

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 Allahah, India. Umballah pretender to the throne of that principality, has imprisoned the colonel, naming by the late king as his heir, because he fears the American may insist on his royal rights. Upon her arrival in Allahah, 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 Allahah, 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 Allahah 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 Allahah, 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 Allahah, 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 Allahah.

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, Ramabal, and his wife Pundita. The latter is the lawful queen of Allahah and public sentiment in her favor is growing. The people at last, weary of Umballah's misrule, rise against him, with Ramabal, at their head, and the king, fighting under their banner, 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. Her presence inspires them with fresh courage and under leadership the tide is turned and the rebels are victorious. To escape from the arena lions which have become free and caused a panic, Kathlyn enters a deserted house and climbs to its roof.

When she hears over the parapet to call for aid she is seen by Umballah, who is fleeing from the rebels. Mad for revenge, he sets fire to the house and Kathlyn's refuge is soon a mass of flames. When that disaster is averted death by poison threatens, but a loyal servant sacrifices himself and saves her from the latter danger.

Ramabal has long suspected that the real king of Allahah did not die, as was announced to the people, but is being held in some vile dungeon. When he discovers that the surmise is correct, he, the Colonel, and Bruce hasten to the hut in which the king has been imprisoned, and the feeble old man is escorted to the palace.

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CHAPTER XXII.

IN the rear of the temple Umballah sought was a small chamber which was used by the priests when they desired to rest or converse privately, which was often. The burning temple lamps of brass emphasized the darkness of the room rather than dispelled it. A shadow occasionally flickered through the amber haze—an exploring bat. A dozen or more priests stood in one of the dim corners, from which their own especial idol winked at them with eyes like coals blown upon. The Krishna of the Ruby Eyes, an idol known far and wide but seen by few.

In the temple itself there was a handful of tardy worshippers. The heat of the candles, the smell of the eternal lotus flower and smoking incense sticks, idols were bejeweled or patched with beaten gold made even the huge vault stifling. Many of the leaf, and many had been covered by wandering white men, who, when their endeavor became known, disappeared mysteriously and were never more known in the haunts of men.

A man in tatters appeared suddenly in the great arched doorway. His turban came down almost to his eyes and a neckcloth covered his mouth. All that could be seen of him in the matter of countenance was a pair of brilliant eyes and a predatory nose. He threw a quick, piercing glance about, assured himself that such devotees as he saw were harmless, then strode boldly if he entered without ado the rear chamber, which he hurriedly closed. Instantly the indignant priests rushed toward him to expel him and give him a tongue-lashing for his impudence, when a hand was thrust out, and they beheld upon a finger a great green stone. They stopped as suddenly as though they had met an invisible electric current.

The curtain fell behind the man in tatters, and he remained motionless, for a space. A low murmuring among the priests ensued, and presently one of their number—the youngest—passed out and stationed himself before the curtain. Not even a privileged dancing girl might enter now.

The man in tatters stepped forward. He became the center of the group; his gestures were quick, tense, authoritative. At length priest turned to priest, and the wrinkled faces became more wrinkled still: smiles.

"Highness," said the eldest, "we had thought of this, but you did not make us your confidant."
"Till an hour gone it had not occurred to me. Shall Ramabal, then, become your master, to set forth the propaganda of the infidel?"
"No!" The word was not spoken loudly, but ably, with something resembling a hiss. "No!"
"And shall a king who has no mind, no will, no strength, resume his authority? Perhaps, to bring more white people into Allahah, perhaps to give Allahah eventually to the British raj?"
Again the negative.
"But the method?"
Umballah smiled. "What brings the worshippers here with candles, and flowers and incense? Is it love or reverence or superstition?"
The bald yellow heads nodded like porcelain mandarins.



Where was the document he had given to his friend Hare?

"Superstition," went on Umballah, "the sword which bends the knees of the laymen, has and always will through the ages!"
In the vault outside a bell tinkled, a gong boomed melodiously.
"When I give the sign," continued the schemer, "declare the curse upon all those who do not bend. A word from your lips, and Ramabal's troops vanish, reform, and become yours and mine!"
"While the king lives?" asked the chief priest curiously.

"Ah!" And Umballah smiled again.
"But you, Durga Ram?"
"There is Ramabal, a senile king, and I. Which for your purposes will you choose?"

