

THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By HAROLD MAC GRATH.



Go back to your homes. These white people shall be my guests till they have rested and are ready to depart.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Kathlyn Mare, believing her father, Col. Hare, in peril, has summoned her, leaves her home in California to go to him in Allaha, 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 Allaha, 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 Allaha, 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, rises from the tomb, allow her to remain as the guardian of the sacred fire. But Kathlyn's haven is also the lair 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 Allaha to the public mart. She is sold to Umballah, who, finding her still unsubmitive, throws her into the dungeon with her father.

Bruce and his friends effect the rescue of Kathlyn and the colonel. Umballah's attempt to recapture them is unsuccessful, and the fugitives are given shelter in the palace of Bak 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 Allaha, 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 Allaha, but return broken hearts 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 Allaha.

One attempt to get Winnie out of the closely guarded palace almost costs Kathlyn her life, but the second plan succeeds, and Kathlyn and Winnie, their father, and Bruce find a hiding place in the home of their Indian friend, Ramabai, and his wife Pundita. The latter is the lawful queen of Allaha and public sentiment in her favor is growing. The people at last, weary of Umballah's misrule, rise against him, with Ramabai, at their head and the colonel and Bruce fighting under him. Kathlyn has been left at home, but when tidings that the revolutionists have been defeated reach her she rushes out and assumes command of the scattered forces. She saves the day for them. Umballah flees for his life.

Umballah has crept back to the city, and, with one of the women of the harem as an accomplice, murders the poor old king. It is arranged to have Pundita, a member of the royal house and wife to Ramabai, crowned queen. But Umballah, having secured the priesthood, the great power in Allaha, as ally, comes back to the palace with absolute authority. His first official act is to imprison Kathlyn, Winnie, the Colonel, and Bruce.

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CHAPTER XXV.

BLINDED by the dust, tripped by the rolling stones, Bruce turned to where he had seen Kathlyn fall. The explosion—the last one—had opened up veins of strange gases, for the whole promontory appeared to be on fire. He bent and caught up in his arms the precious burden, staggered down to the beach, and plunged into the water. A thin trickle of blood flowing down her forehead explained everything; a falling stone had struck her.

"Kit, Kit! I hope to God the treasure went up also." He dashed the cold water into her face.

The others were unharmed, though dazed, and for the nonce incapable of coherent thought or action.

"The boats!" Bruce laid Kathlyn down on the sand and signed to Winnie. "Tend to her. I must take a chance at the beach. We could cross the neck of

sand at ebb, but Umballah will be far away before that time. Kit, Kit; my poor girl!" He patted her wrists and called to her, and when finally her lips stirred he rose and waded out into the sea, followed by four hardy fishermen. The freshening breeze, being from the southwest, aided the swimmers, for the boats did not drift out to sea, but in a northeasterly direction. The sloop was squaring away for the mainland.

Did Umballah have the treasure? Bruce wondered, as at length his hand reached up and took hold of the gunwale of the boat he had picked out to bring down. Would Umballah have possessed tenacity enough to hang on to it in face of all the devastation? Bruce sighed as he drew himself up and crawled into the boat. He knew that treasure had often made a hero out of a coward; and treasure at that moment meant life and liberty to Umballah. On his return to the island he greeted the colonel somewhat roughly. But for this accursed basket they would have been well out of Asia by this time.

"Umballah has your basket, colonel. If he hasn't, then say good-by to it, for it can never be dug from under those tons and tons of rock. . . . Here! where are those fishermen going?" he demanded.

The men were in the act of pushing off with the boats, which they had only just brought back. Ramabai picked up his discarded rifle.

"Stop!"

"They are frightened," explained the chief.

"Well, they can contain their fright till we are in safety," Ramabai declared. "Warn them."

"Hurry, everybody! I feel it in my bones that that black devil has the treasure. Get those men into the boats. Here, pick up those oars. Get in, Kit; you, Winnie; come, everybody!"

