

THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By HAROLD MAC GRATH.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Kathlyn Hare, believing her father, Col. Hare, in peril, has summoned her, leaving her home in California to go to him in Allaha, 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 Allaha, 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 Allaha, 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, rise from the tomb, allow her to remain as the guardian of the sacred fire. But Kathlyn's haven is also the shade 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 Allaha 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 Bal 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 Allaha, where Kathlyn learns that her father, while nominally king, is in reality a prisoner.

Kathlyn's resourcefulness and bravery are the means of rescuing him, and once more they steal away from Allaha, but return broken hearted when they learn that Winnie, Kathlyn's young sister, has come to India. Umballah makes her a prisoner. She is forced to enter the palace and in turn is crowned queen of Allaha.

One attempt to get Winnie out of the closely guarded palace almost costs Kathlyn her life, but the second plan succeeds, and Kathlyn and Winnie, their father, and Bruce find a hiding place in the home of their Indian friend, Ramabai, and his wife Pundita. The latter is the lawful queen of Allaha and public sentiment in her favor is growing. The people at last, weary of Umballah's misrule, rise against him, with Ramabai at their head, and the colonel and Bruce fighting under him. Kathlyn has been left at home, but when tidings that the revolutionists have been defeated reach her she rushes out and assumes command of the scattered forces. She saves the day for them. Umballah flees for his life.

Umballah has crept back to the city, and, with one of the women of the harem as an accomplice, murders the poor old king. It is arranged to have Pundita, a member of the royal house and wife to Ramabai, crowned queen. But Umballah, having secured the priesthood, the great power in Allaha, as ally, comes back to the palace with absolute authority. His first official act is to imprison Kathlyn, Winnie, the Colonel, and Bruce.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

It was Ahmed's suggestion that they in turn should bury the filigree basket. He reasoned that if they attempted to proceed with it they would be followed and sooner or later set upon by Umballah and the men he had won away from the village chief. The poor fishermen were gold mad and at present not accountable for what they did or planned to do. He advised that Umballah would have difficulty in rousing them to the pitch of murder. Umballah would have at his beck and call no less than twenty men, armed and ruthless. Some seventy miles beyond was British territory, and wherever there was British territory there were British soldiers. With them they would return, leaving the women in safety behind.

"The Commissioner there will object," said the Colonel.

"No, Sahib," replied Ahmed. "The Memshah has every right in the world to this treasure. You possess the documents to prove it, and nothing more would be necessary to the Commissioner."

"But, Ahmed," interposed Bruce, "we are none of us British subjects."

"What difference will that make, Sahib?"

"Quite enough. England is not in the habit of protecting anybody but her own subjects. We should probably be held up till everything was verified at Allaha, and the priests there would not hesitate to charge us with forgery and heaven knows what else. Let us bury the basket, by all means; return for it and carry it away by piecemeal. To carry it away as it is, in bulk, would be courting suicide."

Ahmed scratched his chin. Trust a white man for logic.

"And, besides," went on Bruce, "the news would go all over the orient and the things would come like flies scenting honey. No; this must be kept secret if we care to get away with it. It cannot be worth less than a million. And I've known white men who would cut our throats for a handful of rupees."

