

AN EGYPTIAN ROMANCE.

A Story of Love and Wild Adventure, founded upon Startling Revelations in the Career of Arabia Pasha.

By the Author of "NINA, THE Nihilist," "THE RED SPOT," "THE RUSSIAN SPY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.—(CONTINUED.)

Return we, almost with the morning's dawn, to Arabi Pasha's headquarters at the arsenal, so chosen perhaps because the narrow neck of land at that point very nearly converted the peninsula on which the Ras-el-Tin palace is built into an island, and so, in a manner, made him the Khedive's jailer at the outer gates thereof.

But though the war minister was yet the master of the situation, his sovereign to all intents and purposes his prisoner, and all Egypt backing him up and ready to stand by him, we find him on this especial morning ill at ease and with less confidence than usual as to the future, for three of his leading generals have disturbed him thus early, and each had been the bearer of unwelcome tidings.

Suleiman Zoghbeff Effendi has brought the news that the populace are eager for another European massacre and that the troops can't be relied upon for preventing it.

Salam Pasha, afterward known as "The Merciful," is bearer of the intelligence that an immense reward has been offered secretly by the Khedive for his head, and that the Sultan of Turkey has renewed round again under British pressure and is about to dispatch thirty thousand troops to Egypt to help restore the authority of Tewfik.

Toulba Pasha, the last arrival and commonly called "Arabi's Brain," brings the information that the British admiral had sent an express to the palace, urging the Khedive to come off to the fleet, so as to escape all dangers from the bombardment that he intended immediately to open upon the forts.

This last intelligence seemed to cheer the war minister rather than otherwise, for he exclaimed:

"If Tewfik accepts the situation all is well, for by the law of nations, for a sovereign ruler to seek refuge from his own subjects on foreign soil or aboard a foreign vessel is an act of abdication. The Khedival throne will be empty from the moment that Tewfik plants foot on the deck of an English ironclad. I could desire nothing better."

But at this juncture a fourth high official entered the Hall of Councils, and on being eagerly questioned by the war minister as to what he had to tell, made answer as follows:

"Your excellency, the Khedive has declined to quit his palace at the British admiral's invitation, saying he will not desert his faithful people merely because he is menaced by a military insurrection, but will rather cast his lot with them."

"Let not that speech of his get abroad," said Arabi, with contracted brows. "It is meant as a bid for popular favor, nothing more. What other news have you?"

"The English and foreign consular and other authorities are all crowding out of the town, early as it is the hour, and making their way in boats to the different war vessels, all of which seem to be getting their steam up and two or three to be standing in nearer to the shore."

"That looks like business, gentlemen," said Arabi Pasha, with a grim smile.

"If the Feringhees mean to act why should we be bandying mere words?" growled Suleiman Effendi, with a hand on his sword hilt; whereat the fierce Toulba Pasha exclaimed: "If Tewfik won't quietly leave the land of which he has been the scourge and oppressor, why not accord him a grave therein and place his Excellency, the Obsequious of the Nation, in his place? What is one life when thousands are menaced?"

"Silence!" said Arabi, sternly. "A crime such as you hint at, Toulba, never yet advanced the interests of any cause. I put my trust in Allah and the strength of a good and righteous cause. But I do not intend to remain idle. My forts are ready, my guns are shotted, my artillery men are at their posts and ready to shed their blood for Egypt's freedom. Yet would I still maintain peace if possible, for they who,

save of necessity, draw the sword shall perish by the sword. Which of you will venture with a verbal message aboard the British flag-ship?"

The three pashas and the Effendi all held up their hands at once.

But the war minister chose Toulba to be his emissary.

CHAPTER XLV.

NELLIE'S FATHER AND MOTHER SET OUT TO DELIVER HER.

Hardly had the war minister finished speaking when a captain of artillery entered the hall, and advancing, in obedience to a waved permission, whispered something in Arabi Pasha's ear, the only word audible being the word of Trezarr.

He found Nellie's father and mother anxiously awaiting him in a room furnished in a manner that suggested a compromise between official and private life.

When they had made brief mention of the dangers which they had encountered on the way they began to make anxious inquiry respecting their daughter.

"What I have to tell you concerning her must be received in the strictest confidence," said the war minister impressively, "by reason that the life of my informant might be endangered were it otherwise, for harem secrets are the most dangerous of all secrets to be acquainted with, since the betrayal of the smallest of them is death, with sometimes the most terrible tortures superadded."

