

had not the girl reached forward and dragged him to her side.

A yell arose from the Bedouins, and the little dots swayed forward in an irregular line. But the rifles in the cave were held by old and hardened campaigners, and four men dropped ere the attackers had covered two hundred yards. The rush was stopped, and the Arabs took cover in one of the innumerable little valleys which spread themselves in a network over the plain.

For a long time no move was made on either side, but as Kingston swept the horizon with his glasses he descried in the far distance a gleam of brightness moving amid a cloud of dust. In half an hour more this resolved half into a body of camel riders twenty or thirty strong, and as he looked he saw a single figure sneaking back out of rifle shot to warn the approaching band.

After a long colloquy the attackers were seen to be retiring, leaping and bounding in the most fantastic fashion to avoid the fire which never came; for a comparison with Abdullah showed the total amount of ammunition to consist of no more than thirty rounds, and that would have to be saved for the attack.

Smoke began to rise and camels were hobbled as though they had decided to camp for the night. Two sentries, however, were sent forwards half-a-mile on each side of the cave with the evident intention that the fugitives should not slip away unperceived.

"Abdullah, you sleep; I keep watch," commanded Kingston, and to the girl he said: "You had better get some sleep, too. You will want it to-night. There is no immediate danger now, Miss Baker; they will wait for the night to rush us."

Abdullah, a true camelman, retired obediently to the back of the cave where Jezebel and her companion chewed and grunted; but Ethel with a wry face decided against the interior and lay down beside Kingston with her back against the cave on a coarse blanket. She was deadly tired, her eyes heavy lidded, which told their own tale, had black hollows underneath, and she sank into a heavy slumber.

An hour before sunset Abdullah awoke and began to move about the cave questioning. "Master," he whispered excitedly, "I think there passage here. I go see," and he disappeared over a heap of loose rocks down one of the old workings which the olden miners had tunnelled hundreds of years ago. It was half-an-hour later when he returned, his face ablaze with excitement.

"Master, I find way out," he gasped, and in sentences broken with wild gesticulations and Arabic phrases to supplement his English, he told of his stumbles down a rough shaft half-closed by the fall of debris, through a small opening and up another rock-hewn passage to a boulder-covered entrance to the clear air outside.

"But we can't take the camels," objected Kingston.

"No matter, Master. I steal camel when Bedouin man fight."

"Yes, but then we're no better off, for they will follow as soon as they find we are not here. It will be sunset in half-an-hour, and then they will come. Let me think."

"I have it," he said at last, "you take the woman and I'll hold the cave. You go for help with her and bring back."

Kingston roused the girl gently with a pressure of the hand. But when she found her position she sprang up hastily, and if she seemed beautiful in her pallor before, how much more now with a blush mantling brow and neck and ears.

"Has anything fresh happened?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, returning to his desert manner. "Will you be ready to start with Abdullah at sunset?"

"And you?"

"I stay behind here to keep those gentlemen employed for an hour or two to give you a sporting start," he said lightly. "Then I shall come on."

"Then I think I will wait, too," she said with decision.

"Impossible," he said, curtly. "I want to get you off my shoulders. The responsibility is too great."

"You swear you will come on after us," she said, pitifully.

He swore it eagerly. "There is not the slightest danger to me," he lied.

At last, as the sun showed red and dusky above the horizon, Abdullah made a move, prostrating himself first before his master and saying a few broken words in Arabic, to which Kingston replied in curt phrases. At last, with profound dejection,



"Dear Heart, I cannot."

Abdullah signed to her to follow him and disappeared down the tunnel.

Sybil held out her hand. "You swear?"

For all his answer he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. Then thrusting her away roughly, "Go," he said, "or I shall come too."

But he came to earth with a thud as he saw a dense mass slowly pushing its way into the picture. A Bedouin's head! First the peaked covering, then a black forehead, then the whites of the eyes, and he stood spellbound as the whole face appeared and glared uncertainly into the blackness of the cave. Evidently a scout who wondered if the occupants were all asleep. Instantly the spell broke. He threw up his carbine, and a scream echoed the thunderous roar of the shot, as the man flung up his hands and rolled limply down the slope gathering a miniature avalanche on the way. This was the signal for a chorus of yells and a volley of Martini bullets directed at hazard to the cave's mouth. An hour passed in dead silence. Abdullah must be well away by now, he thought. Suddenly a grey-clad figure stole up from the back of the cave and laid a cold hand upon his shoulder.

