THE MESSENGER FROM KHARTOOM

BY ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

Author of "Dr. Jack," "Dr. Jack's Wife," "Miss Caprice," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER 1.

"Backsheesh!" hoarsely whispered a stout, red-faced traveller, bending over a small, nervous man, who, seated on the piazza in front of the well-known Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, Egypt, dashes off page after page of lead pencil work, aided by the lights that illumine the grand plaza.

The latter individual never raises his eyes, but with a groan and a mechanical movement of the arm, draws a plaster from his pocket and holds it up, which miserable coin is gravely taken by the man in the plaid suit and travelling helmet-hat. He does not move away, but stands there at the elbow of the scribe, waiting for that interminable scribbling to be done, and meanwhile watching the lively scene upon the great square of Esbehiyeh,

It is certainly a good sight for foreign eyes, and one that will never be for gotten. Although the month is February, a delicious, balmy atmosphere hangs over the old city on the Music throbs upon the air, and, judging from the gay scenes to be met with after night closes in, it would be hard to believe the Mohammedan fast corresponding to our Lent is in progress. The Koran, however, only demands observance of strict rules from sunrise to sunset, so that in all Oriental countries the devout worshippers make night a

period of feasting.

Just at the present period, many lanterns and flambeaux and lamps il lumine the grand square, from which arise discordant sounds, a perfect babe! of confusion. Here, under a cluster of palms, a snake-charmer handles his cobras with apparent impunity, boxing their heads and causing them to do all manner of strange things. Nearby are dragomans or guides haggling with owners of dorkeys, who, in turn, scold or cuff the little boys in charge of the

little beasts. Close by are fakirs, pretending to sell wonderful things for a trifle; mountebanks, dealers in turbans, fezes, relics and handkerchiefs, and a general conglomeration of idle, curious strollers.

The lights disclose a picture that can probably be looked upon in no other city save Damascus. Here mingle Turks with their red fez and national dress; Arabs in white bournous and turban; native fellahin, or Egyptians, wearing blue gowns and the everlasting brown skull-cap; Jews with long beards and sober garments; Nubians, Persians, Greeks and a sprinkling of foreigners. The red coats of British soldiers give way pretty much to the sensible white that is worn in all hot countries; still there is enough to lend color to the kaleidoscopic picture.

The stout man sees all this without emotion; he seldom, if ever allows himthing as to forget himself. Standing just back of the tilted chair of the smaller man, who writes sheet after sheet with railroad rapidity, he puffs at his cigar and calmly waits for the time to come when his friend will have exhausted the subject or blunted all his pencils. Everything comes to one who has patience, and this, is the most prominent trait in the character of the

"Eureka! I have done it! Glowing description! Berning rhetoric! Do you proud, my boy! Now, I'd give a plaster to run across Grimes."

He has hardly spoken these words, half aloud, when the man with the florid face and heavy hand deliberately raps him on the shoulder.

"Pay your debts, young man. I claim the reward by virtue of discovery. Here's one miserable Turkish coin you've shoved on me. French money is preferred," he says, solemnly.

"Oh! It was you who groaned Backsheesh," in my ear, was it? It's a howling paradise of boggars. I go to bed with a bag of piasters-give 'em out in my sleep. I assure you, Grimes."

Sandy Barlow is the correspondent of a great daily journal in the United States, and is never known to be in anything but a hurry. In piping times of peace he finds material to employ his pencil in various foreign countries, and his letters have been considered fine reading on account of their piquancy and crisp style, characteristic of everything the man does.

Those who know Sandy best have discovered that the war correspondent has a warm heart, and will readily go out of his way to help one whom he counts a friend. This stout gentleman whom he calls Grimes is-so rumor says-the wealthy owner of several mines in Colorado, about which he occasionally sreaks. He keeps his own counsel, however, and any one who is a good judge of physiognomy would have little difficulty in reading on his resolute face all the signs that go to make up a determined character.

"Are you at liberty, Barlow? If so. I'd like to have a little talk," remarks

the silver king. "Great Caesar! Why didn't you say so before? Singular man! Didn't want to interrupt the flow of genius, ch? But I'd drop even my pencil to oblige you.' "There was no great need of haste, You were the first one I thought of when old Tanner brought me the news.

