—and thee's a bit mad!"

So pleased was David's mother with this speech that then and there she was reconciled to Hope's rebellious instincts, and saw safety for her son in the hands of the quaint, clear-minded daughter of her old friend and kinswoman, Mercy Marlowe.

II

Within three months David and Hope had seen the hills of Moab from the top of the Mount of Olives; watched the sun go down over the Sea of Galilee; plucked green boughs from the cedars on Lebanon; broken into placid exclamations of delight in the wild orchard of nectarine blossoms by the lofty ruins of Baalbac; walked in that street called Straight at Damascus; journeyed through the desert with a caravan to Palmyra when the Druses were up; and, at last, looked upon the spot where lived that Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

In this land they stayed; and even now far up the Nile you will hear of the Two Strange People who travelled the river even to Dongola and some way back—only some way back, for a long time. In particular you will hear of them from an old dragoman called Mahommed Ramadan Saggara, and a white-haired jeweller of Assiout, called Abdul Huseyn. These two men still tell the tale of the two mad English folk with faces like no English people ever seen in Egypt, who refused protection in their travels, but went fearlessly among the Arabs everywhere, to do good and fear not. The Quaker hat and saddened drab worked upon the Arab mind to advantage.

In Egypt, David and Hope found their pious mission—though historians have since called it "whimsical and unpractical": David's to import the great Syrian donkey, which was to banish the shame of grossly burdening the small donkey of the land of Pharaoh; and Hope's to build schools where English should be taught, to exclude "that language of Belial," as David called French. When their schemes came home to Framley, with an order on David's bankers for ten thousand pounds, grey-garbed consternation walked abroad, and in meeting the First Day following no one prayed or spoke for an hour or more. At last, however, friend Fairley rose in his place and said:

"The Lord shall deliver the heathen into their hands."

Then the Spirit moved freely and severely among them all, and friend Fairley was, as he said himself, "crowded upon the rails by the yearlings of the flock." For he alone of all Framley believed that David and Hope had not thrown away the Quaker drab, the shovel hat and the poke bonnet, and had gone forth fashionable, worldly and an hungered, among the fleshpots of Egypt. There was talk of gilded palaces, Saracenic splendours and dark suggestions from the Arabian Nights.

Still, the ten thousand pounds went to David and Hope where they smilingly laboured through the time of high Nile and low Nile, and khamsin and sirocco, and cholera, and, worse than all, the banishments to the hot Siberia of Fazougli.

But Mahommed Ramadan Saggara babbles yet of the time when, for one day, David threw away his shovel hat; and Abdul Huseyn, the jeweller, tells how, on the same day, the Sitt—that is, Hope—bought of him a ring of turquoises and put it on her finger with a curious smile.

That day David and Hope, the one in a pith helmet, the other with a turquoise ring on her left hand, went to dine with Shelek Pasha, the Armenian Governor of the province, a man of varied talents, not least of which was deceit of an artistic kind. For, being an Armenian, he said he was a true Christian, and David believed him, though Hope did not; and being an Oriental, he said he told the truth; and again David believed him, though Hope did not. He had a red beard, an eye that glinted red also, and fat, smooth fingers which kept playing with a string of beads as though it were a rosary.

As hard as he worked to destroy the Quaker in David, she worked against him; and she did not fear the end, for she believed in David Hyam of Framley. It was Shelek Pasha's influence, persistently and adroitly used for two years, which made friend David at last put aside for this one day his Quaker hat. And the Pasha rejoiced; for, knowing human nature after a fashion, he understood that when you throw the outer sign away—the sign to you since your birth, like the fingers of your hand—the inner grace begins decadence and in due time disappears.

Shelek Pasha had awaited this with Oriental patience, for he was sure that if David gave way in one thing he would give way in all—and with a rush, some day. Now, at last, he had got David and Hope to dine with him; he had his meshes of deceit around them.

When they came to dinner Shelek Pasha saw the turquoise ring upon the finger of friend Hope, and this startled him and pleased him. Here, he knew, was his greatest enemy where David was concerned, and yet this pretty Saint Elizabeth was wearing a fine turquoise ring with a poke bonnet, in a very worldly fashion. He almost rubbed his eyes, it was so hard to believe; for time and again he had offered antichi in bracelets, rings and scarabs, and fine cottons from Beni-Mazar; and had been promptly and firmly told that the Friends wore no jewelry nor gay attire. Shelek Pasha, being a Christian—after the Armenian fashion—then desired to learn of this strange religion, that his own nature might be bettered, for, alas! snares for the soul are many in the Orient. For this Hope had quietly but firmly referred him to David.

