

THE ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN

By HAROLD MAC GRATH.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Kathlyn Hare, believing her father, Col. Hare, in peril, has summoned her, leaves her home in California to go to him in Allaha, India. Umballah pretends 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 naven 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 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 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 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 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 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 XXIV.

"THOSE ropes were cut," declared Ahmed. "But who in the world could have cut them?" demanded the Colonel.

Ahmed shrugged. "We may have been followed by thieves. They could have gotten here before us, as we were forced to use the elephant trails. Let us keep our eyes about us, Sahib. When one speaks of gold, the wind carries the word far. And then . . ." He paused, scowling.

"And then what?"

"I do not want the Memshahib to hear," Ahmed whispered. "But who shall say that this is not the work of the gurus, who never forget, who never forgive, Sahib?"

"But they would not follow!"

"Nay, but their servant would, on the fear of death. I will watch at night hereafter."

Ahmed searched thoroughly about the ledge from which the east side of the bridge had swung, but the barren rocks told him nothing. Armed with his rifle, he plunged boldly back along the elephant trail, but returned without success. Whoever was following them was an adept, as secret as a Thuggee. All this worried Ahmed not a little. He readily understood that the murderous attempt had not been directed against Kathlyn alone but against all of them. But for her eagerness and subsequent warning, some of them would have been dead at this moment.

"Sahib, it would be better to make camp on the other side of the ford. The Memshahib is weak from the shock and might collapse if we proceeded."

"I leave everything to you, Ahmed. But is there not some place further below where the water does not run so fast?"

"Ramabai will know."

But Ramabai knew only the bridge. They would have to investigate and explore the bank. Half an hour's journey—rather a difficult one—brought them to still and shallow water. Here they crossed and made camp beyond, in a natural clearing. They erected the small tent for Kathlyn, inside of which she changed her clothes, drank her tea, and lay down to sleep.

"What does Ahmed think?" asked Bruce anxiously.

"That we are being followed by some assassins hired by our friends the priests."

"Colonel, let us make straight for the seaport and let this damnable bushel of trinkets stay where it is," urged Bruce, the lover.

"That is not possible now," replied Ramabai. "We can now reach there only by the zacoact itself, or return to the desert and journey over the old trail. We must go on."

The Colonel smoked his pipe moodily. He was galled between necessity and desire. He had come to Asia for this filigree basket, and he wanted it, with a passion which was almost miserly. At one moment he silently vowed to cast the whole thing into the sea, and at the next his fingers twitch and he would sigh.

Sometimes it seemed to him that there was some invisible force working in him, drawing and drawing aim against the dictates of his heart. He had experienced this feeling back in California, and now



"Look!" cried Kathlyn, pointing seaward. What she saw was Umballah setting adrift the boats.

fought against it for weeks, without avail. And frequently now, when alone and undisturbed, he could see the old guru, shaking with the venom of his wrath, the blood dripping from his lacerated fingers, which he shook in the Colonel's face, fecking it with blood. A curse, it was so. He must obey that invisible will; he must go on and on.

His pipe slipped from his fingers and his head fell upon his knees; and thus Kathlyn found him. "Let him sleep, Memshahib," warned Ahmed from across the fire. "He has been fighting the old guru."

"What?" Kathlyn whispered back. "Where?"

Ahmed smiled grimly and pointed toward his forehead.

"Is there really such evil, Ahmed?"

"Evil begets evil, heaven born, just as good begets good. The Colonel Sahib did wrong. And who shall deny some of these gurus a supernatural power? I have seen, I know."

"But once you said that we should eventually escape, all of us."

"And I still say it, Memshahib. What is written is written," plegmatically.

Warily she turned toward her tent, but paused to touch the head of her sleeping father as she passed. Her occidental mind would not and could not accept as possibilities these mysterious attributes of the oriental mind. That a will could reach out and prearrange a man's misfortunes was to her mind incredible, for there were no precedents. She never had witnessed a genuine case of hypnotism; those examples she had seen were miserable buffooneries, travesties, hoodwinking not even the newsboys in the upper gallery. True, she had read of such things, but from the same angle with which she had read the Arabian Nights—fairly stories.

Yet, here was her father, thoroughly convinced of the efficacy of the guru's curse; and here was Ahmed, complacently watching the effects, and not doubting in the least that his guru would in the end prove the stronger of the two.

One of the elephants clanked his chains restlessly. He may have heard the prowling of a cat. Far beyond the fire, beyond the sentinel, she thought she saw a naked form flash out and back of a tree. She stared intently at the tree for a time; but as she saw nothing more, she was convinced that her eyes had deceived her. Besides, her body seemed dead and her mind too heavy for thought.