You know him?" "Like a book! Gruff old party; lovely daughter, Molly. Go on! What was his news? Is England aroused at last to

the emergency?" "Just the contrary. Listen to what I say: Old Tanner tells me his dababeah, or house boat, has just come down the eyer; they left it some two hundred

ŏoooooooooooooooooŏ size: above and nastened on by ranto Cairo. This evening it arrived, and the reis, or captain, called upon him at the hotel here with certain news that

has given Tanner some uneasiness. He was puzzled to know what use to make of it, and, seeing me, put the whole case in my hands. I have promised to go down to the boat and interview the man who is now asleep on board-a man they

-and who they imagine is some sort of messenger sent down from Khartoum by General Gordon." Sandy Barlow is out of his chair, like a shot, all eagerness and animation. "Come on." he exclaimed. "I'm in this game. Great Caesar! If I can get

picked up affoat on the river far above

the only authentic account of that event! What keeps you, man?" "I'm not ready to go yet.Don't make a scene, Sandy, and, above all, whisper word of the truth. The False Prophet has many friends in Cairo who would like nothing better than a chance at this person who comes from the outh, with scimiter or yataghan. Sit

down again while we talk it over. Sandy has hard work subduing his inense eagerness to discover the truth, but he is equal to great emergencies, and finally sinks back in his chair. As for Mr. Grimes, the silver king, he straddles a rattan seat and rests his arms across the back in the most care-

less manner imaginable. "What did the old orator seem to think of his men picking up a passen-

ger?" asks Sandy. "He was wrathy at first, until he found the man was a Frank, or fore gner. That made it all right. He hates these swarthy natives-Turks, fellah and Arab.

"Yes, I have heard him whisper gentle words about them in his own peculiar way. Lovely soft voice the Honorable Demosthenes has. Reminds me of a steam foghorn."

"Hush! Here comes his daughter!"
"Miss Molly, for all the world!" mutters the correspondent between his teeth. A vision in white floats up to where they are seated, and both men spring to their feet. This American girl is a fair, fresh picture-a healthy daughter of the land across the sea. She is not actually beautiful, but there is a charm about face and manner that draws hosts of friends to her side. Mollie Tannor is a taking girl, vivacious, quick, tenderhearted-true. You can read her constancy in the clear, frank, fearless gray eyes. Lucky the man who wins her

eart. It will be for all time.
"Oh, Mr. Grimes, I have been looking for you everywhere! I feared you had gone!,, exclaims the young lady, laying a white hand, which shows some traces of sunburn, on the arm of the mining

"Fortune favors me, Miss Molly. In what way can I do you a service?" "You see, the governor has just been

telling me all about that poor man on board our boat, and I feel sorry! would like to know whether there is anything I can do for him."

Some people might be shocked to hear Molly Tanner thus designate her parent, but the word is uttered with such tenderness that the same persons would secretly listen in the hope of hearing it

Mr. Grimes and the correspondent exchange glances, and then smile. "Really, until we have seen the party,

we cannot exactly say," begins the former. "That's just it! Why not allow me to accompany you to the boat?"

The girl speaks eagerly, as though she has quite set her heart upon it. "Your father would not consent." "Leave that to me-I can manage

"And I reckon you're about the only one who can, Miss Molly. Outside of that I don't believe it would be safe. You see, to reach the river where the boat is tied up, we have to pass through one of the worst quarters of the city, called Musr, and with a lady in our company, there might be trouble. No, I am sorry to refuse, but I must positively decline to accept the responsi-

Molly Tanner does not pout, but laughs, proving that while the old governor has done his best to spoil her, he has not yet succeeded.

"Very well, I shall not insist, Mr. Grimes; but when you return promise to let me know who the young German pilgrim is," she says. "Who said he is German; your father

did not say anything of that sort to me?" declares the stout silver king, in some surprise. "Perhaps I only judged it from his

name. You know the Germans and Italians are working down along the "Even his name the governor neglect-

ed to state. What might it be, Miss Molly?" asked Grimes. "I am sure he said Mynheer Joe." "Mynheer Joe!" gasps Sandy Barlow. "Mynheer Joe!" drops from the usu-

ally undemonstrative silver king, now greatly excited. "Why gentlemen, what is the matter? You seem to be astonished?" says Molly, surveying first one and then the other

"'Astonished?' I'm dumfoundedknocked all in a heap-flabbergasted! To think that I should meet my dear Joe again in this way!" bursts out the impetuous correspondent.

And, on my part, after all I'm not surprised. It's just what I might have expected, knowing what I do of the man. Yes, Mynheer Joe has been with Gordon at Khartoom; he was last heard

of there. Now we shall see what news he brings. I am ready if you are, Mr. Barlow?"

Sandy smiles as he remembers that this man, now eagerness to depart, was in no hurry before, but took things in # cool manner, as though the world was not made in a day, and Ched Grimes had no need of haste. Circumstances alter cases, and the mere mention of a name has put new energy in Mr.

