

THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By AN OLD MAC GRATH I.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Kathlyn Mare, believing her father, Col. Haru in peril, has summoned her, leaves her home in California to go to him in Allah, India. Umballah pretender to the throne of that principality, has imprisoned the colonel, named by the late king as his heir, because he fears the American may insist on his royal rights. Upon her arrival in Allah, Kathlyn is informed by Umballah that her father being dead, she is to be queen, and must marry him forthwith. Because of her refusal, she is sentenced to undergo two ordeals with wild beasts.

John Bruce, an American and fellow passenger on the boat which brought Kathlyn to Allah, saves her life. The elephant which carries her from the scene of her trials becomes frightened and runs away, separating her from Bruce and the rest of the party.

After a ride filled with peril she takes refuge in a ruined temple. The holy men and villagers, believing her to be an ancient priestess, raise from the tomb, allow her to remain as the guardian of the sacred fire. But Kathlyn's navel is also the abode of a lion, and she is forced to flee from it, with the savage beast in pursuit. She escapes and finds a retreat in the jungle, only to fall into the hands of a band of slave traders, who bring her to Allah to the public market. She is sold to Umballah, who, finding her still unsubmitive, throws her into the dungeon with her father.

Bruce and his friends effect the release of Kathlyn and the colonel. Umballah's attempt to recapture them is unsuccessful, and the fugitives are given shelter in the palace of Bala Khan. Supplied with camels and servants by that hospitable prince, the party endeavors to reach the coast, but, are overpowered by a band of brigands, and the encounter results in the colonel being delivered to Umballah. Kathlyn and Bruce escape from their captors and return to Allah, where Kathlyn learns that her father, while nominally king, is in reality a prisoner.

Kathlyn's resourcefulness and bravery are the means of rescuing him, and once more they steal away from Allah, but return broken hearted when they learn that Winnie, Kathlyn's young sister, has come to India. Umballah makes her a prisoner. She is forced to enter the palace and in turn is crowned queen of Allah.

Kathlyn, disguised as a woman doctor, succeeds in gaining admittance to Winnie's room. The joy of the sisters in the meeting is short lived, for Umballah appears and drags Kathlyn from Winnie's arms.

Her orders that Kathlyn be offered as a sacrifice to the god Jugernaut. She is bound and placed in the path of the six wheeled car, but the news is carried to the colonel and his friends and they are enabled to frustrate Umballah's fiendish design.

During the progress of a public exhibition, Kathlyn, who is present disguised as an animal trainer, reveals herself to the people and demands that their queen be allowed to leave the royal box and with her, face the lions in the arena.

This dramatic appeal is part of a carefully rehearsed program, and when Winnie joins her the trap door on which they stand opens and the sisters disappear from the gaze of the astonished multitude.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THROUGH the tunnel, into the street, into the care of Ahmed and Lal Singh, then hurriedly to the house of Ramabal. The fact that they had to proceed to Ramabal's was a severe blow to Bruce and the colonel. They had expected all to be mounted the instant they came from the tunnel, a swift, unobstructed flight to the gate and freedom. But Ahmed could not find his elephants. Too late he learned that the mahout he had secreted had engaged him in a conversation and had stationed themselves near the main entrance to the arena!

The cursing and railing against fate is a futile thing, never bearing fruit; so Ramabal suggested his house lift transportation could be secured. They perfectly understood that they could not remain in the house more than a few hours, for Umballah would surely send his men everywhere, and quite possibly first of all to Ramabal's.

Still Ramabal did not appear very much alarmed. There were secret stairways in his house that not even Pundita knew, and at a pinch he had a plan by which he could turn away investigation. Only in the direct need, though, did he intend to execute the plan. He awaited his friends out of Allah without the shedding of any blood.

"Well," said Ahmed, angrily casting aside his disguise; "well, Ramabal, is the crisis. Will you strike?"

Lal Singh's wrinkled face lightened up with eagerness. "We are ready, Ramabal," he said. "Well," Ramabal paused in his pacing to gaze keenly into the eyes of the old conspirator. "Yes, we. For I, Lal Singh, propose to take my stand at your right hand. I have not been idle. Everywhere your friends are evincing impatience. Ah, I know. You wish for a bloodless rebellion; but that cannot be, not among our people. You have said that in their zeal your followers, if they knew, would sweep the poor old king out of your path. Listen. Shall we put him back on the throne, to perform some other mad thing like this gift of his throne to the Colonel Sahib?"

Ramabal, watched intently by the two conspirators for the British Raj and his white friends, paced back and forth, his hands behind his back, his head bent. He was a Christian; he was not only a Christian, he was a Hindu, and the shedding of blood was doubly abhorrent to his mind.

"Here," said Ramabal to the colonel, "you will be safe. They might search for days without learning this room existed. There will be no need to remain here now. Time enough when my servant gives warning."

They filed out of the gallery solemnly. And Kathlyn went out into the garden, followed by Bruce. "Do you know," said Kathlyn, "the sight of all that armor, old and still magnificent, seemed to awaken the recollection of another age to me?"