Then he had tried another tack: he had thrown in his interest with her first school in his mudirieh; he got her Arab teachers from Cairo who could speak English; he opened the large schoolhouse himself with great ceremony, and with many kavasses in blue and gold. He said to himself that you never could tell what would happen in this world, and it was well to wait, and to watch the approach of that good angel Opportunity.

With all his devices, however, he could not quite understand Hope, and he walked warily, lest through his lack of understanding he should, by some mischance, come suddenly upon a reef, and his plans go shipwreck. Yet all the time he laughed in his sleeve, for he foresaw the day when all this money the Two Strange People were spending in his mudirieh should become his own. If he could not get their goods and estates peaceably, riots were so easy to arrange; he had arranged them before. Then, when the Two Strange People had been struck with panic, the Syrian donkey- market, and the five hundred feddans of American cotton, and the new schools would be his for a song—or a curse.

When he saw the turquoise ring on the finger of the little Quaker lady he fancied he could almost

hear the accompaniment of the song. He tore away tender portions of roasted lamb with his fingers, and crammed them into his mouth, rejoicing. With the same greasy fingers he put upon Hope's plate a stuffed cucumber, and would have added a clammy sweet and a tumbler of sickly sherbet at the same moment; but Hope ate nothing save a cake of dourha bread, and drank only a cup of coffee.

Meanwhile, Shelek Pasha talked of the school, of the donkey-market, the monopoly of which the Khedive had granted David; and of the new prosperous era opening up in Egypt, due to the cotton David had introduced as an experiment. David's heart waxed proud within him that he had walked out of Framley to the regeneration of a country. He likened himself to Joseph, son of Jacob; and at once the fineness of his first purposes became blunted.

As Shelek Pasha talked on, of schools, of taxes, of laws, of government, to David, with no hat on—Samson without his hair—Hope's mind was working as it had never worked before. She realised what a prodigious liar Shelek Pasha was; for, talking benignly of equitable administration as he did, she recalled the dark stories she had heard of rapine and cruel imprisonment in this same mudirieh.

Suddenly Shelek Pasha saw the dark-blue eyes fastened upon his face with a curious intentness, a strange questioning; and the blue of the turquoise on the hand folded over the other in the grey lap did not quite reassure him. He stopped talking, and spoke in a low voice to his kavass, who presently brought a bottle of champagne—a final proof that Shelek Pasha was not an ascetic or a Turk. As the bottle was being opened the Pasha took up his string of beads and began to finger them, for the blue eyes in the poke bonnet were disconcerting. He was about to speak when Hope said, in a clear voice:

"Thee has a strange people beneath thee. Thee rules by the sword, or the word of peace, friend?" The fat, smooth hands fingered the beads swiftly. Shelek Pasha was disturbed, as he proved by replying in French —he had spent years of his youth in France: "Par la force morale, toujours, madame—by moral force, always," he hastened to add in English. Then, casting down his eyes with truly Armenian modesty, he continued in Arabic: "By the word of peace, oh woman of the clear eyes—to whom God give length of days!"

Shelek Pasha smiled a greasy smile, and held the bottle of champagne over the glass set for friend David.

Never in his life had David the Quaker tasted champagne. In his eyes, in the eyes of Framley, it had been the brew especially prepared by Sheitan to tempt to ruin the feeble ones of the earth. But the doublet of David's mind was all unbraced now; his hat was off, his Quaker drab was spotted with the grease of a roasted lamb. He had tasted freedom; he was near to license now.

He took his hand from the top of the glass, and the amber liquid and the froth poured in. At that instant he saw Hope's eyes upon his, he saw her hand go to the poke bonnet, as it were to unloosen the strings. He saw for the first time the turquoise ring; he saw the eyes of Shelek Pasha on Hope with a look prophesying several kinds of triumph, none palatable to him; and he stopped short on that road easy of gradient, which Shelek Pasha was macadamising for him. He put his hand up as though to pull his hat down over his eyes, as was his fashion when troubled or when he was setting his mind to a task.