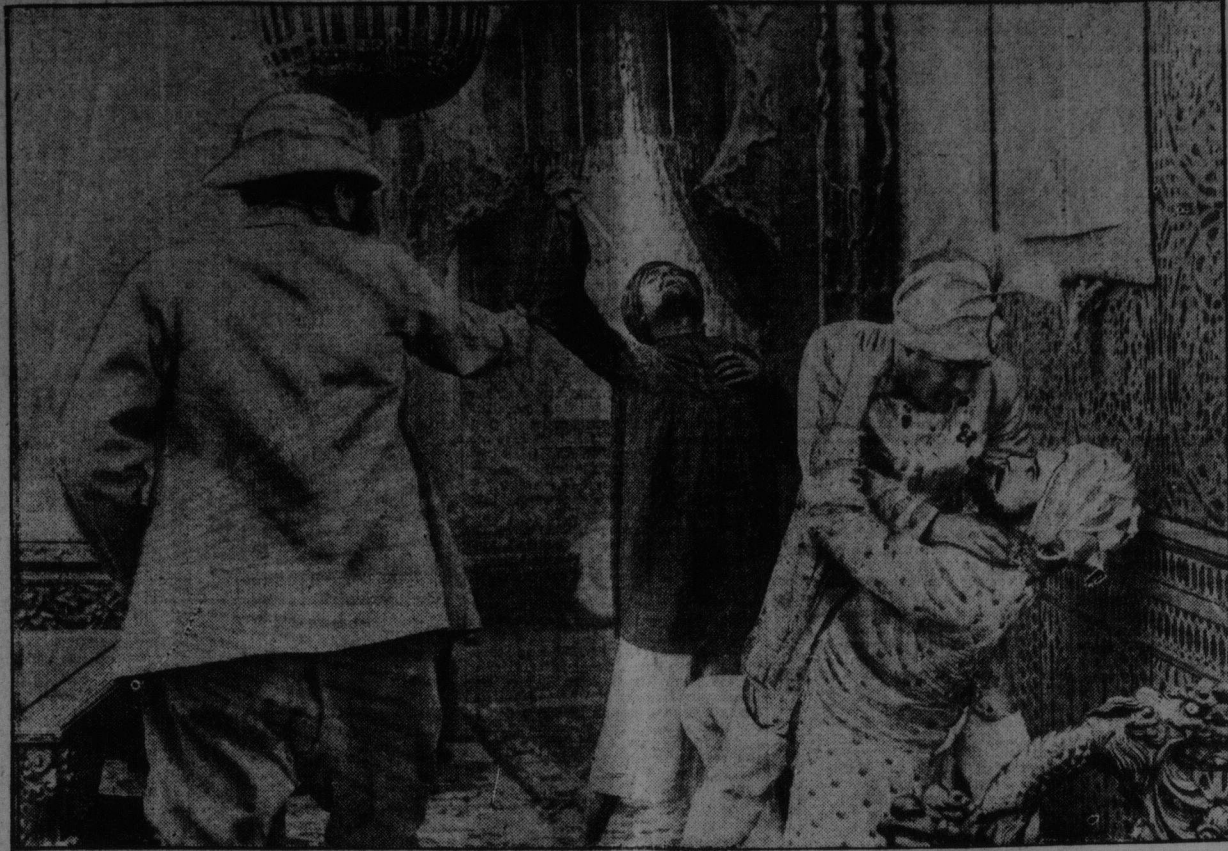
For the first time since the expedition started out the Colonel became normal, a man of action, cool in the head, and foresighted.

Ahmed, spread the men around the camp, he ordered briskly. "Instruct them to shoot over the head of any one who approaches; this the first time. The second time, to kill. Bruce has the right idea; so let us get busy. Over there, where that bowlder is. The ground will be damp and soft under it, and when we roll it back there will be no sign of its having been disturbed. I used to cache ammunition that way. Give me that spade."

At a depth of three feet the basket was lowered, covered, and the bowlder rolled into place. After that the Colonel stooped and combed the turf where the bowlder had temporarily rested. He showed his woodcraft there. It would take a keener eye than Umballah possessed to note any disturbance. The safety of the treasure ultimately, however, depended upon the loyalty of the keepers under Ahmed. They had been with the Colonel for years; yet, that was all there was to the matter.

"Something is stampeding the elephants!" he cried.

Ahmed and the men with him rushed off. In Ahmed's opinion, considering what lay before them, elephants were more important than colored stones and yellow meal. Without the elephants they



Ramabai and Umballah met upon the parapet in a struggle which promised death or the treadmill to the weaker.

would indeed find themselves in sore straits.

"Let us move away from here," advised Bruce, picking up the implements and shouldering them. He walked several yards away, tossed ashore and picked into the bushes, tore at the turf and stamped on it, giving it every appearance of having been disturbed. The Colonel nodded approvingly. It was a good point and he had overlooked it.