Nor is the war correspondent less eager to be on the way. He has received something of a shock upon hearing Molly speak that name. Memories of the past are recalled, which take him to other scenes.

"You will pardon us for leaving you?" says the polite Mr. Grimes to the young

"Certainly. Indeed, you cannot go too soon to please me. I am anxious to hear what this poor man has to say. To me General Gordon has always been the hero of heroes, and any one who comes from him demands my attention and sympathy. Go then to this poor German, see what he most needs, and if Molly Tanner or her father can in any way help him, do not neglect to give me notice.

Again the two men glance toward each other and smile, but although she sees this, there is no explanation made of their actions.

Bowing to the young American girl, they turn away, leaving the piazza of the hotel.

"Remember!" floats her warning voice after them, and Mr. Grimes, turning waves his hand. Then they are lost in the crowd that

jostle elbows in the square called Esbehiyeh, in front of Shepherd's Hotel. Around them sound the voices of drago man and fakir, mule driver and peddler, mountebank and camel driver, while the barking of dogs can be heard everywhere, the streets of Cairo literally running wild with curs. .

"Are you armed?" asks the correspon dent, as they cross the grand plaza and head into a street that leads from it down to the river Nile.

The silver king chuckles. "Never go without a revolver, my boy. Learned that habit years ago," he re-

"Yes, you Western men generally do carry a whole armory on deck. Beastly region we have to pass through. Black as-as-well, Egypt."

"Let's hire a light-no getting around in this quarter without one." They discover near by one of those link-boys, whose trade is fast dying out in Cairo since the improvements advanced by British rule. Time was, and not so very long ago either, when, after sunset on moonless nights, the great city on the Nile was wrapped in darkness, and the law compelled any one moving abroad to carry a lighted lan-

tern or flambeau. The city being divided into three distinct quarters, separated by gates, and known as the regions of Copts, Jews and Franks, no one could pass through after nightfall unless bearing a light.

In many parts of the strange, whited city on the east bank of the Nile, it is still necessary to carry a torch or lantern, unless one means to invite all manner of dangers, although the law with regard to this thing has fallen into desuctude since the English have made so many innovations with their charge of affairs after the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882.

boy is engaged to go and light, and the two Franks, as all foreigners are called in Egypt, boldly plunge into the lower region of Cairo, fronting

on the Nile. Now and then they pass remarks and joke, for the newspaper correspondent is nothing if not humorous. The frequent mention of that singular name, "Mynheer Joe," proclaims that they are exchanging confidences regarding their experiences in connection with this per-

Sandy is frank in all he says, and there can be no doubt regarding his fervid admiration for the man whom they expect to find on board the dahabeah of

Demosthenes Tanner. "It was at the storming of Alexandria I first met Mynheer Joe. I was then, as now, a correspondent, and ready to undergo all manner of dangers, in order to get the freshest news, even to holding a wire all day rather than let another man beat me.

"When the time came to land, in order to save the city from the mob, Arabi being defeated, I found myself thrown in the company of one who was a stranger to me. He came from a British war ship. Liked his looks from the first, and side by side we went through the streets of Alexandria. Firing all around us-got in numerous little engagements; was once surrounded by a pack of howling native troops, who thought they could wipe us out. Mr. Grimes, you missed the sight of your life in failing to see how Gordon's friend stood off those curs. Bless my soul! I can shut my eyes and look on the whole thing yet. I never saw such a fire-eater in action, and yet in repose

Joe is as meek as a lamb. "After that I froze to him. We saw some weeks in company-weeks I have never forgotten, because I loved that man. Then I was ordered to watch the Italian operations about Abyssinia, while Joe went to find Chinese Gordon. I lost track of him, but have never ceased to feel the deepest interest in his work, as an explorer second only to Stanley and Emin Paha. Now you can understand my intense delight upon hearing that the man we are going to see is no other than my comrade in Alexandria, Mynheer Joe.

This is about the longest consecutive parrative Mr. Grimes has ever beard Sandy give utterance to, which marks the power of that magical name. On his part, the silver king does not prove so confiding. He speaks of the man who interests them both as though acquainted with his past; but whether he has ever personally met him, Sandy finds it impossible to say.

