

it. As he strove to conquer his feelings he worked doggedly at the stubborn timber.

Suddenly it gave a foot. Instantly the French-Canadian dropped his peavie and leaped for shore in mad panic. Each second he expected the solid timbers beneath his feet to spread and grind him between, and it was not until he reached the top of the bank and heard the whole gang roaring with laughter, that he realised it was a false alarm.

He knew he had become a coward in their eyes, and his face flushed red with shame. The loss of his peavie was disgrace enough, for it was a sort of honour among lumbermen never to surrender their implements whatever happened, and he had discarded his without excuse.

He was about to rush back to recover it before it was too late when he saw the whole mass begin to move. Jake had jumped and taken the place he had deserted, and now he and MacTavish were making for shore with absolute coolness, but without waste of time. The boss won the far bank in safety.

It was a pretty sight to see the two leap nimbly from log to log as they rose and fell beneath their feet. Their heavy boots with their half-inch spikes bit into the bark and saved them from slipping. Their peavies were held in both hands as balancing poles.

Their comrades had been watching in silence. But now a low gasp went up. MacTavish was seen to stumble and fall forward among the moving timbers. An upreared log was about to crash down upon him, when Jake paused in his flight, reached out and jerked him from under his collar. MacTavish scrambled up the shifting mass like a cat and next moment was free of danger.

But it was not so well with his rescuer. The pause had cut off his retreat. There was but one chance for life and he took it. He sprang far out into the boiling torrent. Next moment the falling timbers churned the water where he went down.

Fifty feet below his head came to the surface and his hands clawed madly at the water. It was evident to his helpless comrades that he could not swim. They ran down the shores and waded in as far as

they dared, to reach for him with their pike-poles, but the rush of logs drove them back to land.

Then Francois, burning to wipe out his disgrace and ignoring all thoughts of his own safety, ran out upon the heaving, grinding floor of logs in a mad endeavour to rescue the drowning man. Before he could reach the open water in their advance, the whole mass swept over the other's head and sealed his doom inevitably.

But still the French-Canadian leaped back and forth, searching for some opening where his comrade's head might appear, and more by his luck than skill, escaping the same fate. The men running down shore yelled for him to come back and cursed him for a fool and an idiot.

Finally, a quarter of a mile below, he realised the helplessness of further effort and regained the shore in safety.

MacKenzie clapped him sympathetically on the back. "Don't take on about it, Frenchy, fer yer did the best yer could. An' I don't reckon none of the boys think yer a coward *now* fer yer little loss of nerve further back. This ain't no child's play, an' accidents *will* happen."

The friendly speech of the boss made him a little less dejected, but he felt himself the cause of the other's death. He looked at MacTavish thoughtfully.

"Jim, he not only saved *your* life, but *mine*, too. I see it all now plain as the nose on your face. I guess it were the fates workin' out after all, an' not my fault."

"Nobody says it was, Frenchy. Yer drunk!" answered MacTavish roughly.

"Because of what the cards said," Francois went on unnoticing, "I was dead certain I was the one meant ter die. But didn't Jake grab on to the ace of spades an' stop me gittin' it? He side-tracked my doom onto himself when he done that, an' saved my life. Yes, boys, he saved me then, though he didn't know it, just as much as he saved Jim now." He turned to walk away.

"Yes, boys, as I says before, the *cards don't lie*!"

## EL FARSI THE BARBER

By D. E. S. FIELDS

**M**OHAMMED the Syrian had been talking fully an hour, and had related a number of stories to his attentive hearers. It was at the entrance of a *gourbi*, before a pile of ashes which hid dying embers left from the recent fire of brush. The night was damp, and from the ground arose heavenward a mingled odour of earth, musk, and Alpine plants.

Stretched on the ground, rolled up in a burnoose of goat hair which protects from cold at night and heat in the day, my eyes followed in the horizon the moving flames of a fire. For some time I ceased to hear the storyteller; then he began to sing. It was a slow and languishing melody, constantly repeated, accompanied by the confused cadence of an invisible tomtom, in which a fifteen-year-old girl, Maileh, wept over her absent lover, who had gone toward the desert and failed to return.

But the singer stopped; he drew from his neighbour's narghile a smelling puff, and as I rose asked me to listen to him a moment more.

"Thou art sad, sahib," said he. "Is it that Maileh's misfortune has moved thy heart and thoughts? I am going to tell thee a story well known in Syria, my country, which will chase the clouds that have darkened thy eyes. Listen!"

I settled myself in an easy position, hearing again in the silence that preceded the first words of my storyteller the far away barking of a dog and the murmur of whispering among the group of listeners. Then all was still, and Mohammed began thus:

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**F**ORMERLY, in the reign of a master just but severe, whose reputation stood like a halo above the immense Mussulman Empire, lived a well known barber, noted for his obstinate temper and for his vanity. He lived in a small town, near the capital of the Empire. His name was El Farsi. Son of a camel driver whose life had been spent in driving his beast from one town to another without accumulating a fortune, he had at last settled down in a well patronised shop, where he sold leeches and at the same time shaved the skulls and cheeks of the most respectable citizens. He had even acquired in his delicate profession a renown that had spread over the white walls of the small city.