"There was a conference. The priests drifted away from Umballah. He did not stir. His mind was proud and haughty, but for all that his knees shook and his heart thundered. He understood that it was to be all or nothing, no middle course, no half methods. He waited, wetting his cracked and swollen lips. When the priests returned to him, their heads bent before him a little. It represented a salaam, as much as they had ever given to the king himself. A glow ran over Umballah.

"Highness, we agree. There will be terms."
"I will agree to them without question."
"Life and power again real power! These meddling fools should serve him, thinking the while that they served themselves.

"Half the treasury must be paid to the temple."
"Agreed!" Half for the temple and half for himself; and the abolishment of the seven leopards.
"With this stipulation; Ramabal is yours, but the white people are to be mine."

The priests signified assent.
And Umballah smiled in secret. Ramabal would be dead on the morrow.
"There remains the king," said the chief priest. Umballah shrugged.
The chief priest stared soberly at the lamp above his head. The king would be, then, Umballah's affair.

"He is ill?"
"He is moribund . . . Silence!" warned Umballah.

The curtain became violently agitated. They heard the voice of the young priest outside raised in protest, to be answered by the shrill tones of a woman.

"You are mad!"
"And thou art a stupid fool!"
Umballah's hand fell away from his dagger. "It is a woman." "Admit her."

The curtains were thrust aside, and the painted dancing girl who had saved Umballah from death or capture in the fire of his own contriving rushed in. Her black hair was studded with turquoise, a necklace of amber gleamed like gold around her neck, and on her arms and ankles a plenitude of silver bracelets and anklets. With her back to the curtains, the young priest, staring curiously over her shoulder, she presented a picturesque tableau.

"Well?" said Umballah, who understood that she was here from no idle whim.
"Highness, you must hide with me this night."
"Indeed?"
"Or die," coolly.

Umballah sprang forward and seized her roughly.
"What has happened?"
"I was in the zenana, highness, visiting my sister, whom you had transferred from the palace. All at once we heard shouting and trampling of feet, and a moment later, your house was overrun with men. They had found the king in the hut and had taken him to the palace. That they did not find you is because you came here."

"Tell me all."
"It seems that the majordomo gave the poison to Ramabal, but the white goddess. . ."
"The white goddess!" cried Umballah, as if stung by a cobra's fang.
"Ay, highness. She did not die on that roof. Nothing can harm her. It is written."
"And I was never told!"
She lived, lived, and all the terrors he had evoked for her were as naught! Umballah was not above superstition himself for all his European training. Surely this girl of the white people was imbued with something more than mortal. She lived!

"Go on!" he said, his voice subdued as was his soul.
The white goddess by mistake took Ramabal's goblet and was about to drink when the majordomo seized the goblet and drained the poison himself. He confessed everything, where the king was, over-

you were. They are again hunting through the city for you. For the present you must hide with me."
"The white woman must die," said Umballah, in a voice like one being strangled.

To this the priests agreed without hesitation. This white woman whom the people were calling a goddess was a deadly menace to that scepter of theirs, superstition.

"What has gone is a pact?"
"A pact, Durga Ram," said the chief priest. With Ramabal spreading Christianity, the abhorred creed which gave people liberty of person and thought, the future of his own religion stood in imminent danger. "A pact," he reflected. "To you, Durga Ram, the throne; to you half the treasury and all the ancient files of our creed restored."

"I have said it."
Umballah followed the dancing girl into the square before the temple. He turned and smiled ironically. The bald fool!

"Lead on, thou flower of the jasmine!" lightly. And the two of them disappeared into the night.
But the priests smiled, too, for Durga Ram should always be more in their power than they in his.

There was tremendous excitement in the city the next morning. It seemed that the city would never be permitted to resume its old careless indolence. Swift as the wind the news flew that the old king was alive, that he had been held prisoner all these months by Durga Ram and the now deposed coun-

anon, I want this wretch Durga Ram spread out on an ant hill. . .

And then, without apparent reason, he began to call for Lakshmi, the beautiful Lakshmi, the wife of his youth. He ordered preparations for an elephant fight; rambled, talked as though he were but 20; his eyes dim, his lips loose and pendulous. And in this condition he might live ten or twenty years. Ramabal was sore at heart.

They had to wait two days till his mind cleared again. His first question upon his return to his mental ballast was directed to Kathlyn. Where was the document he had given to his friend Hare? Kathlyn explained that Umballah had taken it from her.

