

Arabia, was the occasion of an outburst of unaffected joy from the people, many of whom had been his steadfast friends at all times, while others, opposed to him at first, had learned that Modar's rule was the rule of scorpions compared with the whips of their rightful lord. Another advantage was that the Garden, massive as were its walls, stood in the open valley, and was assailable on all sides. For the rest, it was as well provisioned as the city, and better watered.

Around the new rebel stronghold the besieging army gathered. It was useless simply to blockade the place, for none knew better than the King that it was provisioned for years. And it appeared as useless to assault it, for the bowmen might shoot their puny arrows, the spearmen shake their lances and the chariots dash up to the iron gates till the very crack of doom without dislodging a single stone from those solid walls, or destroying a single defender. Meanwhile laughter and revelry could be heard within, and the rebel soldiery on the top of the walls mocked at their besiegers.

But the besiegers were not idle. True, the army lay inactive about the Garden, content with cutting off all communication from without, but in the city artisans toiled day and night on vast machines—catapults and ballistas and battering rams with which it was hoped to breach the walls and thus gain entrance. This work had gone on for a month, and all things were in a state of forwardness for the anticipated assault, when at dawn one morning a messenger came breathless into camp, crying, "To arms! to arms! The Ishmaelite is upon us!"

Before the sleeping host could spring to arms clouds of fierce sons of the desert, issuing from the rocky defiles of the mountain, dashed upon the Queen's forces, carrying dismay and disorder wherever they went. For a few moments it seemed that they would sweep everything before them, and then the tide of fight was turned by the arrival of a band under Selif, who, dashing into the thickest of the conflict, held their ground till their comrades, hastily arming, flew to their assistance, and the line of war was formed along the valley; the besieging forces, turning their backs upon the Garden, faced the foe that came down upon them from the mountain. Gradually the fortunes of the day changed. From being surprised, dispirited and beaten, the troops of Himyar gained new accessions each moment and soon began in turn to drive the brave but undisciplined sons of the desert before them.

And now another change came: the gates of the Garden suddenly flew open, and the garrison, issuing thence, fell upon the rear of the Queen's troops. Unprepared for this new attack, the latter were gradually beaten back before the combined assaults of their foes. Gathering in compact mass they presented a solid front, but even then they were pushed gradually but surely back before the impetuous assault till they reached the causeway leading into the city. A chosen body ascended this causeway and closed the gate, while the main body, passing quite around the city, entered by the other gate, and so the battle terminated for the night. The royal troops were beaten but safe, while the Ishmaelites and the rebels fell back to the neighborhood of the Garden where they camped for the night.

Queen Belkis at once called a council of war. Though the day had terminated disastrously for her forces, there was no immediate danger of further calamity. The enemy could not possibly make any impression upon the city, and it was entirely foreign to the nature of the roving Ishmaelite to undertake the tedious and monotonous business of