"One day, as he was standing before the door

of his shop, a donkey driver passed him, with his beast heavily loaded with two bundles of firewood.

"The man was known to him; so he called, 'Hey, old sage Ahmed! Good luck to thee!'

"Good morning, barber," answered the man. 'Is it thee who will take my wood to-day?'

"I am willing to," said the barber, and he examined the merchandise, reflected a moment, and asked, with a malicious smile, 'How much dost thou want for all the wood I see on thy animal?'

"Well," said the donkey driver, 'I shall be satisfied to have ten copper pieces; for I long to go back to my village.'

"All right," loudly said El Farsi, 'ten copper pieces for all the wood I see on thy ass! I agree; unload!'

"Ahmed untied the old ropes that bound the firewood and threw it down. But immediately the barber, seizing the pack saddle that had fallen at the same time, carried it into his shop, and ordered his servant to bring the wood.

"The donkey driver, not understanding this action on the part of the barber, looked perplexedly from the bald back of his animal to the mocking face of the man as he received the ten copper pieces.

"But thou hast taken my pack saddle!" exclaimed he.

"Well, is it not made of wood, and hast thou not sold all the wood that was on thy donkey?'

"By the holy name of Allah, barber, thou art a rascal! The pack saddle alone is worth three times more."

"I believe it," retorted El Farsi; 'but it was a bargain. I gave you the price agreed upon.' And all that the poor donkey driver could say would not persuade the other to give back the saddle.

"However, it was getting late and the poor fellow had to decide. The barber, a little feared for his bad tongue, had gathered all the jokers on his side, who laughed at Ahmed's misfortune and his woebegone face.

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**A**T last he left the place, leading his animal behind him. Arriving at the shop of a public writer, he told the man of his adventure and asked what he should do.

"Go and ask audience of the kadi," answered the public counsellor at law.

"He went there, and the judge propounded only one question.

"Thou hadst sold all the wood that was on thy beast?"

"Yes, master," answered Ahmed.

"Well, then, the barber is right and the bargain is regular. Go away."

"He went away, unable to understand that kind of justice, and concluding that the kadi was as much of a rascal as the barber. He went back to the public writer, who said:

"The Sultan, the Master's master on our earth, is a good man. Go and see him; I will write thee a petition. He alone can have thy goods restored to thee."

"He took the petition, went to the palace, and was ushered before the Prince of Believers. He knelt before the great man, and exclaimed:

"O Prince just and good, thy name has spread all over thy Empire like a veil that lights us! I beseech thee—" and he related his story, his forehead on the ground, while a chamberlain handed the petition to the Prince.

"So, then, ass driver, thou hadst sold all the wood that was on the back of thy donkey?" asked the illustrious monarch, yawning.

"Yes, Prince," said Ahmed.

"Well, thou canst go thy way; the barber was right."

"The ass driver was beginning to doubt himself now. The veil of justice and the light of the Empire had condemned him also. Could it be that he was really wrong? Had he been cheated by his own simplicity, and had the barber been more clever than dishonest?"

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**S**UCH were the reflections of the unhappy fellow as he withdrew from the presence of the Prince. But what would his wife say, who was waiting for him in the next village? Surely she would beat him. And he lamented, wept, in a corner of the steps leading to the palace.

"Just then a beggar happened to pass that way. On his head he had a green turban as a mark of holiness; his long white beard which fell on his chest from a pale and sweet face indicated his respectability, and his eyes and manners gave one confidence. He drew near the man, leaning on a knotted staff, and, squatting before him, asked gently:

"A misfortune has entered thy house, my brother. Wilt thou trust me? I am Mohammed-el-Haji."

"Then the donkey driver lifted up his head and again repeated his story; he wept, and finally was near doubting divine justice after having been denied the human.

"Oh, my brother, what wert thou going to say?" interrupted the old man, coming nearer. "Go back again and see the barber, for he was right, unhappily; but listen to me."

"And in a whisper he gave him a good piece of advice.

"Suddenly the face of the man brightened. He rose with haste, thanked the beggar warmly, emptied almost his purse in his alms box, embraced him, and returned to the town. Soon he arrived before the public writer, who exclaimed, as soon as he saw him:

"Holloa, old man! Hast thou obtained justice?"

"Alas!" answered the ass driver, 'justice is not to be found in this world, and the Prophet's precepts are rarely followed. But keep my ass for a little while. I am going to the market-place, and will soon come back.'

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**H**E soon was again before the barber's house. The man was leaning against his door, and when he saw his victim he began laughing.

"Well," thought Ahmed, 'those laugh best who laugh last. I wait my turn!'

"Here thou art!" said the barber. "Thou lookest quite happy."

"Indeed I am," answered Ahmed cheerfully. "I have just met a relative of mine who is going to get married this very day, and my friend and I are going to take him to his handsome bride. But tell me—thou hast a just reputation in thy profession, and I would like that thou shouldst shave us, my friend and me. We must be worthy to be present at the festival. How much wilt thou charge to shave us both?"

"You are not among my customers," said the barber, 'neither thou that I know, nor thy friend that I do not know. However, in compensation for the bad bargain I caused thee, I am willing to shave you both for a small silver piece, though you will certainly notch my razors.'

"A small silver piece, it is a great deal for my

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