Umballah, having satisfied himself that the camp would not break till morning, slunk away into the shadows. He had failed again; but his hair had made him strong. He was naked except for a loin cloth. His beard and hair were matted, the latter hanging over his eyes. His body was smeared with ashes. Not even Ahmed would have recognized him a yard off. He had something less than nine hours to reach the cape before they did; and it was necessary that he should have accomplices. The fishermen he knew to be of predatory habits, and the promise of gold would entice them.

The half island which constituted the cape had the shape of a miniature volcano. There was verdure at the base of its slope and trees lifted their heads here and there hardily. It was a mile long and half a mile wide; and in the early morning it stood out like a huge sapphire against the rosy sea. Between the land the promontory there lay a stretch of glistening sand; there was half a mile of it. Over this a flock of gulls were busy, as scavengers always are. At high tide, yonder was an island in truth.

Sometimes a British gunboat would drop down here suddenly; but it always wasted its time. The fishermen knew nothing; nothing in the way of guns and powder ever was found; and yet the British raj knew that somewhere about lay the things for which it so diligently and vigorously sought.

On the beach fishermen were disembarking. A sloop with a lateen sail lay at anchor in the rude harbor. Some of the fishermen were repairing nets, and some were tinkering about their fishing boats. Beyond the beach nestled a few huts. Toward these other fishermen were making progress.

The chief of the village—the headman—disembarked from this sloop. He was met by his wife and child, and the little one clambered about his legs in ecstasy. Among the huts stood one more imposing than the others, and toward this the chief and his family wended their way. In front of the hut stood an empty bullock cart. Attached to one of the wheels was a frisking kid. The little child paused to play with her pet.

Absorbed in her pastime, she did not observe the approach of a gaunt being with matted hair and beard and ash besmeared body. Children are gifted with an instinct which leaves us as we grow older; the sensing of evil without seeing or understanding it. The child suddenly gazed up, to meet a pair of eyes black and fierce as a kite's. She rose screaming and fled toward the house. The holy man shrugged and waited.

When the parents rushed out to learn what had

frightened the little one they were solemnly confronted by Umballah.

"I am hungry."

The chief salaamed and ordered his wife to bring the holy man rice and milk.

"Thou art an honest man," said Umballah.

"It is said," replied the chief gravely.

"Thou art poor."

"That is with the gods I serve."

"But thou art not without ambition."

"Who is?" The chief's wonder grew. What meant these peculiar sentences?

"Wouldst put thy hand into gold as far as the wrist and take what thou couldst hold?"

"Yes, holy one; for I am human. Whither leads these questions? What is it you would of me?"

"There are some who need to be far away to see things. Well, good man, there is a treasure under your feet," falling into the veraculous.

The chief could not resist looking down at the ground, startled.

"Nay," smiled Umballah, "not there. Think; did not something unusual happen here five years ago?"

The chief smoothed the tip of his nose. "My father died and I became headman of the village."

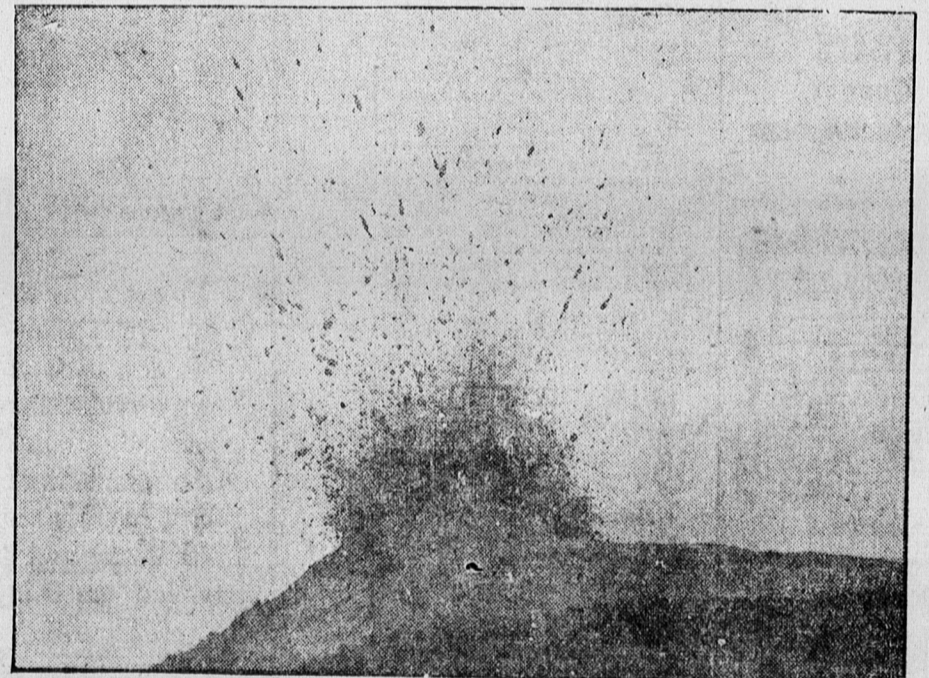
"Would you call that unusual?" ironically.

the filigree basket dug up and transferred to the sloop before the Colonel Sahib could reach the village. And Umballah would have succeeded but for the fact that the wind fell unaccountably and they lost more than an hour in handling the sloop with oars.