They returned hastily to camp, which was about 200 yards beyond the bowlder. Kathlyn entered her tent to change her clothes, ragged, soiled, and burnt. The odor of wet burnt cloth is never agreeable. And she needed dry shoes, even if there was but an hour or two before bedtime.

Only one elephant had succeeded in bolting. In some manner he had loosened his peg; but what had started him on the run Kathlyn never learned. The noise of the chase died away. Bruce was lighting his pipe. The Colonel was examining by the firelight a few emeralds, which he had taken from the basket. Ramabai was peering at Kathlyn, who was sitting on the edge of the tent, and picking into the bushes, tore at the turf and stamped on it, giving it every appearance of having been disturbed. The Colonel nodded approvingly. It was a good point and he had overlooked it.

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me where it is before I am done with you. You will tell me on your knees, gladly, gladly! Now, men! There is a long journey before us."

The Colonel, Kathlyn, and Winnie were forced into one howdah, while Umballah mounted the other. As for the quiet-mouthing, they were not particularly happy behind the ears of the elephants, who, with that keen appreciation of their under-stood instinctively that they had to do with novices. But for the promise of gold that dangled before their eyes, threats of violent death could not have forced them upon the elephants.

They started east, and the jungle closed in behind them.

As for Umballah, he cared not what became of the other prisoners.

They were being held captive in one of the village huts. The chief had pleaded in vain. He was dishonored, for they had made him break his word

and the other to labor. It took half an hour to push back the bowlder and dig up the basket. After this was done Bruce and Ramabai and Ahmed the indefatigable carried the gold and precious stones to the especially made saddlebags. All told, it took fully an hour to complete the work.

Many a time the impulses came to Bruce to pluck the shining metal and sparkling stones from the crack of doom. There were also moments when he felt nothing but hatred toward the father of the girl he loved. For these trinkets Kathlyn had gone through tortures as frightful almost as those in the days of the inquisition. Upon one thing he and Ahmed had agreed, despite Ramabai's wild protest: they would leave the treasure with Balakhan and follow his army to the walls of Allaha. If harm befall any of their loved ones not one stone should remain upon another. And Bruce declared that he would seek Umballah to the ends of the earth for the infinite pleasure of taking his black throat in his two hands and squeezing the life out of it.

Eventually and without mishap they came to the walled city of the desert, Balakhan's stronghold. Balakhan of necessity was always ready, always prepared. Before night of the day of their arrival he himself had always been an honorable man, had never acted treacherously to any, had been a banker but never a usurer. In his heart he knew that he still held the love of his people; but they dwelt in the shadow of superstition.

"Balakhan, we have been friends, and my father was your good friend."

"It is true."

"Will you do a favor for the son?"

"Yes, if the Colonel Sahib and his daughter live. If they are dead, woe to your people, son of my friend! I have given my word to the Memshah. I have made a threat before my men and must fulfill it if I would hold them hereafter. If the Colonel Sahib and his daughter live, ask what you will."

Ramabai bowed.

"I will set my camp five miles beyond your walls and wait. When I see the Memshah I will salaam, turn right about face, and go home. Now, to you, Bruce Sahib: Leave not your treasure within my walls when I shall be absent, for I cannot guarantee protection. Leave it where it is and bring it with you. Save yourself, no one of my men knows what your saddlebags contain. Let us proceed upon our junket—or our war!"

Umballah reached the ancient gate of Allaha at the same time Bruce stopped before the walls of Bal Khan's city. He pulled the curtains of the howdahs and threatened death if they called out. From time to time he gave directions to the weary men astride the elephant's neck. The thought of gold was not as tempting as it had been. There was fear in his heart. This false Holy One was or had been the most powerful man in all Allaha. Here he would be among friends. And the man who had but recently been a peaceful fisherman felt intermittent hot flashes about his throat.

Umballah had no intention whatever of making his presence known in Allaha. He determined to write the secret from either the Colonel or his daughter, return for the treasure, and depart for Egypt down the Persian gulf. He could have tortured his captives on the way, but he was oriental; he wanted to feel all the luxuries he had formerly known, to enjoy himself physically as well as mentally. He missed the exhilaration of his king's peg.