Meanwhile, they have been making rogress in the direction of the river. A light of some sort is positively needed in these streets after nightfall, moon or no moon, on account of the peculiar

three stories in height. As the street itself is but an alley, barely ten feet in width, and each storey of the houses projects beyond the one below, it is easy to shake hands from the neighbor ing roofs. Even this small space is often covered with mats, to keep out the garish light of day, which, reflected from the

white walls, dazzles the eyes. In these narrow streets, men stand in groups engaged in discussion or barter now and then gently pushed aside by the nose of some camel advancing silently, the "ship of the desert" being, be sides the donkey, the only burden-bearer allowed in the native section

Here and there a light is seen moving along, as some shiek proceeds homeward; gayety abounds; but Arab and Moor believe in keeping their homes sacred from the public, and only huge piles of whitened bricks lie on every side

As yet they have met with no adven ture, and the distance between the grand square and the river has been diminished by half. This savors of rare good luck, for it is not always that Frank can traverse this region, at such an hour, unmolested. Cairo abounds in rascals who do not

fear the English law, however much they may respect the native koorbash and stocks. It is not a sin or a crime to rob a foreigner-unless caught in the act. That is the way they look at it.

Sandy knows this, if his companion does not happen to be so thoroughly posted with regard to the customs of the city on the Nile. He continues to keep his eyes about him, and does no let the Arab who carries the flambeau get beyond his reach, knowing that in all probability in case of an attack the first act of the dusky rascal will be to fly and leave them in darkness to meet the foe. They have even cut down the dist ance to a fourth and soon the light will fall upon the waters of the river, when the war correspondent bends suddenly forward and snatches the torch from the hand of the astonished bearer.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Grimes sees the action and does not appear to be at all surprised-indeed, he rarely deviates from the steady repose that marks him as a wonderfully

nervy man. Something glistens in his hand-it is a revolver, and the light gives the blue steel a cruel as well as a cold look. Evidently the stout tourist is ready to

take care of himself. Sandy has clutched the torch, which he at once raises above his head. Half a dozen ragged forms have sprung into view beyond. Perhaps some arch has secreted them until now. There can be no mistking their intentions, for quickly they advance, spreading out as if to prevent the Franks, who have thus wandered into their net, from escaping.

"Backsheesh!" they clatter like a lot of monkeys, holding out begrimed hands and scowling. There is only one way to treat these rascals-if you comply with their de mands they grow more and more im

portunate, until they finally proceed to openly rob their victim. "Stand back!" cries Sandy, with roar, as he swings the flambeau around

his head. They understand enough English to know what he is saying-at any rate, his actions are doubly significant-but, believing they can rule the ranch by mere force of numbers, the ragged beggars continue to push forward, thus

hemming the two whites in. small in point of Sandy is a warrior, every inch of him, and, as might be expected from his nervous manner, possessed of an inflammable temper. When the nearest of the rogues pushes within reaching distance and clutches at him with bony fingers, the newspaper man brings the flaming torch, with a resounding thump, against the top of the beggar's head. It does not affect the link, beyond sending forth a shower of sparks, but the unfortunate recipient of the blow, finding sparks in his long hair, utters vociferous shouts

and dances with the fervor of a dervish. This is deemed a signal for a general assault all along the line, and for the space of sixty seconds there is seen a spectacle rarely equaled in the narrow

streets of old Cairo. At first the two foreigners are averse to using their firearms, and endeavor to inspire terror in the breasts of their enemies by a generous exhibition of

When Sandy has to dodge a fiendish blow from a wicked dagger, he thinks

it about time they proceeded to sterner measures. Sandy opens on the rag-tag-and-bob-

tail crowd, as he terms them, seeking to inflict wounds and create a diversion. immediately backed up by his ompanion. His strong, white teeth hold fast his eigar, and even as he lets drive at a dark-faced fellah who seeks to cleave him with an Algerian yataghan, the silver king puffs out a small cloud of smoke. Talk about coolness! Here you have it in a human iceberg. Sandy holds his breath while looking at this strange companion, and wonders whether he would show excitement in

the heat of battle. This sort of a reception is hardly to the liking of the cowardly curs who have appeared daring simply because

numbers gave them confidence. At the first shot most of them began to glance over their shoulders. This is a sure sign of a desire to retreat. Then comes hotter work. Sandy no longer waits for them to come to him, but with his revolver in one hand and the flaming torch whirling about his head he leaps toward the footpads.

This is too much for them-they break and fly with cries of terror, some spring ing up the street, while others go down in the direction of the river.

In a marvelously short space of time the street is empty save for one poor fellow, who, shot in the leg, is hopping off as fast as his good peg will carry him, calling on Mohammed to save him from the foreign tigers.