Mr. and Mrs. Trezarr were much impressed by this speech, and whilst its solemnity caused them to tremble for their daughter's safety, it induced them to promise their host in one breath that they would take his advice and be guided by him in all things.

"It is well," replied Arabi; "know then that our dear Nellie is a prisoner in the Khedival seraglio at the Ras-el-Tin Palace and in the power, moreover, of one who hates her and will sacrifice her to an insane jealousy unless she is prevented."

This explanation by no means tended to allay the anxious parents' fears.

"Let me once get hold of my dear child and I'll bring the palace down with my screams but what I'll bring her out," exclaimed Mrs. Trezarr, and she would have gone on in the same strain ad infinitum had not her husband checked her.

Arabi clapped his hands thrice, and the artillery bimbashan appeared.

He called him on one side and gave his directions, and then, turning again towards Mr. and Mrs. Trezarr, said, with a smile:

"That officer is responsible for your safe custody, and in an hour from the present I hope to welcome your return, with your daughter and my affianced wife accompanying you."

With these words he waved his hand, as though deprecating reply and in haste that they should be gone.

No sooner had they passed out of the room, however, than a sudden thought, or rather suspicion, seemed to strike him, and giving utterance to what sounded very like a muttered Oriental oath, he rushed after them, and catching Mr. Trezarr by his sleeve drew him back a few paces, and said in a half earnest and half jocular tone, but the former predominating:

"Mind that you all three do come back to me. Don't be going aboard one of the British war ships along with the Khedive, for as surely as that your daughter shall be a sovereign princess and the most exalted of all women in Egypt if you keep your word and marry her unto me, so surely will I take upon all the wealth in your bank and mansion at Cairo, of which I hold the keys, and consecrate all that you possess for the national cause, should you be induced on any pretext to break your word to me."

He waited not for an answer, but hurried back into the room which he had just quitted, where he seated himself cross-legged on a divan, and calling a young Nubian

slave to light his chibouqua, indulged in the following comforting reflections:

"Trezarr will not now dare to play me false; for his wealth is as dear to him as his very soul, and I can seize upon it at any moment should he venture to leave the country. Then, as to the Khedive, the very thing that I want is to frighten him off Egyptian soil, for I would sooner that his blood was not on my hands, and yet have I every desire that his throne should be left empty, for until empty how can another fill it?"

CHAPTER XLVI.

ELMARR SEIZES THE AMULET AND NELLIE CATCHES THE WHIP.

When we see abruptly left Nellie in the middle of a former chapter, lying half naked amidst the pile of soft and yielding cushions in the almost stifling heat of her prison chamber, we merely said that she slumbered until morning's dawn. She then awoke to find herself bathed in a gentle perspiration, and the pink spots on her cheeks, the princess' cheeks, had raised on her beginning to turn to bruises.

With a shudder she began to redon her apparel.

Hardly had she completed her toilet when the door of the room was opened and Elmarr came in, bearing on a tray a cup of coffee and some little cakes.

She placed them on the floor, regarded Nellie with an evil leer and was about to withdraw, when our heroine asked her for the necessary requisites for the performing of her ablutions and dressing her hair, whereupon Elmarr grinned and said:

"Her highness, when she has risen, intends to conduct you to the bath and personally to wait upon you there. I am sure that you should feel grateful for such an excess of consideration."

Nellie stammered something or other in way of acknowledgment, but did feel very grateful, for it occurred to her like a conviction that in the bath her loveliness would bring upon her fresh persecutions and sufferings, and that the princess intended to wait upon her for no other purpose than to insult them, and fiercely gloat over her writhings, her pantings and her struggles the while.

The buffoon read her thoughts in the wild, frightened look of the great violet eyes. She went out of the room and closed the door behind her, whereupon Nellie, feeling faint, drew forth a quaint little silver vinaigrette (a luxury which she always carried about her in that climate of intense heat and numerous evil and unwholesome smells), and applying it to her delicate nostrils inhaled the refreshing essence, hoping that it would do her good.

But the buffoon, who had crouched down outside the door to watch the Feringhee girl through the keyhole, no sooner beheld the pretty and somewhat curiously shaped ornament in the captive's fingers and the use to which it was being applied than it entered into her head that it must be the amulet by means of which she had summoned the devil to her assistance. He had before. With a yell, therefore, she suddenly threw open the door again and with glaring eyes and crooked talons rushed to the attack, Nellie, not at all comprehending the meaning of this hostile demonstration, springing to her feet and trembling all over like an aspen.