"Sybil!" he gasped. "What are you doing here?" The girl fell on her knees and sobbed. She clung to his arm like a frightened child.

"Abdullah said that I should find you dead," she whispered. "But I couldn't go any further."

She hid her face in her hands most sweetly, but he took them in his strong hands and drew her to him. As he tried to speak of his love, his voice broke and he could only sink to his knees and kiss the strong little hands whose nervous grip sent the blood coursing through his veins so madly.

She first came to earth and pointed to the cave's mouth; the moon had risen, and now the scuffling was explained. Up the slope, dragged by ropes from above, was slithering a weird carcass with limp wobbly legs and a neck that curved unnaturally. It was the body of one of the camels he had shot, and round its belly were tied three or four of the wooden saddles to save a repast-work, from behind which the attackers could enfilade the cave. Not a man was visible, for the wily Bedouins had tasted too much marksmanship from the little carbine in the cave. As Kingston went forward cautiously to survey; but as his head showed up against the dark background a bullet sang past his ear and buried itself in the sandstone just behind him.

"Covering party," he said, cheerfully. "We must retire to our citadel," and they made their way

to the back of the cave where the old tunnel began.

As a last hope Kingston fired a shot, and then, taking the girl's hand, raced down the tunnel. His shot had given him a few minutes' respite, for as they reached the open air they heard the reverberation of the futile volleys fired into the darkness. But there were men on the crest of the hill, and he had only time to drag the girl into another opening.

"I think this is the end," he said, with a tightening of his arm around her. But she, with her woman's faith showing clear above the fog of imminent death, was quite calm.

"Dear," she whispered, "it is only the beginning, for surely God would not part us after so short a happiness." She handed him the revolver he had given her. He refilled it with a shudder, "Dear heart, I cannot."

"You promised," she reminded him; and he took it dully.

They could hear the scouts on the hill calling shrilly to those in the cave, and the answering yells of the attackers as they emerged from the tunnel. Then there came a panic and a fresh clamour of voices, but as no attack seemed imminent, Kingston dared to look out. The Bedouins seemed distracted. Some with hands uplifted were screaming inarticulate curses, others were running down the side of the hill and scattering like startled rabbits.

"The Camel Corps and the boy!" he yelled delightedly. There was no fear of attack now, and she came forth and stood beside him. Round the shoulder of the hill came a galloping camel, happily with a mad rider waving a sword and swerving after the fashion of the British subaltern in action. Behind him pounded in a choking cloud of sand some ten uniformed men in straggling line who broke into a squealing cheer as they caught sight of the quarry.

As they reached the bottom of the slope the subaltern trotted up dripping and happy. "Your father's all right, Miss Baker," he said, cheerfully. "We stalked on the camel guard first whilst the rest were occupied with you. Then we came on for the fun. Oh, it was a lovely show—a lovely show!"

"Just go on and prepare the Colonel," said Kingston in an "off" voice, and the boy, with a queer look at their faces and a glance at their clasped hands, trotted away.

"You meant it?" said Kingston with a catch in his voice. "It wasn't just—"

"Must I say it again?" she asked with a low happy laugh.

"Dearest! Yes; and every day of your life."

Over the crest of the rise was hurrying a pompous red-faced man followed by the subaltern who, like the little gentleman he was, pleaded weariness and incapacity to hurry.

"Sybil, my dear child!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Kingston, sir, I shall never be able to thank you—"

"I hope so!" said Kingston quietly; and to the dismay of the colonel, to the joy of the subaltern, he lifted the girl's hand to his lips.

## A Song of Beauty.

Oh, sing me a song of beauty! I'm tired of the stressful song,

I'm weary of all the preaching, the arguing right and wrong,

I'm fain to forget the adder that under the leaf lies curled,

And dream of the light and beauty that gladdens the gray old world!

Oh, sing of the emerald meadows that smile all day in the sun!

The ripple and gleam of the rivers that on through the meadows run!

The birds—let them sing in your singing and flash through the lines you write,

The lark with his lilt in the morning, the nightingale charming the night,

The butterfly over the flowers that hovers on painted wing—

All these, let them brighten and lighten the beautiful song you sing!

Though under the leaf the adder of death and of gloom lies curled,

Oh, sing, for a space, of the beauty that gladdens the gray old world!

—Denis A. McCarthy, in *New York Sun*.