Kathlyn gazed sadly at her father. Treasure, treasure; that first. She was beginning to hate the very sound of the word. The colonel had been nervous, impatient, and irritable ever since the document had been discovered. Till recently Kathlyn had always believed her father to be perfect, but now she saw that he was human, he had his flawed spot. Treasure! Before her or Winnie! So be it.

"Colonel," said Bruce, taking a chance throw, "we are less than a hundred miles from the seaport. Suppose we let Umballah clear out and we ourselves head straight up the coast? It is not fair to the women to put them to any further hardship."

"Bruce I have sworn to God that Umballah shall not have that treasure. Ramabai, do you understand what it will mean to you if he succeeds in reaching Allaha with that treasure, probably millions? He will be able to buy every priest and soldier in Allaha and still have enough left for any extravagance that he may wish to plunge in."

"Sahib," suggested Ramabai, "let us send the women to the seaport in care of Ahmed, while we men seek Umballah."

"Good!" Bruce struck his hands together. "The very thing."

"I refuse to be separator from father," declared Kathlyn. "If he is determined to pursue Umballah back to Allaha, I must accompany him."

"And I!" added Winnie.

"Nothing more to be said," and Bruce signed to the boatman to start. "If only this breeze had not come up! We could have caught him before he made shore."

Umballah paced the deck of the sloop, thinking and planning. He saw his enemies leaving in the rescued boats. Had he delayed them long enough? As matters stood, he could not carry away the treasure. He must have help, an armed force of men he could trust. On the mainland were Ahmed and the loyal keepers; behind were three men who wanted his life as he wanted theirs. The only hope he had lay in the cupidry of the men on the sloop. If they could be made to stand by him, there was a fair chance. Once he was of a mind to leave the basket over the rail and trust to luck in finding it again, but the thought came at his heart. He simply could not do it.

Perhaps he could start a revolt, or win over the chief of the village. He had known honest men to fall at the sight of much gold, to fight for it, to com-

mit any crime for it—and, if he needs, to die for it. But the chief was with his enemies. Finally he came to the conclusion that the only thing to be done was to carry the treasure directly into the chief's hut and there await him. He would bribe the men with his sufficiently to close their mouths. If Ahmed was on the shore, the game was up. But he swept the mainland with his gaze and discovered no sign of him.

As a matter of fact, Ahmed had arranged his elephants so that they could start at once up the coast to the seaport. He was waiting on the native highway for the return of his master, quite confident that he would bring the bothersome trinkets with him. He knew nothing of Umballah's exploit. The appalling thunder of the explosion worried him. He would wait for just so long; then he would go and seek.

Every village chief has his successor in hope. This individual was one of those who had helped Umballah to carry the treasure from the cave; in fact, the man who had guided him to the cave itself. He spoke to Umballah. He said that he understood the holy one's plight; for to these yet simple minded village folk Umballah was still the holy one. Their re-

luctance was the same.

"Holy one," he said "we can best your enemies who follow."

"How?" eagerly.

"Yonder is the chief's bullock cart. I myself will find the bullocks."

"What then?"

"We shall be on the way south before the others land."

"An extra handful of gold for you! Get the oars out! Let us hurry!"

"Mow, holy one; these men will obey me."

"They shall all be well paid."

Umballah had reached the point where he could not plan without treachery. He proposed to carry the basket into the jungle somewhere, bury it, and make way with every man who knew the secret; then, at the proper time, he would return to it with

stood back of her father, pushing, pushing.

"He is mad," whispered Bruce, "but we cannot leave him."

"What would I do without you, John!"

From down the beach the chief's little girl came toddling to the group of excited men. She was clutching something in her hand. Her father took her by the arm and pulled her back of him. Kathlyn put her hand upon the chief's head, protectingly. The child gazed up shyly, opened her little hand, and disclosed a yellow sovereign!

The argument between the chief and his mutinous followers went on.

