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## THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN By HAROLD MAC GRATH.

### Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Kathlyn Hare, believing her father, Col. Hare, in peril, has summoned her, leaves her home in California to go to him in Allah, India. Umballah, pretender to the throne of that principality, has imprisoned the colonel, named by the late king as his heir, because he fears the American may insist on his royal rights. Upon her arrival in Allah, Kathlyn is informed by Umballah that her father, being dead, she is to be queen, and must marry him forthwith. Because of her refusal she is sentenced to undergo two ordeals with wild beasts.

John Bruce, an American and fellow passenger on the boat which brought Kathlyn to Allah, saves her life. The elephant which carries her from the scene of her trials becomes frightened and runs away, separating her from Bruce and the rest of the party.

After a ride filled with peril she takes refuge in a ruined temple. The holy men and villagers, believing her to be an ancient priestess, raise from the tomb, allow her to remain as the guardian of the sacred fire. But Kathlyn's haven is also the abode of a lion, and she is forced to flee from it, with the savage beast in pursuit. She escapes and finds a retreat in the jungle, only to fall into the hands of a band of slave traders, who bring her to Allah to the public mart. She is sold to Umballah, who, finding her still unsubmitive, throws her into the dungeon with her father.

Bruce and his friends effect the release of Kathlyn and the colonel. Umballah's attempt to recapture them is unsuccessful, and the fugitives are given shelter in the palace of Balu Khan.

Supplied with camels and servants by that hospitable prince, the party endeavors to reach the coast, but, are overpowered by a band of brigands, and the encounter results in the colonel being delivered to Umballah. Kathlyn and Bruce escape from their captors and return to Allah, where Kathlyn learns that her father, while nominally king, is in reality a prisoner. It is arranged to find a bride for him. Candidates come from near and far, Kathlyn among them. She hopes by gaining access to the palace in disguise to be able to get her father out of Umballah's clutches, and to join Bruce and Ramabai outside the palace gates. Her plan is succeeding when the leopards which guard the treasury become free and enter the throne room, throwing the entire court into a wild panic.

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### CHAPTER XV.

#### PANTHERS.

CROUCHED in the palanquin, Kathlyn waited for the onslaught of the leopards. Once she heard a tremendous scratching at the rear of her hiding place, the palanquin tottered. But the animal was not trying to get inside; he was merely sharpening his claws after the manner of his kind, claws which were sharp enough, heaven knew, since, regularly, once a month the keepers filed them to needle points.

An elephant trumpeted nearby, and Kathlyn could have wept in despair. Outside the wall were friends, doubtless by this time joined by her father and Ramabai, and all wondering where she was. She dared not call out for fear of attracting the leopards, whose movements she could hear constantly; the jar of their padded feet as they trotted, under and about the palanquin, the snuff-sniff of their wet noses, an occasional yawning.

By and by her curiosity could not be withstood, even though she might be courting death. Cautious-



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a chance. If it creaked she was lost; for she would fall into the hands of the keepers if not under the merciless paws of the cats.

But the longer she hesitated the less time she would have. Bravely, then, she tried her hand upon the door handle and slowly but firmly turned it. There was no sound that she could hear. She pressed it outward with a slow, steady movement. Fortunately the door of the Hindu was short, somewhat above the ankles, and within her strong body was free of those modern contrivances known as corsets and stays.

She sprang out, dashed for the vines, and drew herself up rapidly. In unison the seven leopards whirled and flew at her. But the half a dozen yards which they had first to cover to reach the wall saved her. Up, up, desperately, wildly, with a nervous energy which did far more for her than her natural strength. The cats leaped and snarled at her heels. She went on. Beneath her the leopards tore at the vines and tried to follow, one succeeding in tearing her skirt with a desperate slash of his paw. He lost his hold and tumbled back among his mates.

But every minute the vines, sturdy as they were, threatened to come tumbling to the ground.

Her long and lively experiences in the jungle had taught her the need of climbing quickly yet lightly. She flung herself across the top of the wall, ex-

hausted, but she was safe. She had made up her mind to stop at the moment she did. For the elephants had not left the first turn in the street when keepers and soldiers came running pell-mell into the street with ropes and ladders, prepared for the recapture of the treasury leopards, which, of course, were looked upon as sacred.

