

The Arab's Race for Life.

is the story of a horse—not a man. So astonishing is the incident that we hasten to give the name and address of the narrator, Miss Catharine M. E. Twynam, of Rose Bank, Paignton. Here is the story in Miss Twynam's own words:—

At the termination of the Persian War in 1857, my father, the late Captain T. S. H. Twynam, being then a lieutenant in the Indian Navy, was employed in transport duty on the River Tigris, and he commanded the river steamer Assyria. One day in looking over some of my father's old journals I came across the following entry:—

May 20th, 1857.—Took on board Lord Kerr's two horses.

"May 28th.—Lost Lord Kerr's bay horse; picked up on river bank some time afterwards, after a lion had chased him; very exciting."

This seemed to me to be a very interesting and curious story, and I made it my business to look up the details, partly from other papers and partly from the narrative of an eyewitness. It seems that the valuable horse referred to in the latter part of my father's note was a thoroughbred Arab, much prized by his noble owner. On the above date, the horse was being sent up the River Tigris from Mohumrah to Baghdad, under the charge of two grooms. Of course, he was taken on board with very great care, and every precaution was taken for his safety. The grooms almost lived at the side of the beautiful creature, because they were by no means sure how he would take his confinement. At first, however, the horse was perfectly quiet, and as the hours wore on the grooms naturally began to find things very dull, and in due time they considered they were justified in leaving the horse together and beguile the time in their own way. That very evening an extraordinary thing happened. Twilight was coming down upon the famous river, and everyone on board the steamer was quite unsuspecting of anything, when without a moment's warning a tremendous splash burst upon the soft evening air. Everyone rushed to the side of the Assyria, and you can judge for yourself of the general amazement that possessed everyone when Lord Kerr's matchless Arab bay was seen swimming vigorously towards the river bank. How he had unfastened his halter and made a dash for the side, without being heard, not a man on board was able to answer. There was the erect and shapely head gliding swiftly through the smooth water towards the rich and picturesque shore. The captain at once ordered his engineer to slacken speed, in order that he might watch what the animal would do. At this time the ship was gliding past the beautiful grassy plain, with dense jungle immediately at the back of it. Presently the Arab struggled up the bank, and it was then noticed that his nosebag was still attached to his head. Suddenly he stood still and commenced to shake his head violently, evidently in the hope of getting rid of his disagreeable incubus. Of course, he could not get rid of it altogether, but at length his series of wild tosses succeeded in so loosening the bag, that it slid off his head and hung about his graceful neck. Thus released he gave a loud neigh, and then after a preliminary canter, sufficient to make him realize his absolute freedom, he stopped to enjoy the tender grass at his leisure, oblivious of the commotion caused by his extraordinary escape.

On board the steamer the captain and his officers were communing together, to decide what should be done to recapture the horse. There was no time to be lost, for night was fast coming on, and indications were already visible of the rise of a glorious tropical moon. As the great white disc rose over the jungle a terrific and unmistakable roar seemed to shake the very heavens. Everyone, startled by the sound, turned towards the spot, and there, in the brilliant moonlight, was seen an enormous lion, with his head thrown back and his fore-paws stretched resolutely out.

Amazing to relate, the beautiful Arab stood still, in no wise discomposed, but went on calmly eating his supper. The lion quickly changed his posture, stretched himself out almost upon his belly, and commenced to creep with a curious writhing motion towards the horse. As the brute crept on in this manner, one of the men on board the Assyria asked to be allowed to try a shot, but before he could get his rifle the lion's tactics had changed again, and he made a series of great bounds forward until within a few yards of his prey. Every detail of the extraordinary spectacle that ensued was distinctly visible to all on board the steamer. The Tigris here is not very broad, and the moonlight was perfectly dazzling in its intensity. Suddenly the Arab realized his danger. He seemed to stiffen his limbs and prick up his small ears. Next moment he sprang forward like an arrow closely pursued by the lion, who though he growled horribly at first, presently became absolutely silent. Then began one of the most astonishing races ever recorded, the competitors being two of the most beautiful

