

OUR NEW SERIAL

The Captives of the Kaid

By R. MARCHANT

Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Thirteen-year-old Lalla was the granddaughter of Squire Trevor of Oakhurst Manor. One day while visiting the picture gallery she came across a picture turned face to the wall. She was told that it was the picture of the Squire's eldest son who had been drowned by his father and had never been heard of since. During a thunder storm Lalla is lost in the woods, and is brought home by a young sailor lad who hurriedly leaves without waiting to be thanked. Circumstances lead to the belief that the lad is the son of the Squire's eldest son. Mrs. Trevor's brother accompanied by Lalla and her mother, start on a cruise down the African coast. A storm drives the yacht

wrecked and the crew are taken prisoners. Sid of Barbic, a native of the harbor of Arcton, is in the habit of buying his wealth in different places. Once he and his servant Hashem are followed by a boy named Ighil, who owns his daughter killed by the servant and the papers with the plan of where all the wealth is buried taken from him. Ighil goes to a neighboring boat. A few years later when the old Kaid dies a rich man whom Ighil recognizes as Hashem is made Kaid. Twenty years have passed when a big ship calls anchor at the harbor to inquire for a yacht that is believed the stranger glided away into the shadows in search of his mate, and growing freemason. Room followed at his heels.

The short half-hour the stranger had spoken of, grew into nearly two hours. Lalla's dog is found by the sailor wounded. Captain Ellerby, the large vessel, was refusing to take the Kaid to Timbuctoo. Timbuctoo demands information as to the whereabouts of the Kaid's survivors.

CHAPTER XVII. A Critical Moment.

Timbuctoo felt that a whole moon of rain was lifted from his shoulders at that theory about the voice belonging to the second mate, who was known as Jackdaw, the appeal having been bestowed upon him because he had signed on as John Dawson, while his black hair and eyes had suggested the altering and shortening of his name, to which he himself appeared to have not the slightest objection. Following his shout the young man burst into the room, escorted by Ighil, and attended by three stout fellows from the steamer, all armed with knives and pistols, and others having been left about the boat, to guard against treachery or surprise.

At the sight of the Kaid cowering on his leopard-skin, with the shill head-dress all awry, and a general air of dejection and wretchedness about him, the young man called Jackdaw burst into a hearty laugh of amusement, in which his companions joined although the face of Timbuctoo did not relax one iota of its gravity, as he watched the convulsive clenching of the Kaid's big black hands, and saw the malevolent hatred gleaming from his fierce eyes.

"It is a rehearsal for private the attack," Timbuctoo demanded. Jackdaw, with his movement had subsided sufficiently to admit of speech.

"No, sir, it ain't a rehearsal, but the real thing, and there would have been no rehearsal, no rehearsal, no rehearsal, if the black gentleman you mention hadn't opened his mouth when he did, and spoke up like a man, telling me where the survivors of the 'Sylph' are hid." Timbuctoo replied, still not taking his gaze from the big man crouching on the spotted skin.

"Well as that, eh?" and Jackdaw laughed as he spoke, but became instantly as grave and as grim as the other inquiring. "These were the survivors from the 'Sylph' boat?"

"I don't know. They are hidden away in the argan woods of the foot hills, so my black gentleman says. Do you know the place, Ighil?" Timbuctoo put his question to the friendly black, yet still without moving his head.

Ighil answered that he knew it well enough, but that it was some distance inland, and to go there and return would take perhaps three, perhaps four hours, for the path was rough, winding up and down all the way.

"It can't be done, not if it took three days or a week; though what captain 'Trevor, or what the owners of the 'City of Bristol' will say, when we do get into port, is more than I care to think about," and Timbuctoo screwed up his eyes, ducking his head as if dodging a blow, yet never once taking his gaze from the seowling black face of the Kaid.

"Never mind about the delay; we have got our duty towards these poor creatures to do, and do it we must, at whatever cost. If only wish we knew how many of these people there are to be rescued. Think what a fearful thing it would be if one of them were left behind," replied Jackdaw, glaring at the Kaid as if he would annihilate him with a look.

"Ay, ay, sir; and so it would. But one of us must stay here to keep this unreasonable monster in order, while the rest go to the foot hills. Will you stay, sir, or shall I?"

"Just as you like, Timbuctoo; I'm not in the least particular. This is more your show than mine, and it is only fair you should run it to a finish; so if you like to go hunting I will stay and nursemaid this quarrelsome black baby; for, as you say, it will certainly never do to leave him to his own devices just now." As he spoke, the young man pulled his own pistols from his belt, and, stopping forward, flourished them in the face of the enraged yet helpless Kaid, who looked as if he were fit to explode with anger and amazement.

Then for the first time did Timbuctoo take his gaze from the ugly black face, and, standing up, stretched himself as if thankful to be relieved from the strain of his watch. "Thank you, sir; then, if it is all the same to you, I'd be very glad to go, for Ighil says there is another poor wretch here—has been here I can't say how long; a white man he is too, and, I suppose, English, since it was he who taught Ighil what he knew of the language. We ought to take him along too."

"By all means. The more the merrier, you know; though what poor old Ellerby will say, and how he will feel, when he sees a crowd coming aboard the 'City of Bristol,' is beyond my powers of imagination. But off you go, and be as quick as you can, for we may have hot work to get clear away, if there are many folks about, like-minded with this ugly black villain," and Jackdaw nodded gently in the direction of the Kaid.