At the ancient gate the fugitives paused for the supplies awaiting them. Ahmed was not known to the guards there; that was good fortune. In the distance he jest with them, winked and nodded toward the curtained howdah. The guards laughed; they understood. Some disappointed howdah was returning whence she came. Ahmed took his time; he had no reason to hurry. Nothing must pass which would arouse the suspicions of the guards; and haste always alarmed the oriental.

To the Colonel, however, things appeared to lag unnecessarily. He finally lost patience and swept back the curtain despite Bruce's restraining hand. A native mahout, who had been loitering in town that day, recognized at once the royal turban which the colonel still wore. The colonel's face meant nothing; the turban everything. The mahout stood stock still for a moment, not quite believing his eyes. By this time, however, Ahmed was comfortable straddled back of his elephant's ears and was jogging along the road.

"The king!" shouted the surprised mahout to the guards, who had not seen the man or the turban. "What king, fool?" returned the guards.

"What king, fool?" returned the guards. "The white king who was betrothed this day! At all I have seen the royal turban. It is he!"

The guards decided him. So, finding no hope in

them, he ran to his elephant, mounted, and rode back into town. Durga Ram would pay well for this news.

"Father," said Kathlyn reproachfully, "that mahout recognized you. I warned you not to move the curtain."

Bruce shrugged. "But, Kit," returned her father, "Ahmed was so infernally slow! He could spend time in chattering to the guards."

Ahmed heard, but said nothing. "Never mind," interposed Bruce pacifically. "At any rate we shall have the advantage of a couple of hours, and Umballah will not catch us with the elephants he has at hand. By the time he starts his expedition we shall be thirty miles away. Let us be cheerful!"

"Kit," said her father, "I couldn't help it. I can't think quickly any more. I am like a man in a nightmare. I've been down to hell, and I can't just yet realize that I am out of it. I'm sorry."

"Poor dad!" Kathlyn pressed him in her arms, while Bruce nodded approvingly but approvingly.

By and by they drew aside the curtains. Kathlyn saw here and there objects which recalled her first journey along this highway. If only she had known! "One thing is forecast," said Bruce. "When Ramabai returns it will be to fight. He will not be able to avoid it now. I shouldn't mind going back with him. Ahmed, what is this strange hold Umballah had over the actions of the Council of Three? They always appear to be afraid of him."

"Ah, sahib," said Ahmed, resting his ankus on a road on the skull of his mount, "there is said to be another prisoner in the palace prison. Lal Singh knows, I believe."

"What's your idea?"

"Sahib, when I put you all safe over the frontier I am coming back to Allah to find out," and that was all Ahmed would say regarding the subject.

"I'll wager he knows," whispered Bruce.

"But who can it be? Another poor devil of a white man? Yet how could a white man influence the actions of the Council?" The Colonel spoke irritably.

"Look!"—from Kathlyn. "There is one of those wonderful trees they call the flame of the jungle."

She called their attention to the tree merely to cause a diversion. She wanted to keep her father's thoughts away from Allah.

So they journeyed on into the sunset, into twilight, into the bright, starry night.

Back in the city the panic was already being forgotten as a thing of the past. The leopards were back in their pastures; the high officials and dignitaries, together with the unsuccessful candidates, had gone their several ways. Umballah alone paced the halls, well satisfied with the events of the day, basking in the disturbance caused by the escape of the leopards.

His captain entered and saluted. "Highness, a mahout has news."

"News? Of what?"

"He claims that he saw the king's turban in a howdah which passed the ancient gate about an hour ago."

"That is not possible," replied Umballah.

"I told him that the king was in his chamber."

"So he is. Wait! I will go myself and see," all at once vaguely perturbed. He was back in a very short time, furious. "It is true! Woe to those who permitted him to escape!"

"Highness, the escape of the leopards and the confusion which followed."

"By all the gods of Hind, and 'twas you who left the door open! You opened it for me to pass out first. Summon the council. Off with you, and give this handful of silver to the only man who has sense enough to believe his eyes. Hare Sahib is mine, and I will follow him into the very house of the British Raj! Guards and elephants! And the bride to be, what of her? Look and see. Nay, I will go with you."

Umballah found an empty chamber; the future queen was gone. More than one of the women of the harem—his favorite—bound and gagged with handkerchiefs. Quickly he freed her.

