

Then Macnamara turned, to see Mahmoud and the third dervish on the ground, struggling in each other's arms. He started forward, but before he could reach the two, Mahmoud jumped to his feet with a reeking knife, and waved it in the air.

"He was a kinsman, but he had to die," said Mahmoud as they mounted. He turned towards the bodies, then looked at the camels flying down the desert towards Dongola.

"It is as God wills now," he said. "Their tribesmen will follow when they see the camels. See, my camel is wounded!" he added, with a gasp.

IV

Two days following, towards evening, two wounded men on foot trudged through the desert haggard and bent. The feet of one—an Arab—had on a pair of red slippers, the feet of the other were bare. Mahmoud and Macnamara were in a bad way. They were in very truth "walking against time." Their tongues were thick in their mouths, their feet were lacerated and bleeding; they carried nothing now save their pistols and their swords, and a small bag of dates hanging at Macnamara's belt. Prepared for the worst, they trudged on with blind hope, eager to die fighting if they must die, rather than to perish of hunger and thirst in the desert. Another day, and they would be beyond the radius of the Khalifa's power: but would they see another day?

They thought that question answered, when, out of the evening pink and opal and the golden sand behind them, they saw three Arabs riding. The friends of the slain dervishes were come to take revenge, it seemed.