When, however, she discovered what the hideous wretch wanted of her, she struggled hard to retain possession of the vinaigrette, for it was dear to her as having been a birthday present from her mother, that mother whom she thought she might never see again.

But the fight that she waged to maintain it convinced Elmarr more than ever that it was that which she suspected it to be, so she clutched the wrist and bit at the hand that held it and at last, succeeded in getting it away from its owner, when she immediately rushed from the room, mingling peals of mocking laughter with shrill and crooked exclamations of triumph.

When the wretch had again closed and secured the door again behind her Nellie began to wonder how the foul hag could feel so elated over such a trivial thing, for that the woman imagined it to be anything more than a silver ornament never struck her for an instant.

Feeling slightly hungry and intensely thirsty, for the wants of our fallen nature will assert themselves in the most unfortu-

nate and the most beautiful, Nellie now turned to her cakes and coffee, and after eating a couple of the former she drank a cup of the latter.

No sooner had she swallowed it down, however, than a strange, burning taste came into her mouth, and she grew conscious that her thirst had been increased instead of lessened, and increased to a most painful degree in addition.

So this was a fresh torture that had been devised for her, and as she remembered having read or been told how that prisoners had been tormented unto madness by thirst, she shuddered, for she thought that perhaps they meant to give her nothing to drink but this drugged coffee, and so to render her in time a raving maniac.

To overcome such thoughts, or at all events in order to try to overcome them, she went over to the window, and through the strong bars of her cage gazed for hours upon the fair world outside.

An interruption came in a most marvellous form, that is to say, in the shape of the Princess Zennah, carrying in her hand a whip and followed closely by Elmarr the buffoon, having a closely stoppered glass jar under each arm.

As she placed these on the floor our lovely heroine perceived that one was half full of scorpions and the other of centipedes, the two most revolting, repellant and deadly of Egyptian reptiles.

She would have shrieked at the sight, for she felt that they were intended for her and knew not that, save by their dreadful flicking as they crawled over her, and perhaps fought each other upon her, they were innocuous by reason of their stings and poison bags having been drawn from them.

But after Elmarr had put down the two jars she disappeared again and then a second time returned bearing a basin, a jug of water, soft towels, perfumed soap and delicate flesh gloves, whereupon the princess observed with an evil smile:

"The white rose of the Feringhees will have to perform her ablutions in her own room on this occasion, for the bath has been monopolized by my brother's wives and favorites. I myself, however, will be her attendant, assisted by the good Elmarr."

"Oh, you mean to hurt me," sobbed Nellie. "What have you got that whip for if it isn't to beat me with? You shall lash me with my clothes on if you do it at all, and I will struggle to the death before you shall set those terrible reptiles to bite and sting me."

Having said this much she essayed to smash the glass of the window, fancying that could she but succeed she might be able to make her shrieks audible to some of the people who were in the boats, but, as though divining her intentions, the buffoon, who was as strong as any man, sprang upon her, forced her away and sent her reeling across the floor.

"Strip!" exclaimed the princess, fiercely cracking her whip. "Off with everything that you have on—everything, I say. Ah, you have lost your talisman, your amulet, haven't you, you white witch? The devil can't save you from us now. That is why you tremble so, I suppose."

Nellie could not understand what she meant, but cried, nevertheless, for mercy.

But "Strip! Strip!" was all that the princess could utter in reply.

But, as though Nellie read her every thought, and her intoxicating aspiration as well, she would not commence to disrobe, so that at an imperious command from the princess the buffoon flew upon her again and began to tear off her clothing, Nellie at first resisting, but soon discovering how futile it was to do so against the superior strength that was opposed to her, suffering her arms to fall limply by her side and remaining as passive as though she had been a lay figure in the hands of her assailant.

Off came her dress, then the Princess sprang forward, whip in hand, and lashed, slashed, slashed, with all her strength and fury, at all that warm palpitating and snowy loveliness, the cruel thrashing around back and arms and bosom, and eliciting from the beautiful sufferer shriek after shriek of anguish.

Heaven alone knows what she might have been called upon to suffer ere it was over had not Elmarr suddenly exclaimed, in accents of mingled horror and alarm:

"Your highness, there is a man coming this way. Malcolm, Malcolm, I forgot to put your shoes outside the curtain. Oh, what's to be done? What's to be done?"