He made a wide detour and came out at the rear of his house. No one was in sight. He dismounted and entered, found three or four of his whilom slaves, who when he revealed his identity felt the old terror and fear of the man. His prisoners were brought in. A slave took the elephants to the stables. He wanted to run away and declare Umballah's presence, but fear was too strong.

Ironically Umballah bade the fishermen to enter to eat and drink what they liked. Later he found them in a drunken stupor in the kitchen. That was where they belonged.

Umballah cast his prisoners into the secret chamber. Then he gave himself up to the luxury of a bath, had his hair and beard combed, his body anointed with perfumes, and put on his finest rai-

ment. Then he drank his peg. As for his prisoners, he did not visit them again that day nor yet that night. The initial torture of suspense was always excellent. One thing annoyed him, however—not a murmur from these calm eyed white people who were about to face death. He raged against this lack of feeling, for it robbed him of half his pleasure. He liked his victims to whine and cliche and beg for mercy.

Like many rich Asiatics, Umballah had his own manager. He had inherited it along with the demi-palace when the king's sister died several years before. There were four sides to this court, and in the center of each side were bars, and behind these bars tigers or leopards or lions or wild boar—what ever pleased the owner's fancy. Many a royal battle had been waged in this court, sometimes between tigers, or a tiger and a lion, a leopard and a boar.

Umballah, after his bath, asked if the old boar was still alive. The heaven born was told that the animal had died in the cage a few days ago. Umballah shrugged. He had had in mind a fight between the boar and a leopard, to start his circulation, as it were.

He ordered his prisoners to be brought into the Court of Death and left there. Meditation was excellent for the end. A parapat ran round the court, and from there Umballah could see everything below. His victims entered the court without struggling. They merely stood closely together in the center.

"You see?" said Umballah. "Now, where have you hidden the treasure?"

Kathlyn walked over to one of the cages and peered into it. A sleek tiger trotted up to the bars and purred and invited her to scratch his head. She did not accept the invitation, however, knowing the species tolerably well. Usually these courts of death had solid steel doors which could be drawn up or lowered at will. The animal dens were more like cages.

With no little curiosity she noted a singular arrangement of the three central bars. The removal of these three bars left an opening sufficiently wide for the egress of the largest tiger or lion.

"I am not answered," said Umballah dead.

A click resounded from the four sides, and a bar disappeared from each of the cages.

"That will be all for the present," said Umballah. "Food and water you will not receive. Tomorrow morning another bar will be removed."

And he left them.

Overhead the blue sky was growing bluer and the shadows in the Court of Death a deeper black.

Early the next morning the town began to seethe in the squares. Bal Khan's army lay camped outside the city! Those who possessed treasures dug pits for them in the cellars of their houses. Within the great temple there was a flutter among the white robed ones. What could they do? They knew not where the white goddess was, nor Umballah. They dispatched a peace messenger to one camp, but the messenger was sent back before he had passed the outposts.

When Bruce, Ramabai, Pundita, and Ahmed halted their elephants before the temple they were greeted by the now terrified priests, who begged to be informed what Bal Khan proposed to do.

"Deliver us to the Memshah!"

The priests swore by all their gods that they knew nothing of her.

"He speaks the truth," volunteered Ramabai, as the chief priest fell before one of his gods. "Umballah has doubtless entered secretly."

"What would you advise? For God's sake, think of something Ramabai! He may be torturing them!"

"Let us enter the temple," said Ramabai. "Ahmed, bring the treasure and leave it in the care of the priests." A few moments later Ramabai addressed the assemblage. "Bal Khan is hostile, but only for the sake of his friends. He lays down this law, however—obey it or disobey it: The Colonel Sahib and his daughters are to go free, to do what they please with the treasure. Pundita, according to the will of the late king, shall be crowned. Obey or disobey—I warn you that these are not my dictates, but Bal Khan's."

"Peace, peace!" The cry rose from all directions, even from the priests themselves.

The high priest held up his hand for silence. "We obey, on one condition—that the new queen shall in no manner interfere with her old religion or attempt to force her new religion into the temple."

To this Pundita assented.