When the sloop left the primitive landing the chief returned to his hut and told his wife what had taken place, like the good husband he was. They would be rich.

Suddenly the child set up a wailing. Through the window she had seen a bold leopard trot over to the bullock cart and carry away the kid. The chief at once summoned his remaining men, and they proceeded to set a trap for the prowler. The cat had already killed one bullock and injured another. They knew that the beast would not return for some hours, having gorged itself upon the kid. But it was well to be prepared.

Toward noon the other treasure seekers drew up within a quarter of a mile behind the village. The men folk thought it advisable to reconnoiter before entering the village. One never could tell. Winnie declared her intention of snoozing while they waited, and curled up in her rugs. Kathlyn, however, could not resist the longing to look upon the



An explosion followed that was heard half a hundred miles away.

"No, Ha!" suddenly. "Five years ago; yes, yes, I remember now. Soldiers, who made us lock ourselves in our huts, not to stir forth on the pain of death till ordered. My father alone was permitted outside. He was compelled to row out to the island. There he was blindfolded. Only two men accompanied him. They carried something that was very heavy. My father never knew what the strange, shining basket held. Then the soldiers went away and we came out. No one was allowed on the island till my father died."

"Did he tell you what it was he helped bury yonder?"

"No holy one. He was an honorable man. Whatever the secret was, it passed with him. We were not curious."

"It was the private treasure of the King of Allaha, and the man was the King himself."

The fisherman salaamed.

"And I am sent, because I am holy, to recover this treasure, which was willed to the temple of Juggernaut."

"But holy one, I know not where it is hidden!"

"I do. What I want is the use of your sloop and men I can trust. To you, as much gold as your hands can hold."

"I will furnish you with men as honest as myself."

"That will be sufficient; and you shall have your gold."

The word of a holy man is never subjected to scrutiny in India. Umballah was in good humor. Here he was, several hours ahead of his enemies. He would have

seen again. She could see the lovely blue water through the spaces between the trees. Soon she would be flying over that water, flying for home, home!

She went farther from the camp than she really intended, and came unexpectedly upon the leopard, which stood guarding its cubs while they growled and tore at the dead kid. Kathlyn realized that she was unarmed, and that the leopard was between her and the camp. She could see the roofs of the village below her; so toward the huts she ran. The leopard stood still for a while, eyeing her doubtfully, then made up its mind to give chase. She had tasted blood, but had not eaten.

Meantime the little child had forgotten her loss in her interest in the bullock cart with its grotesque appearance, followed by the excited leopard. She cart. The leopard leaped into the cart at the rear, while Kathlyn ran toward the chief's hut, into which she staggered without the formality of announcing her advent.

The father of the child had no need to question, though he marveled at the white skin and dress of this visitor, who had doubtless saved his child from death. He flung the door shut and dropped the bar. Next he sought his gun and fired through a crack in the door. He missed; but the noise and smoke frightened the leopard away.

And later, Bruce, wild with anxiety over the disappearance of Kathlyn, came across the chief battling for his life. He had gone forth to hunt the leopard, and the leopard had hunted him. Bruce

dared not fire, for fear of killing the man; so without hesitation or fear he caught the leopard by the back of the neck and by a hind leg and swung her into the sea.

The chief was severely mauled, but he was able to get to his feet and walk. The white woman had saved his child and the white man had saved him. He would remember.

Thus the leopard quite innocently served a purpose for all her deadly intentions; the chief was filled with gratitude.

When the Colonel and the others came into view the former seized Kathlyn by the shoulders and shook her hysterically.

"In God's name, Kit, don't you know any better than to wander off alone? Do you want to drive me mad?"

"Why, father, I wasn't afraid!"

"Afraid! Who said anything about your being afraid? Didn't you know that we were being followed? It is Umballah! Ah! that gives you a start!"

"Colonel!" said Bruce gently.

"I know, Bruce, I sound harsh. But you were tearing my hair, too."

"Forgive me," cried Kathlyn, penitent, for she knew she had done wrong. "I did not think, but Umballah?"

"Yes, Umballah. One of the keepers found a knife by that bridge, and Ramabai identifies it as belonging to Umballah. Whether he is alone or with many, I do not know; but this I do know; we must under no circumstances become separated again. Now, I'm going to quiz the chief."