"Highness, the bride's face was dark like my own, but her arms were as light as clotted cream! And she spoke the tongue of the white people."

Kathlyn Hare! She lived; she had escaped the brigands; she had fooled him! And Ramabai had played with him as a cat plays with a wounded mouse. O, they should see this time!

Suddenly he laughed. It echoed down the corridor, and one of the treasure leopards roared back at the sinister sound.

"Highness!" timidly.

"Thought I hold you blameless." He rushed from the palace.

Poor fools! Let them believe that they had escaped. There was still the little sister; in a short time now she would be inside the city walls. The Colonel Sahib would return; indeed, yes. There would be no further difficulty regarding the filigree basket of gold and gems. Still, he would pursue them, if only for the mere sport of it. If he failed to catch them all he had to do was to sit down and wait for them to return of their own volition.

Ramabai, however, was a menace; and Umballah wondered how he was going to lay hold of him. While waiting for his elephants to be harnessed he summoned the council. Ramabai's property must be confiscated and Ramabai put to death. Here for the first time the council flatly refused to fall in with Umballah's plans. And they gave very good reasons. Yes, Ramabai was a menace, but till the soldiery was fully paid, to touch Ramabai would mean the bursting forth of the hidden fire and they would all be consumed.

"Open the treasury door for me, then!"

"We dare not. The keepers understand. They would loose the leopards, which we dare not shoot. The law..."

"What is the law to us?" demanded Umballah frankly. "Let us make the laws to suit our needs. The white man does. And we need money; we need each other," pointing a finger suggestively toward the door.

"Only when we have the troops," replied the council firmly. "We have bent our heads to your will so far in everything, but we refuse to sacrifice these heads because of a personal spite against Ramabai, whom we frankly and wisely fear. We dare not break into the treasury. The keepers are unsubmitive; the priests are with them, and the people are with the priests. Bring back the white man and his daughter first; if that is impossible, marry this second daughter, and we will crown her, and then you may work your will upon Ramabai. You have failed in all directions so far. Succeed but once and we are ready to follow you."

Umballah choked back the hot, imperious words which crowded to his lips. These were plain, unvarnished facts, and he must bow to the inevitable, however distasteful it might be. For the present, then, Ramabai should be permitted to go unharmed. But Ramabai might die suddenly and accidentally in the recapture of the Colonel Sahib. An accidental death would certainly extinguish any volcanic fires that smoldered under Allah. So, with this secret determination in mind, Umballah set forth.

Ahmed, his mind busy with a thousand things, forgot the thousand and first, at that stage most important of all; and this was the short cut, a mere pathway through the jungle, but which lessened the journey by some thirty miles. And this pathway Umballah chose. The three hours' headway was thus paid down to minutes, and at the proper time Umballah would appear; not behind the pursued but in the road in front of them.

There was, to be sure, a bare possibility of the Colonel and his party getting beyond the "meeting of the path and the road"—that is, if he kept going forward all through the night, which, by the way, was exactly what the astute Ahmed did. But Kathlyn's curiosity the next morning neutralized the advantage gained.

A group of masked dancers, peripatetic, was the cause. Confident that they had outstripped pursuit, she saw no reason why she should not witness the dancing.

How Umballah came upon them suddenly, like a thunderbolt, confiscating the elephants; how they fled to a nearby temple, bribed the dancers for masks and garments, fled still farther into the wooded hills and hid there with small arms ready, needs but little telling. Umballah returned to the city satisfied. He had at least deprived them of their means of travel. Sooner or later they would founder in the jungle, hear of the arrival of the younger daughter, and return.

Ahmed was grave. Lal Singh had gone. Now that the expedition had practically failed, his place was back in the shoe shop in the bazaars. Yes, Ahmed was grave. He was also a trifle disheartened. The fakir had said that there would be many disappointments, but that in the end... He might be a liar like all the other Hindus. Yet surely one part of his foretelling was correct; many disappointments.

"Kit," said her father, "Ahmed warned you not to stop."

"I am sorry."

It was on the tip of her tongue to retort that his own carelessness was the basic cause of the pursuit; but she remembered in time what her father had been through.

"There is a village not far," reminded Ahmed. "They are a friendly people. It is quite possible, with the money we have, to buy some horses, small but sturdy. But there is one thing I do not understand, sahib."