"He wanted to take her in his arms, but he waited for her to continue the thought."

"I wonder if in the dim past I was not an Amas-out?" it wonder too," he said.

"It is marvelous how this horrid country has brought out in me things, emotions, and the like, that I never dreamed existed. Tonight I feel like a pagan. I want to put on one of those amazing chain armors, take a sword, and go forth."



"Captain," he began, "is Durga Ram a good master? Does he keep his promises? On the other hand, what will you gain by taking us prisoners to Umballah?"

Pundita rose and placed her hands upon her husband's shoulder. "We owe them our lives. Strike, Ramabal; but only if our need demands it."

"Good," said Lal Singh. "I'm off for the bazars for the night. I'll buy chupatties and pass them about, as they did in my father's time at Delhi in the Great Mutiny."

She tried to draw away her hands. "I love you, Kathlyn!"

"No, no! I refuse to let you be dragged into this. I want you to go, to go now while there is time. I command it. As you say, we cannot tell what may happen. The rebellion may prove a fizzle; but, one way or the other, there will be death. I want you to leave us, for we are indeed accursed!"

The man at her side laughed. To her ears it was the same laughter she had heard in the desert. In her heart she knew that he would not go. Was she glad?

"My life is mine, Kit," he said, releasing her hands, "and I give it to you. But I promise not to speak of love again till you are safe and sound on the broad Pacific. There are Ahmed and Lal Singh and Ramabal, and I will be their lieutenant. By the Lord Harry, besides yourself there is only one thing I want; my hand round the throat of the black devil who has caused all this. He seems to bear a charmed life. Never have I had a good opportunity to get near him. But patience!"

"Let us return to father and Winnie," she said. "Besides, perhaps I ought not to have come out here at all."

And Winnie! The change which had taken place in the child was the most remarkable of all to Kathlyn. Winnie was a woman, quiet, brave, uncomplaining, and Kathlyn now realized that the child had been flighty simple because they had coddled her and given away to her whims in the old days. The old days! Ah, could either of them ever go back to the placid, humdrum contentment of home after all this strife!

During this talk in the garden Umballah had not been inactive. The white people could not possibly have left the city; they were still within the walls.

There will be desperate men about, taking whatever side promises the most loot; and they will be everywhere, like poisonous flies. God knows I ought not to speak, to say anything, but my heart is too full this night."

"With all my heart and soul. You are as irresistible as breathing. And I want you for my wife, Kit!"

"No, John! Perhaps my poor father is right. A curse of some sort seems to be hanging over us. For look: how many times has everything looked bright, only to turn out like this! The cable saying that Winnie was on her way, the brigands, Ahmed's long sleep, the mistake this afternoon of the mahouts. I wonder if my own God has forsaken us?"

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For all that he had reasoned shrewdly regarding the house of Ramabal, he could not dismiss the possibility from his mind. So at length he ordered his captain of the guard, roughly and with curses—for Umballah was not pleasant in his cups—to proceed at once to the house of Ramabal and learn if they were there, or had been; to hasten to every servant in the house till the truth was dragged from their lips. Dead or alive!

The captain saluted and reported with his men. He was the same captain whom Umballah weeks before had marked for death because of his insolence. But the regent had found him so necessary that he dared not harm the man till real quiet was restored in Allah. And well the captain knew this; knew that his master was only biding his time and that once Umballah had his desires his (the captain's) throat would not be worth a copper piece. But the captain was a gambler, and Umballah's rupees were as necessary to him as air and water. Still, if Umballah had hidden fangs, so had he. Let the regent strike!

As Bruce and Kathlyn reached the door leading into the house they were met by Ramabal, whose face was grave.

"Ah, Memasahib, you ought not to have come out here. You might be seen. Perhaps Umballah is merely playing with us, cat and mouse wise."

He might have had more at his tongue's end, but he was destined not to utter it. The gate was flung open violently and the servant who had been watching



"No, no! I refuse to let you be dragged into this."

ing the street burst in with the cry: "Soldiers!"

The colonel, Winnie and Pundita appeared. For a moment they believed that Ramabal was going to guide them to the secret gallery. But suddenly he raised his head and stared boldly at the sea. And by that sign Bruce and the colonel understood; Ramabal had taken up the dice to make his throw. The two men put their hands to their revolvers and waited.

Soon the captain and his men came rushing in, only to stop short at a sign from Ramabal. "Captain," he began, "is Durga Ram a good master? Does he keep his promises?"

The captain turned and eyed his men. "Does he look out for your welfare as an honest man should, or does he simply use you as his tools and dupes? For what does he want the soldiery? To guard the weak and the oppressed from the strong, or to fortify himself in such manner that it will be easy for him to take what money he wishes

and flee? Is he a good master who persecutes for his own ends?"

"Ramabal," said the captain, "speak out your thought frankly and clearly."

Thus challenged, Ramabal said: "Join our side, and tomorrow at dawn we will strike a blow for the betterment of Allah!"

"And what of the old man in the dungeon?" dryly.

"Wait till we overthrow Umballah and the cowardly council; then we shall speak of him. Well!" proudly and fearlessly.