The hat was not there; but Hope's eyes were on his, and there were a hundred Quaker hats or Cardinals' hats in them. He reached out quickly and caught Hope's hand as it undid the strings of her grey bonnet. "Will thee be mad, Hope?"

"All the world's mad but thee and me, David, and thee's a bit mad," she answered in the tongue of Framley.

"The gaud upon thy hand?" he asked sternly; and his eyes flashed from her to Shelek Pasha, for a horrible suspicion crept into his brain—a shameless suspicion; but even a Quaker may be human and foolish, as history has shown.

"The wine at thine elbow, David, and thine hat!" she answered steadily.

David, the friend of peace, was bitterly angry. He caught up the glass of champagne and dashed it upon the fine prayer-rug which Shelek Pasha had, with a kourbash, collected for taxes from a Greek merchant back from Tiflis—the rug worth five hundred English pounds, the taxes but twenty Turkish pounds.

"Thee is a villain, friend," he said to Shelek Pasha in a voice like a noise in a barrel; "I read thee as a book."

"But through the eyes of your wife, effendi; she read me first—we understand each other!" answered the Governor with a hateful smile, knowing the end of one game was at hand, and beginning another

instantly with an intelligent malice.

Against all Quaker principles David's sinful arm was lifted to strike, but Hope's hand prevented him, and Shelek Pasha motioned back the Abyssinian slaves who had sprung forward menacingly from behind a screen.

Hope led the outraged David, hatless, into the street.

III

That evening the Two Strange People went to Abdul Huseyn, the jeweller, and talked with him for more than an hour; for Abdul Huseyn, as Egyptians go, was a kindly man. He had taught Arabic to David and Hope. He would have asked more than twelve pieces of silver to betray them.

The next afternoon a riot occurred around the house of the Two Strange People and the school they had built; and Shelek Pasha would have had his spite of them, and his will of the donkey-market, the school, and the cotton-fields, but for Abdul Huseyn and three Sheikhs, friends of his—at a price—who addressed the crowd and quieted them. They declared that the Two were mad folk with whom even the English folk would have naught to do; that they were of those from whom God had taken the souls, leaving their foolish bodies on earth, and were therefore to be cared for and protected, as the Koran said, be they infidel or the Faithful.

Furthermore, said Abdul Huseyn, in proof of their madness and a certain sort of holiness, they wore hats always, as Arabs wore their turbans, and were as like good Mahommedans as could be, sitting down to speak and standing up to pray. He also added that they could not be enemies of the Faithful, or a Christian Mudir would not have turned against them. And Abdul Huseyn prevailed against Shelek Pasha—at a price; for Hope, seeing no need for martyrdom, had not hesitated to open her purse.

Three days afterward, David, with Abdul Huseyn, went to the Palace of the Khedive at Cairo, and within a week Shelek Pasha was on his way to Fazougli, the hot Siberia. For the rage of the Khedive was great when he heard what David and Abdul Huseyn told him of the murderous riot Shelek Pasha had planned. David, being an honest Quaker—for now again he wore his shovel hat—did not realise that the Khedive had only hungered for this chance to confiscate the goods of Shelek Pasha. Was it not justice to take for the chosen ruler of the Faithful the goods an Armenian Christian had stolen from the poor? Before David left the Palace the Khedive gave him the Order of the Mejidfeh, in token of what he had done for Egypt.

In the end, however, David took three things only out of Egypt: his wife, the Order of the Mejidfeh, and Shelek Pasha's pardon, which he strove for as hard as he had striven for his punishment, when he came to know the Khedive had sent the Mudir to Fazougli merely that he might despoil him. He only achieved this at last, again on the advice of Abdul Huseyn, by giving the Khedive as backsheesh the Syrian donkey-market, the five hundred feddans of cotton, and Hope's new school. Then, believing in no one in Egypt any more, he himself went with an armed escort and his Quaker hat, and the Order of the Khedive, to Fazougli, and brought Shelek Pasha penniless to Cairo.

Nowadays, on the mastaba before his grandson's door, Abdul Huseyn, over ninety "by the grace of Allah," still tells of the backsheesh he secured from the Two Strange People for his help on a certain day.

In Framley, where the whole truth never came, David and Hope occasionally take from a secret drawer the Order of the Mejidfeh to look at it, and, as David says, to "learn the lesson of Egypt once again." Having learned it to some purpose—and to the lifelong edification of old friend Fairley, the only one who knew the whole truth—they founded three great schools for Quaker children. They were wont to say to each other, as the hurrying world made inroads on the strict Quaker life to which they had returned: "All the world's mad but thee and me, and thee's a bit mad."