"Ramabai, soldiers! To the house of Umballah! We shall find them there," cried Ahmed.

Umballah squatted upon his cushions on the terrace. The second bar had been removed, and the priests were pressing their wet nozzles to the openings, and growling deep challenges.

"Once more, and for the last time, will you reveal the hiding place of the prisoners. If they told or did not tell it would have made no difference with the man above. He was drunk."

The third bar was removed.

But it did not stir.

The third bar, remove it!"

The slaves who had charge of the mechanism which operated the bars refused to act. Perhaps the refusal saved the lives of the Colonel and his daughters. The batinado was ordered for the poor, disobedient wretch. Then he was thrown out into the street.

And there Bruce found him and learned what was toward.

The events which followed were of breathless rapidity. Ramabai and Umballah met upon the parapet in a struggle which promised death or the treadmill to the weaker. At the same time Bruce opened the door to the Court of Death as the final bar dropped in the cage. At the sight of him the Colonel and his daughters rushed to the door. Roughly he hurled them outside, slamming the iron door, upon which the infuriated tigers flung themselves.

The young newspaper man to whom Winnie was engaged and the grizzled Ahmed sat on the steps of the bungalow in California one pleasant afternoon. The pipe was cold in the hand of the reporter and Ahmed's cigar was dead, which always happens when one recounts an exciting tale and another listens. Among the flower beds beyond two young women wandered, followed by a young man in pongee, a pansy set carelessly upon his handsome head, his face brown, his build slender but round and muscular.

"And that, Sahib, is the story," sighed Ahmed.

"And Kathlyn gave the treasures to the poor of Allaha? That was fine."

"You have said."

"They should have hanged this Umballah."

"No, Sahib. Death is grateful. It is not a punishment; it is peace. But Durga Ram, called Umballah, will spend the remainder of his days in the treadmill, which is a concrete hell, not abstract. Always round his ankles there will be irons, the galls of the night-chains. Always his wrists shall be bruised and torn; for sometimes he will lose his step and hang by his wrists. So much for ingratitude; so much for the blindness of revenge."

"Do you think England will ever step in?"

"Perhaps. But so long as Pundita rules justly, so long as her consort abets her, England will not move. Perhaps, if one of them dies."

"These are calling you. And I will go and brew the Colonel Sahib's tea."

THE END.

But Durga Ram called Umballah, will spend the remainder of his days in the treadmill.

to the white people. So be it. Sooner or later the glitter of gold would leave their eyes and they would come to him to beg pardon.

Moonlight. The village slept. Two fishermen sat before the hut confining the prisoners, on guard. An elephant squealed in the distance. Out of the shadow a sleek leopard, then another. The guards jumped to their feet and scrambled away for dear life to the nearest hut, crying the alarm. Bruce opened the door, which had no lock, and peered forth. It was natural that the leopards should give their immediate attention to the two men in sight. Bruce, realizing what had happened, called softly to Ramabai and Pundita, and the three of them stole out into the night, toward the camp. Bruce did not expect to find any one there. What he wanted was to arm himself and to examine the bowlder.

Meantime, Ahmed returned with the trunk elephant to find nothing but disorder and evidence of a struggle. A tent was overturned, the long grass trampled, and the Colonel's sofa-couch had lay crumpled near Kathlyn's tent.

"Ah, ah!" he called. But, being a philosopher, his wallowing was of short duration. He ran to the bowlder and examined it carefully. It had not been touched. That was well. At least that meant that his Sahib and Memshah lived. Treasure! He spat out a curse . . . and threw his rifle to his shoulder. But his rage turned to joy as he discovered what the arrival was.

"Bruce Sahib!"

"Yes, Ahmed. Umballah got the best of us. We were tricked by the trunk elephant. He has taken Kathlyn back toward Allaha."

"And so shall we return!"

Ahmed called to his weary men. His idea was to fill the elephant saddle bags with the gold and stones, leave it in trust with Balakhan, who should in truth this time take his tulwar down from the wall. He divided his men, one company to guard

SEE THE PICTURES THIS AFTERNOON AND EVENING AT THE IMPERIAL