"Ramabal," replied the captain, "I too, will be frank. I will be loyal to the hand that pays me best, for I am not an Allahabid by birth. I am a mercenary. I have said it."

"Be with me on the morrow and I promise out of my own chest will I pay you your arrears and earnest money for the future. On the other hand, what will you gain by taking us prisoners to Umballah?"

"My lord's word is known. I myself will take charge of the affairs at the palace; and Umballah shall go to the burning ghata. I will announce to him that I found you not. When you arrive at the palace you will find everything in readiness. But till you come I dare not lift a hand."

And at that moment he meant every word he said. Ramabal was the richest man in Allah. He turned again to his men, to find that they were ready to follow Ramabal anywhere and at any time.

Ahmed, who knew the Asiatic heart thoroughly, could scarcely repress a smile. No matter. If they proved loyal to Ramabal on the morrow much would be forgiven.

The captain and his men departed, while Ramabal and his friends reentered the house; to find the imperturbable Lal Singh decked out in his lawful finery. He was Ramabal's right hand, and the British Raj vanished into nothingness.

"All is ready," he announced.

"Dawn," replied Ramabal.

"The servant goes forth for the chupatties."

Dawn. The garden was filling with silent armed men. With Ramabal in the secret gallery were the chiefs. Ramabal indicated the blazing swords. "My friends, choose among these weapons. The gems are nothing, but the steel is tried and true."

Lal Singh selected the simplest, saluted, and slid the scabbard through his cummerbund. As for Kathlyn, she could not keep her eyes off the beautiful chain cuirass which had once upon a time been worn by one of Pundita's forbears, a warrior queen.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Pundita, may I put it on? And tell me the story of the warrior queen. To be brave like that, to fight side by side with the man she loved!" She put the cuirass on.

Quite involuntarily her eyes roved to Bruce, who was staring at her like one entranced. The hearts of both of them leaped, but their lips remained mute. There was, however, a message in the eyes which each read with equal clearness. O, to be free, to be back in the old familiar world!

Lovely Pundita told the story. As she unfolded the tale Kathlyn experienced a strange exhilaration, unlike anything she had previously known. She wanted to snatch down one of the swords, start out for the palace, to stand in the midst of battle. And the old part of it was this exhilaration was not transient; it grew and expanded magically, like a faker's peepal tree.

The sky was yellow when the little army started off upon its desperate empire. A guard was left behind for the women.

God be with you," said Kathlyn as she gave her hand to Bruce.

"Kathlyn, I'm afraid of you," he said earnestly.

"In what way?"

"What made you put on that chain armor? And your eyes look so strange? Ah, promise me that you will stay here and obey the men left to guard you? You know the way to the secret armory. Fly to it at the first sound of firing. No one knows how this is going to end. I would not give a rupee for the word of any soldier in Allah. Promise, or I shall not be able to keep my mind on what is before me."

"I promise that only in the matter of life and death will I stir. O," impulsively, "why was I not born a man?"

"I much prefer you as you are." He smiled, kissed her hand, and took his place among the easier revolutionists.

"Kit," said Winnie when the women were alone, "Kit, that man loves you!"

"And Winnie, girl, if anything happens to him it will kill me!" Kathlyn wrapped her arms about her sister.

Pundita solemnly gave each of the girls a dagger. "What is this for?" Kathlyn asked.

"My lord falls there will be worse things than death in store for us. Pundita was again in the first. "My husband strikes openly now. He must win or die."

War! Rebellion! Great clamor and shouting before the palace stairs!

"Give us Umballah and the council!"

"Give us the gutter rat, Durga Ram!"

"We will bury him with the sword!"

"Umballah!"

From one end of the city to the other there was turmoil.

Umballah heard the shouting, and at first did not understand; but soon the truth came to him. The city was in revolt. He summoned what servants he could trust and armed them. And when the captain of the guard entered to seize Umballah he was himself overpowered. The dispatch with which this was accomplished stunned the soldiers, who knew not what to do without their leader.

When Lal Singh staggered into the house of Ramabal, holding his side in mortal agony, dying, Kathlyn felt the recurrence of that strange duality which she had first known in the Temple of the Lion. "The palace soldiers betrayed us!" whispered Lal Singh. "The secret gallery. . . Food and water there. . . Fly!" And thus Lal Singh gave up his cobbler's booth.

As in a dream Kathlyn ran from the house into the street. Winnie would have followed, but Pundita clung to her, refusing to let her go. The stony look in Kathlyn's eyes had warned Pundita of the futility of trying to coerce her.

With the sun breaking in lanes of light against the ancient chain armor, her golden hair flying behind her like a cloud, on, on Kathlyn ran, never stumbling, never faltering, till she came out into the square, before the palace. Like an Amazon of old she called to the scattering revolutionists, called, harangued, aroused them under her scorn and contempt, and finally roused them to frenzy. She became again in their eyes the whitey woman who had gone to the rates of hell at a word from her. And many did.

In her madness Kathlyn turned the tide; and when her father's arms closed round her she sank insensible upon his breast.

(Continued next Saturday.)

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