In any other city under the sun, such commetion at dead of night would create an intense excitement. Not se in Cairo. The white walls shut them in, pierced by minute windows that allow little chance of street gazing. Those who hear the sounds of war are dis-

creet enough to " and that they will b

better off away. "Look out behind you, sir!" calls Sandy, and the silver king turns sud denly to cover's creeping figure that has advanced from a dark-arched doorway. whereupon the most piteous jargon is heard, and behold the suspected assassin turns out to be their torch-bearer who, having witnessed the hot little affair from a place of security, is now crawling back to resume his interrupted

They welcomed him gladly, and Sandy relieves himself of the flambeau, glad to be rid of it. As there are no more footpads in view to give them battle they again take up their line of march the river, fortunately close at hand

Mr. Grimes has had explicit directions from Mr. Tanner how to reach the boat, and a suspicion has already entered his head that the ambuscade into which they ran may have been arranged by the reis of the sailing craft to relieve his rich employer of superfluous wealth. These Arabs and natives are up to all manner of tricks to gain filthy lucre, and old travellers become so accustomed to treachery that they are surprised at nothing, and learn to depend upon themselves entirely.

He even mentions the fact, as it occurs to him, to Sandy, who declares there is a strong element of probability about it, and in the same breath swears that, if the occasion offers, he will sift the matter to the bottom and wring the neck of the wily old reis if such a course is necessary to extract the truth. "The river!" calls out their guide in his

native tongue and the fact arouses the two men to new interest, as they remember why they have come here. A minute later and they stand upor

the edge of the Nile. Just here the bank is high, and at this season of the year the water reaches its lowest stage to the south, though at Cairo there is al-

ways plenty. Below them they can see lights upon numerous vessels, some anchored out in the river, others tied up at the docks. Voices, too, come over the water from the west-men are singing on some of the coasters that ascend the river from the Mediterranean. All the typical boats seen upon this great sea can be found on the lower Nile. Here are schooners brigs, ships, men-of-war-the baggala felucca, xebec, settee and even a patamer from India, while numerous smaller craft and dahabeahs suited to travel on the Nile dot the surface of the river by day, making a scene worth femember-

ing. Our two friends can discern nothing of this now since darkness rests like a pall over the water, relieved only by the riding lights and lamps on board the numerous craft. Their attention is directed at once to a point immediately below, where the gleam of several lights proclaims the presence of a boat.

As they advance, they make out the clean-cut model of a new dahabeah, and can see the dark-skinned Egyptian sailors squatted on deck forward, while aft, the cabin, painted snow-white, is easily distinguishable.

The boat is tied to a dilapidated dock, but, for some reason, is also anchored a dozen feet away. A long gang-plank leads from the shore on board. Sandy orders the torch-bearer to lead the way. and in order to make sure of the fellow's attendance when they have need of his services again, neglects to pay

Thus they trip across the plank and reach the roof of the cabin, where the captain meets them-a man with grizzled beard, white turban and flowing robes. Upon his face Sandy reads a look of perplexity and disappointment, and from this moment he knows the truth-that they really owe their adventure to this reis, who, believing millionaire Tanner would come to the boat arranged to have his pockets tapped

while en route. These captains all talk fairly good English, although their hatred for the foreigner seems to be an inherited quality. Outwardly they may appear jolly and as meek as lambs, but inwardly the

are ravenous wolves. Sandy has a habit of pushing himself forward; not that he means to be rude. but it is a characteristic of his impetu-ous nature. To his credit be it said, the same thing urges him on in times of danger. He is always found in the van "This boat is the Alice?" he asks

boldly. The captain removes the stem of his long pipe from his mouth, and gravely nods his head in an affirmative way. "We have come direct from Tanner, to whom you are engaged for

the season." Another solemn nod. "Unable to come himself, he has sent us to see the man you picked up on the Nile-a man who was once my friend. The native captain looks at him close

ly, as though mentally figuring just where he should place Sandy. Then he smiles blandly and holds out his hand. "If his friend, then mine. I have suf fered at the hands of El Mahdi, and he who is an enemy to the False Prophet

is my brother. Shake!" Sandy complies, and gives the old reis such a Freemason grip that it wrings groan from the dark-skinned owner of

the dahabeah Alice. "Now lead us to your guest. We are in haste," he says, with an assumption of authority that no one ventures to dispute; for, despite his lack of majestic proportions, the war correspondent has he air of one born to command. It is not stature that makes a leader like

"Follow,gentlemen," says the captain. with a majestic wave of his hand. They obey willingly. The door of the cabin is close by. On either side are the steps leading to the promenade on the roof, over which an awning is stretched, for it is here that the tourist lives during the day, for the cabin, be ginning amidships, extends to the stern When the cabin-door is opened, they be-hold a splendid interior. Money has not been spared in fitting out the Alice, and only a millionaire like Ttanner could engage such a lovely craft for the season. A lamp is turned low, so that some thing of a dimness rests upon the in terior, but the sharp eyes of Sandy have already discovered the figure of a man upon a divan.

(To be Continued.)

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