GLOSSARY

Aiwa, effendi——Yea, noble sir.
Allah——God.
Allah-haly 'm alla-haly——A singsong of river-workers.
Allah Kerim——God is bountiful.
Allshu Akbar——God is most Great.
A'l'meh——Female professional singers
Antichi——Antiquities.

Backsheesh——Tip, douceur, bribe.
Balass——Earthen vessel for carrying water.
Basha——Pasha.
Bersim——Grass.
Bimbashi——Major.
Bishareen——A native tribe.
Bismillah——In the name of God.
Bowab——A doorkeeper.

Corvee——Forced labour.

Dahabeah——A Nile houseboat with large lateen sails.
Darabukkeh——A drum made of a skin stretched over an earthenware funnel.
Doash——(Literally) Treading. A ceremony performed on the return of the Holy Carpet from Mecca.
Dourha——Maize.

Effendina——Highness.
El aadah——The ordinary.
El Azhar——The Arab University at Cairo.
Fantasia——Celebration with music, dancing, and processions.
Farshoot——The name of a native tribe.
Fatihah——The opening chapter of the Koran, recited at weddings, etc.

Feddan——The most common measure of land—a little less than an acre. Also dried hay.
Fellah (plu. fellaheen)——The Egyptian peasant.
Felucca——A small boat, propelled by oars or sails.
Fessikh——Salted fish.
Ghaffirs——Humble village officials.
Ghawdzee——The tribe of public dancing-girls. A female of this tribe is called "Ghazeeyeh," and a man "Ghazee," but the plural Ghawazee is generally understood as applying to the female.
Ghimah——The Mahommedan Sunday.

Gippy——Colloquial name for an Egyptian soldier.
Goolah——Porous water-jar of Nile mud.
Hakim——Doctor.
Hanouti——Funeral attendants.
Hari-kari——An Oriental form of suicide.
Hashish——Leaves of hemp.
Inshallah——God willing.
Jibbeh——Long coat or smock, worn by dervishes.
Kavass——An orderly.
Kemengeh——A cocoanut fiddle.
Khamsin——A hot wind of Egypt and the Soudan.
Khedive——The title granted in 1867 by the Sultan of Turkey to the ruler of Egypt.
Khiassa——Small boat.
Khowagah——Gentleman.
Koran——The Scriptures of the Mahommedans.
Kourbash——A stick, a whip.

La ilaha illa-llah——There is no God but God.
Mafish——Nothing.
Magnoon——Fool.
Malaish——No matter.
Mamour——A magistrate.

Mankalah——A game.
Mastaba——A bench.
Mejidieh——A Turkish Order.
Mirkaz——District.
Moghassils——Washers of the dead.
Moufetish——High steward.
Mudir——A Governor of a Mudirieh or province.
Muezzin——The sheikh of the mosque who calls to prayer.
Mushrabieh——Lattice window.

Naboot——Quarter staff.
Narghileh——The Oriental tobacco-pipe.
Nehar-ak koom said——Greeting to you.
Omdah——The head of a village.
Ooster——One of the best sort.

Ramadan——The Mahommedan season of fasting.
Reis——Pilot.

Saadat el basha——Excellency.
Sais——Groom.
Sakkia——Persian water-wheel.
Salaam——A salutation of the East; an obeisance, performed by bowing very low and placing the right palm on the forehead and on the breast.
Sarraf——An accountant.
Shadoof——Bucket and pole used by natives for lifting water.
Sha'er——A reciter. (The singular of Sho'ara, properly signifying a poet.)
Sheikh-el-beled——Head of a village.
Shintiyan——Very wide trousers, worn by the women of the middle and higher orders.
Sitt——"The Lady."

Tarboosh——Fez or native turban.
Tarah——A veil for the head.
Ulema——Learned men.

Waled——A boy.
Wekeel——A deputy.
Welee——A favourite of Heaven; colloquially a saint.

Yashmak——A veil for the lower part of the face.
Yelek——A long vest or smock, worn over the shirt and shintiyan.

Zeriba——A palisade.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

All the world's mad but thee and me
He had tasted freedom; he was near to license

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