"John," said Kathlyn, "you speak the dialect. I can understand only a word here and there. But listen. Tell the chief that all we desire is to be permitted to depart in peace later," she added, significantly.

"What's up?"

"The child has a coin—A British sovereign—in her hand. She knows where Umballah has secreted the treasure. Since father cannot be budged from his purpose, let us try deceit. You speak to the chief while I explain to father."

To the chief Bruce said: "The treasure is evidently lost. So, after a short rest, we shall return to our caravan and depart. We do not wish to be the cause of trouble between you and your people."

"But, Sahib, they have the gold!"

"The false holy one doubtless gave them that before the explosion," Bruce laid hold of his arm in a friendly fashion, apparently, but in reality as a warning. "All we want is a slight rest in your house. After that we shall proceed upon our journey."

The mutineers could offer no reasonable objections to this and signified that it was all one to them so long as the white people departed. They had caused enough damage by their appearance and it might be that it was through their agency that the promontory was all but destroyed. The fish would be driven away for weeks. And what would the fierce gun-runners say when they found out that their stores had gone up in flame and smoke? Al, al! What would they do but beat them and torture them for permitting any one to enter the cave?

"When these men come," answered the chief, with a dry smile, "I will deal with them. None of us has entered the cave. They know me for a man of truth. Perhaps you are right," he added to the mutineer. "There could not have been a treasure there and escape the sharp eyes of those Arabs. Go back to your homes. These white people shall be my guests till they have rested and are ready to depart."

Reluctantly the men dispersed, and from his hiding place Umballah saw another of his schemes fall into pieces. There would be no fight, at least for the present. The men, indeed, had hoped to come to actual warfare, but they could not force war on their chief without some good cause. After all, the sooner the white people were out of the way the better for all concerned.

Did the leader of this open mutiny have ulterior designs upon the treasure, upon the life of Umballah? Perhaps. At any rate, events so shaped themselves as to nullify whatever plans he had formed in his gold-dazzled brain.

The Colonel was tractable and fell in with Kathlyn's idea. It would have been nothing short of foolhardiness to have openly antagonized the rebellious men.

"You have a plan, Kit, but what is it?"

"I dare not tell you here. You are too excited. But I believe I can lead you to where Umballah has buried the basket. I feel that Umballah is watching every move we make. And I dare say he hoped—and even instigated—this mutiny to end in disaster for us. He is alone. So much we can rely upon. But if we try to meet him openly we shall lose. Patience for a little while. There, they are leaving us. They are grumbling, but I do not believe that means anything serious."

"Now then white people," said the chief, "come to my house. You are welcome there now and always. You have this day saved my life and that of my child. I am grateful."

Inside the hut Kathlyn drew the child toward her and gently pressed open the tightly clenched fingers. She plucked the sovereign from the little pink palm and held it up. The child's father seized it, wonderingly.

"Gold! They lied to me! I knew it."

"Yes," said Bruce. "They did find the treasure. They brought it here and buried it quickly. And we believe your little girl knows where. Question her!"

It was not an easy matter. The child was naturally shy, and the presence of all these white skinned people struck her usually babbling tongue with a species of paralysis. But her father was patient, and word by word the secret was dragged out of her. She



Having found the hiding place of the treasure, they intended to take it that night.

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told the stolen bullock cart, of the digging in the sand, of the holy one.

In some manner they must lure Umballah from his retreat. It was finally agreed upon that they all return to the camp and steal back at once in a round-about way. They would come sufficiently armed. Later, the chief could pretend to be walking with his child.

So while Umballah stole forth from his hiding place, reasonably certain that his enemies had gone, Umballah set together his mutineers and made arrangements with them to help him carry away the treasure that night, the rightful owners were directed to the broken stick in the damp sand.

That night, when Umballah and his men arrived, a hole in the sand greeted them. It was shaped like a mouth, opened in laughter.

(Continued next Saturday.)