The Scourge of Damascus

A Story of the East...

By SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

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INTRODUCTION.

Horam, King of Damascus, then at its glory as the zenith city of the east, bemoaned the coming of old age without prospective heir to the throne. In his younger days he had loved Helea, his queen, but fearing that she was disloyal to him had her cast into the black, swift flowing Phorpar. At the time the story opens Ulin, the daughter of Abou Cassem, the king's prime minister, three times dreams that she has become the wife of the king and that a son being born to them is heir to the throne. Cassem tells his story to the king. The latter having one other child, the son-in-law of Ulin, seeks an alliance with her and on the sixth day following they are to be married. He throughout the day sends messages to the west. Albia, the messenger, is taken by a band of Bedouins, who, learning of the fate of Helea, determine to rescue her. Albia, in the guise of a Bedouin, enters the city and learns that the king has not been long known in this section.

"I may be mistaken," said Albia, trying to reconnoiter herself. "I know that he is a terrible Scourge, and that men fear him; but I do not know how many years he has been so. It may not be so many as I thought."

"But who is he? Where did he come from?"

"Ah, there is a mystery, my dear mistress. Nobody knows where he came from, but it is said that he is an albino, that he suffered some great injury at the hands of Haram, the king of Damascus, that he was left for dead, that he was found by a band of Bedouins, and that he has been with them ever since. He is a giant in stature, and his face is so hideous that men call him the Scourge of God. He is a terrible man, mistress, and I tell you he is feared throughout all the land."

"Go on, Albia."

"Well, he has been with the Bedouins ever since, and they say he is their leader. He is a terrible man, and he hates Damascus and its king. He has sworn that he will lay Damascus in ashes, and Abou Cassem bade me hasten hither and give you warning."

"Albia, what is it about this terrible robber—this Scourge of Damascus? I have heard something about him. I heard my father once speak of him; but my little knowledge of the world did not lead me to be inquisitive. Do you know anything about him?"

"I have heard a great deal of him, my lady. He has been a terror to Damascus for a great many years.

"How many years, Albia? I was thinking that my father said he had

"There is no living place which a keen eye would not detect. I have looked in every direction. So, Aswad, save us by your stout arms."

"I fear the demons will prevail," said Ulin, in a tone of breathless suspense.

"I dare not hope otherwise," returned Albia.

"If they do come, we must find some place in which to hide."

"Alas, my dear mistress, there is no such place. If we go up among the rocks, we must only run the risk of being easily found, but we run the greater risk of starving."

"I would rather starve than fall into the dread Julian's hands," said Ulin.

"It would be a terrible death to starve upon those bleak rocks," returned Albia, with a shudder. "But I will share your fate, my mistress; let it be what it may."

"And we will face death by inanition in perfect peace. But who is more sure to be captured—Albia?"

"Ah, mistress, I cannot think of it!"

"Come, we must retire. Let us go to the other end of the cave, and there we can talk over our plans."

"If we can retire to a place that will be secure, and that will let us hear what may be going on, I think it will be best."

"Come, Albia, I know such a place. Follow me."

"Stay, mistress, I will go first, and I will see if the way is clear."

"Albia, I cannot think of it!"

"Come, mistress, I will reply they have not been long known in this section."

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"Yes, sir."

"And the seat is all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad. Do you know that out home the other day I was sitting on the fence and a cow came up and stood before me for ten minutes, and my wife was telling me afterward that I neither raised my hat nor asked her to take my seat."

EXPLAINED.

Chapel of the Pyx.

The ancient chapel of the Pyx at Westminster is to be thrown open to the public. This is one of the oldest and most interesting parts of the Abbey, the greater part of the fabric belonging to the reign of Edward the Confessor. It was used in early Norman times as a royal treasury, and a robbery from the chapel in the reign of Edward I of treasure valued at £100,000 created a great deal of stir. Later it was used as a record chamber for the treasury, and more recently as a receptacle for the apparatus necessary for the trial of the Pyx—the standardizing of the coin of the realm. The documents formerly deposited in the Pyx chapel have been removed and henceforth the public will have the privilege of penetrating the recesses of this mysterious chamber.—Newcastle (Eng.) Chronicle.

YELLOWSTONE PARK.

Extended four personally conducted tours, leaving Chicago July 9, August 6, September 3, 1901. Tourists will visit the Yellowstone Park, Salt Lake City, Colorado, Pacific Coast, Alaska, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Mexico, etc. Tourists will be accompanied by a Chaperon, and will be provided with all necessary expenses, including first class transportation, Pullman sleeping and dining cars, hotel accommodations, carriage drives, etc.,