

would have made it for a king. In the freer intercourse of the morning, and thinking perhaps that the fugitives were now safe from the pursuit of this party, Hhareth became less reserved, and not only acknowledged his indenture, but, under pledge of secrecy, told his guest his reason for having denied his name. The latter no sooner heard this than he became greatly excited; and, to Hhareth's dismay, he ran across to his Captain, and brought him to the house, evidently telling him all he knew by the way. The only resource of the hunch-back was his idiotic expression and a stout denial of everything. "Fool!" cried the Captain, "thy master's guest was King Shedad, and I am the King's servant. The last of the King's servants are we, he added mournfully, "for they who should have hedged him about have raised wicked hands against him, and have driven him forth from his land and his people. Thou hast lied, Hhareth; and if thy lie shall bring the King and thy master to die in the desert, their blood will be upon thy head."

It was some time before Selif, for that was the Captain's name, could convince Hhareth that he really was a servant and a friend of the King. When however, he did succeed, Hhareth, becoming more impetuous than Selif himself, saddled a horse, and offered to lead the way in overtaking the fugitives. The sun was an hour high when the troop dashed out of the hamlet; and, like the little party which fled in the night, they took the way to Mesa and the desert.

They descended the hill, passing through vineyards, and then between gardens, among date and palm trees, and shortly came to stony and rough ground, where only here and there were little cultivated patches. To this succeeded a country filled with great ragged masses of limestone, looking like the habitation of rude and savage giants, the space between bearing scanty herbage, upon which flocks of goats were feeding. Beyond this all vegetation ceased save brown vines running over the hard baked earth, clinging to the flat, shingly stones, or half buried in the loose sands. At last even this ceased and the troop found itself upon the trackless desert, in the country of "the shifting sands." Hhareth rode first, his keen eye keeping watch of certain hoof marks, plainly distinguishable at first, but growing less and less distinct as the time wore on. At length the hunch-back would halt occasionally; then, like a hound regaining the lost scent, he would dash on again. The sun rose higher and higher, and the heat became intense; but still the party pushed forward at a high speed. The horses, injured as they were to the heat and to the desert, began to show signs of distress; but still their riders urged them on save when, at long intervals, Hhareth would pause to seek anew the lost trail. And still these stoppages became more and more frequent. At length, when the troop had paused a long time Selif rode up to Hhareth; and the latter confessed himself entirely at fault. "The north wind and the south wind," he said, "have woven the twisted sands, and effaced the prints of their feet. I can lead no longer."

"Whither would Zohair lead the King?" Selif asked.

"I cannot tell," said Hhareth. "By this road he might go to Tayef or to Saba."

"Shedad," said Selif, "would not go to Tayef. The Ishmaelite is in Mesa and robs the land even to Tayef. Shedad would not go thither.

"Then," said Hhareth, he hath turned southward and gone towards Saba. But now, O Selif, it is needful that we seek for water and rest, else we perish in the desert, for I perceive that the horses grow faint."