creatures in creation. Pursuer and pursued raced along the plain by the side of the river, and just as the surprising chase commenced the steamer, too, surged forward, to keep up with the race on shore. The captain now resolved not to lose a moment in shooting the lion. He would, of course, have allowed this before, but events occurred with such surprising rapidity that all ordinary action was out of the question. Every moment the lion seemed to gain on the horse, and although at first he seemed to fly like the wind, he was obviously hampered by the irregularities of the ground. By this time the steamer, too, was plunging through the water at racing speed. Nearer and nearer came the lion, and just when he was about to drag down his prey a shot rang out from the steamer, and the lion fell back badly wounded. The brute at once retreated into the long grass behind, leaving the horse in possession of the field. Not for long, however. It soon appeared that the lion had not been so badly hit as was at first supposed, at any rate, he crept out of the jungle a few minutes later, and recommenced the pursuit. Once more both horse and lion galloped over the plain, and again the lion seemed to gain at every stride. It was noticed that the Arab had a curious, anxious method of feeling with his feet over the rough ground, and this, of course, considerably reduced his speed. It goes without saying, that under ordinary circumstances, and over an even track, the horse could easily have out-distanced his voracious pursuer. The lion was again almost upon his prey, when a perfectly astonishing thing happened. The Arab was fairly stretched out in his long stride, when he suddenly pulled up like lightning and kicked behind him with tremendous force. He caught the lion fairly under the jaw and rolled him backwards. No sooner had the slender and shapely legs flashed out than the horse flew on again, with his mane streaming in the air. For the second time the lion crept crestfallen into the jungle. Presently the horse stood still and actually commenced grazing, as if under the most ordinary circumstances. In about seven minutes' time the lion emerged once more from the jungle and crept swiftly and resolutely towards the horse. With a toss of his head and a sharp neigh, the Arab again prepared for flight. The captain of the steamer ordered full speed ahead to watch the race, which recommenced with astounding vigor in the brilliant moonlight. By this time the excitement of those on board had fairly reached fever heat, as it seemed absolutely impossible that the Arab could escape the third time.

As everyone watched the horse and lion, not a sound was heard save the ring of the horse's hoofs and the thud of the steamer's paddles. Which will win? The Arab is by this time showing signs of undoubted fatigue, whilst the lion seems none the worse for the chase. The end must come soon, for the poor horse reels slightly in his gait. The lion seems to know that the moment of his triumph is at hand, and he commences to growl and rumble in a very curious manner. Suddenly a second shot startles the night air, and almost simultaneously with it comes a mighty roar as the lion leaps into the air, then falls to the ground dead.

But now, what is to be done to get the horse on board? Orders are given to steam slowly close in shore, and to keep the animal in view for the remainder of the short night. This is accordingly done.

Next morning at daybreak the Arab was seen rather nearer to the bank of the river and quietly grazing. One of the grooms leant over the side of the steamer and called his name softly. At the sound of the familiar voice the horse walked quickly in the direction of the steamer. The captain now gave the order that the steamer was to be brought still closer to the bank of the river. A few moments after this the horse trotted down to the water's edge. The ship was stopped, a plank was let down, and the Arab walked steadily up it on to the deck of the Assyria, to the great relief of the captain, and the joy and surprise of everyone on board.

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ROBBER INSURANCE.

Quite a Business is Done in China by Brigand Insurance Companies.

One of the flourishing businesses of Northern China is that of brigand insurance companies. These organizations, for a specified fee, undertake to protect the traveller from robbers; being starting on a journey arrangements are made with one of these concerns, and they send an escort of one or two so-called riflemen. Each company has a distinguishing flag, which is put in some conspicuous place, either on the cart or boat, as the case may be. Now in meeting a band of brigands the convoy goes on ahead and holds a parley, informing them that he represents such and such an insurance company, and if they recognize him as a friend all well and good, if not, the matter has to be fought out, which usually results in the riflemen running away.

It is very evident to any one that these guarantee companies are merely agents for the brigands, and as long as this system is permitted to flourish so long will Northern China be a robbers' den. The truth of the matter is that the brigands in Manchuria are nothing more than soldiers who were disbanded after the late Japanese war and who carried their rifles and ammunition with them. They are, however, a cowardly lot, only making attacks between sunset and sunrise. Some of them are decidedly rebels, and notwithstanding the heavy sacrifice of human lives their numbers increase, to the fear of both government and people.

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