The others tramped off without any further delay, leaving the young man alone with the crouching figure on the leopard-skin, who stirred uneasily every few minutes, but spoke no word, only glancing and glowering with fierce eyes—mute evidence of what he would do if only there were no obstacles between himself and the impudently bold white stranger who had dared to look upon him.

It was very quiet about the cabin, or room made a little stir of movement, or a hen clucked sleepily to her nestling chickens, whilst night came apace, and Jackdaw was wondering how to continue his surveillance of the Kaid when the darkness fell. But just then his doubts were solved by the shuffling entrance of the old woman, who bore in her hands a little vessel of argemone, with a piece of rag for a wick, which gave out a beautiful steady light, illuminating the rude, bare interior, and bringing into strong relief the black, lowering face of the Kaid. One moment only did Jackdaw let his gaze shift at the entrance of the old woman, but even that moment was well nigh fatal to him, as, with a lightning rapidity of action, the Kaid's black hand shot out towards the spears which stood so near to him.

"Halt!" yelled Jackdaw, in a voice of thunder, at the sound of which the old woman shrieked with fright, as she hurried away in all haste, and the treacherous Kaid sank back, limp and inert upon his spot, red with the effort to look as if he had never lifted a finger.

"Well, this is not wildly exciting," the young man exclaimed to himself, with a wide-reaching yawn, when an hour or so had gone by, and no sound broke the silence either in the house or out of it, saving the occasional cry of a jay, or the grunts of a herd of wild pigs, which held high carnival in the Kaid's melon beds near at hand. That yawn rather startled him, for it would certainly be highly dangerous to get sleepy at this juncture. The crouching black figure on the leopard-skin was wide awake enough, and even a momentary lapse into forgetfulness on his own part would probably give the Kaid a chance to offensively reverse the position between them.

If only the night had not been so dark and still, or if only he had not been so tired! But, with a great effort, Jackdaw shook himself, in order to banish that incipient drowsiness which again he felt stealing over him. Then he began to talk to himself, making remarks the reverse of complimentary concerning the black figure crouching on the skin; after which he told himself, as if he were some other person, how the smoke signal had been seen from the deck of the 'City of Bristol,' whereupon he and his comrades had come off in the captain's boat to the relief of Timbuctoo.

But when, after some trouble, we succeeded in landing, there was no Timbuctoo to be seen," said the young man, gravely addressing the watchful black figure on the skin, at the same time yawning until his jaws nearly cracked under the strain of it. "No Timbuctoo to be seen," he repeated, almost as if the statement were a talisman against his overpowering weariness; "only a grinning black man, nearly, but not quite, as handsome as yourself, most respected and respectable Kaid; and this same grinning individual had a piece of dirty paper, on which, with a burned stick for a pencil, Timbuctoo had written a message bidding us follow the bearer, who was entirely to be trusted.—Hullo, what's that?"

Jackdaw broke off with a nervous start from the drowsy monologue with which he had been keeping himself awake, and listened intently, feeling sure that he had heard a creep

ing, crawling footsteps approaching across the dark outer room, and a heavy sigh as if the person who heaved it were of asthmatical tenacity, and could only get his breath in that husky, wheezing kind of respiration.

If only he dared to take his eyes for one moment from that crouching figure on the skin! If only he dared to see what kind of danger it was that respiration broke out all over him, the hair on his head seemed to rise, and stand erect, for a certain eager hopefulness had flashed into the fierce eyes of the Kaid, whilst at the same moment, the rag which of the primitive lamp collapsed over the side of the vessel with a sputtering hiss, and went out.

There was a savage snarl of exultation from the Kaid, who apparently sprang up and flung himself upon the enemy who had held him so long at bay. But Jackdaw had foreseen the satisfaction of hearing the Kaid crash headlong against the partition wall of the outer room, which, being frail, gave way before the impact, had crumbled like matchwood, letting the big black man go sprawling through to the outer room. Then in a moment there ensued an uproar that beggared description—a furious, loud barking from a big dog that was plainly enraged; fierce shouts from the angry Kaid, who appeared to be fighting for his life with some unseen enemy; shrill shrieks of women; the frightened cackling of poultry, with suffocating clouds of dust, and an overpowering odour of smouldering rags and oil which made the senses reel.

Jackdaw struck out wildly, intent on finding an exit somewhere, trying hard to remember, in the confusion of the moment, where the door was situated by which he had entered. He was still groping when, to his horror, an accidental stumble landed him plump into the arms of the Kaid, who soaped to be enjoying a momentary respite from that other opponent with whom he had been engaged.

Then came a stunning blow to the head, which roused Jackdaw to see stars galore; a hand clutched tightly at his throat, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER XVIII. A Great Surprise.

It was late in the afternoon of the next day, and the 'City of Bristol' was ploughing her way towards Puerto de Cabras in the Canary Islands, as fast as her engines could drive her. Meanwhile, the crew of the 'Sylph' had been passed into service, to assist in the navigation of the freight steamer, for, as Captain Ellerby said, it was unaccountably awkward to have the first mate on his back with a broken leg, and the second mate so severely mauled from his pitheadark encounter with the Kaid of Igouder as to be unable to see, or to lift his hands to his head.

The worthy captain also found it extremely embarrassing to have a real live baronet acting under his orders as mate pro tem; but, being a man of good, sturdy common sense, he took things as he found them, and accepted Sir Basil's offer of service in the spirit in which it was given.

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(Continued next week.)

The Story of Bill Smith and Abe Honeyman

CHAPTER 2

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