"And what is that?" asked the Colonel.

"The readiness with which Umballah gave up the pursuit. It's a long walk; let us be getting forward."

Late that afternoon they were all mounted once more, on strong, tractable ponies, with water and provisions. And the spirits of all rose accordingly. Even Ahmed became cheerful.

"We'll make it, please God!" said the Colonel.

"Give me a telegraph office. That's all I need just now."

"Two days, sahib," said Ahmed, "we will reach the sea."

They rode all through the night, stopping only at dawn for breakfast and a cat nap after. Then forward again till they came upon a hunter's rest house, deserted. Here they agreed to spend the night. Beyond the rest house were half a dozen scattered mud huts, occupied by natives who pretended friendliness, hailing even the keen Ahmed into a sense of security. But at dawn, when they awoke cheerfully to pick up the trail, they found their horses and provisions gone.

The Colonel, Bruce, and Ahmed, still armed, never having permitted the rifles out of their keeping, set out grimly in pursuit of the thieves, while Kathlyn proceeded to forage on her own initiative.

She came presently upon a magnificent ravine, half a mile in depth. There was a broad ledge some fifteen feet below. It was evidently used as a goat path, for near at hand stood a shepherd's hut. Stirred by the spirit of investigation, she made preparations for descent by attaching the rope she had brought along to a stout boulder.

Panthers!

They were coming up the pathway behind her. It would be simple enough to descend; but how to get back to the rest house? There was no time to plan; she must act at once. She must drop down to the ledge and trust to her star.

She called out loudly as she swung downward. The shepherd came running out of his hut, dumfounded at what he saw.

(Continued next Saturday.)



"A narrow squeak, dad," was all she said.

ly and soundlessly she moved the curtain which faced the wall. A mass of heavy vines ran from the ground to the top of this wall. If only she could reach it; if only she dared try! Presently the keepers, armed with goads and ropes, would be forthcoming, and all hope of flight banished. Umballah, upon close inspection, would recognize her despite her darkened skin and Indian dress.

From the other window she peered. There, in the path, were two leopards, boxing and clinking in play. As she watched, always interested in the gambols of such animals, she noticed that two other leopards left off prowling, approached, sat upon their haunches, and critically followed the friendly set-to. Then the other three, seeking diversity, sauntered into view. Kathlyn quickened with life and hope. The seven leopards were at least half a dozen yards away. It was a bit of the vines sprawling over the wall.

To think that all depended upon the handle of the palanquin door! If it opened without noise there was

ed. For the time being, at least, she was safe. She hung there for a few minutes till she had fully recovered her breath. Below the leopards were still leaping and striking futilely; and even in her terror she could not but admire their grace and beauty. And, oddly, she recalled the pet at home. Doubtless by this time he had fallen back into his savage state.

When she dared risk it she gained a secure position on the wall and sat up, flinging her legs over the side of it. She saw three in a bit of blur at first; her heart had been called upon so strenuously; but after a little objects resumed their real shapes, and she espied the two elephants. She called, waving her hands.

"It is Kathlyn!" cried Bruce; for the eyes of a lover are always keenest.

"Kit!" shouted the Colonel, who shared the howdah with Bruce. "Kit, hang on for a moment longer! Ahmed, to the wall!"

The Colonel and Ramabai had left the zenana by one of the windows overlooking the passage which

ran past the garden of brides. They had had no trouble whatever in reaching the elephants. But the subsequent waiting for Kathlyn had keyed them all up to the breaking point. The pity of it was, they dared not stir, dared not start in search of her. Had it been leopards only, Bruce would have made short work of it; but it would have been rank folly to have gone in search of the girl. If she had been made captive, she needed their freedom to gain her own. Besides, the counsel of both Ahmed and Lal Singh was for patience.

Ahmed had the greatest faith in the world in Kathlyn's ability to take care of herself. Think of what she had already gone through unscathed! Kathlyn Memasahib bore a charmed life, and all the wild beasts of the jungles of Hind could not harm her. It was written.

And then Bruce discovered her upon the wall.

It took but a moment to bring the elephant along-side; and Kathlyn dropped down into the howdah.

"A narrow squeak, dad," was all she said.

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SEE THE PICTURES NEXT FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT THE IMPERIAL