But the chief said that no person described had passed or been seen. No one but a holy man had come that morning, and he had gone to the island in the sloop.

"For what?"

The chief smiled, but shook his head.

"Was it not a basket of gold and precious stones?" demanded the Colonel.

The chief's eyes widened. There were others who knew, then? Bruce noticed his surprise.

"Colonel show the good chief the royal seal on your document."

The Colonel did so, and the chief salaamed when he saw the royal signature. He was mightily bewildered, and gradually he was made to understand that he had been vilely tricked.

"To the boats!" he shouted, as if suddenly awakened. "We may be too late, for I believe he was a holy man, and I believe."

They all ran hastily down to the beach to see what boats they could. Here they met a boat, readying obstacle in the refusal of the oarsmen. The chief, however, signified that it was his will; and, nevertheless, he commanded that the fishermen should handle the oars. They would be paid, that was different. Why did not the white people say so a word? They would go anywhere for money. Not the word, the boats and pushed off.

On the way to the island the Colonel consulted the map, or diagram, he had in his hand. It was not possible that Umballah knew the exact spot.

A filigree basket of silver, filled with gold and gems! The man became as eager and excited as a boy. The instinct to hunt for treasure begins just outside the cradle and ends just inside the grave.

To return to Umballah. Upon landing, he asked at once if any knew where the cave was. One man did know, but he refused to show it. There were spirits there, ruled by an evil god.

"Take me there, you, and I will enter without harm. Am I not holy?"

That put rather a new face upon the situation. If the holy man was willing to risk an encounter with the god, far be it that they should prevent him. An ordinary seeker would not have found the entrance in a lifetime. Umballah had not known exactly where the cave was, but he knew all that the cave contained. When they came to it Umballah sniffed; the tang of sulphur became evident both in his nose and on his tongue. He understood. It was simply a small spring, a mineral in which sulphur predominated. He came out with some silver in his hands. He drank and showed them that it was harmless. Besides, he was a holy man, and his presence made ineffectual all evil spirits which might roam within the cave.

Umballah, impatient as he was, had to depend upon patience. By dint of inquiries he learned that wild Mohammedans had used the cave upon the set, set a curse upon its threshold. Umballah retorted and destroyed this by reasoning that the curse of a Mohammedan could not affect a Hindu. Finally, he offered each and all of them a fortune and won.

Torches were lighted and the cave entered. There were many side passages; and within these the astute Umballah saw the true reason for the curse of the Mohammedans, guns and powder, hundreds and hundreds of pounds of black destruction. A lower gallery—the mouth of which lay under a slab of rock—led to the pit wherein rested the filigree basket.

For a time Umballah acted like a madman. He sang, chanted, dug his hands into the gold and stones; choked, sobbed. Here was true king's ship; the private treasures of a dozen decades, all his for the taking. He forgot his enemies and their nearness as the fortune revealed itself to him. As his men at length staggered out of the lower gallery with the basket slung upon an improvised litter, he espied his enemies marching up the hill back into the cave again. Umballah cursed and bit his nails. He was unarmed, as were his men, and he had had time to search among the smuggled arms to find his need.

"Heaven-born," spoke up the man who had known where the cave was, "there is an exit on the other side. We can go through that without yonder people noticing us."

"A fortune for each of you when you put this on the sloop!"

Back through the cave they rushed, torches flaring. Once a bearer stumbled over a powder can, and the torch holder all but sprawled over him. Umballah's hand stood on end. Fear impelled the men toward the exit.

"There is powder enough here to blow up all of Hind! Hasten!"

At the mouth of the exit, the men with the torches, finding no further need of them, carelessly flung them aside.

"Fools!" roared Umballah; "you have destroyed us!"

He fled. The bearers followed with the burden. Down the side of the promontory they slid. Under a projecting ledge they paused, sweating with terror. Suddenly the whole island rocked. An explosion followed that was heard half a hundred miles away, where the gunboat of the British raj patrolled the shores. Rocks, trees, sand filled the air, and small fires broke out here and there. The bulk of the damage, however, was done to the far side of the promontory, not where the frightened Umballah stood.

"A twisted rifle barrel fell at his feet."

"To the sloop!" he yelled. "It is all over!"

On the far side the other treasure seekers stood huddled together, scarce knowing what was a turn. The miracle of it was that none of them was hurt. Perhaps a quarter of an hour passed before their faculties awoke.

"Look!" cried Kathlyn, pointing seaward. What she saw was Umballah, setting adrift the boats which had brought them from the mainland. Came a second explosion, far more furious than the first. In the downward rush Kathlyn stumbled and fell, the debris falling all about her.

(Continued next Saturday.)

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