"But, your majesty," exclaimed the Colonel rather impatiently, "what difference does it make? Your return has nullified that document."

"Not in case of my death. And in Allahah the elder document is always the legal document, unless it is legally destroyed. It is not well to antagonize the priests, who hold us firmly to this law. I might make a will in favor of Pundita, but it would not legally hold in justice if all previous wills were not legally destroyed. You must find this document."

"Did you ever hear of a law to equal that?" asked Bruce of the Colonel.
"No, my boy, I never did. It would mean a good deal of red tape for a man who changed his mind



"Patience, sahib!" warned the priest.

cil of three. No more the old rut of guileless. Never had they known such fetes. Since the arrival of the white goddess not a day had passed without some thrilling excitement, which had cost them nothing but shouts.

So they deserted the bazaars and markets that morning to witness the most surprising spectacle of all; the king who was dead was not dead, but alive!

So, in the throne doom, later, he gave the power to Ramabal to act in his stead till he had fully recovered from his terrible hardships. More than this, he declared that Pundita, the wife of Ramabal, should ultimately rule; for of a truth the principality was lawfully hers. He would make his will at once, but in order that this should be legal he would have to destroy the previous will he had given to Colonel Hare, his friend.

"Forgive me, my friend," he said. "I acted unwisely in your case. But I was angry with my people for their cowardice."
"Your majesty," replied the Colonel, "the fault lay primarily with me. I should not have accepted it or returned. I will tell you the truth. It was the filigree basket of gold and precious stones that brought me back."

"So? And all for nothing, since the hiding place I gave you is not the true one. But of that, more

frequently. He could not fool his relations; they would know. The laws of the dark peoples have always amazed me, because if you dig deep enough into them you are likely to find common sense at the bottom. We must search Umballah's house thoroughly. I wish to see Ramabal and Pundita in the shadow of their rights. Can't destroy a document off-hand and make a new one without legally destroying the first. Well, let us be getting back to the bungalow. We'll talk it over there."

At the bungalow everything was systematically being prepared for the homeward journey. The laughter and chatter of the two girls was music to their father's ears. And sometimes he intercepted secret glances between Bruce and Kathlyn. Youth, youth, youth and love! Well, so it was. He himself had been a youth, had loved and been beloved. But he grew very lonely at the thought of Kathlyn eventually going to another home; and some young chap would soon come and claim Winnie, and he would have no one but Ahmed. If only he had had a boy, to bring his bride to his father's roof!

Pictures were taken down from the walls, the various wild animal heads, and were packed away in strong boxes. And Ahmed went thither and gave you is not the true one. But of that, more

busy because then he had no time to mourn Lai Singh.

Bruce's camp was, of course, in utter ruin. Not even the cooking utensils remained; and of his men there was left but All, whose leg still caused him to limp a little. So Bruce was commanded by no less person than Kathlyn to be her father's guest till they departed for America. Daily Winnie rode Rajah. He was such a funny old pachyderm, a kind of clown among his brethren, but as gentle as a kitten. Running away had not paid. He was like the country boy who had gone to the big city; he never more could be satisfied with the farm.

The baboon hung about the Colonel's heels as a dog might have done; while Kathlyn had found a tiger cub for a plaything. So far awhile peace reigned at the camp.

They found the much sought document in the secret chamber in Umballah's house (just as he intended they should); and the king had it legally destroyed and wrote a new will, wherein Pundita should have back that which the king's ancestors had taken from hers—a throne.

After that there was nothing for Colonel Hare to do but proceed to ship his animals to the rail, to the once to the ports where he could dispose of them. Never should he enter this part of India again. Life was too short.

High and low they hunted Umballah, but without success. He was hidden well. They were, however, assured that he lingered in the city and was sinisterly alive.

Day after day the king grew stronger mentally and physically. Many of the reforms suggested by Ramabal were put into force. Quiet at length really settled down upon the city. They began to believe that Umballah had fled the city, and vigilance correspondingly relaxed.

The king had a private chamber the window of which overlooked the garden of brides. There with his sherbet and water pipe he resumed his old habit of inditing verse in pure Persian, for he was a scholar. He never entered the zenana or harem; but occasionally he sent for some of the women to play and dance before him. And the woman who loved Umballah was among these. One day she asked to take a journey into the bazaar to visit the sister. Ordinarily such a request would have been denied. But the king no longer cared what the women did, and the chief eunuch slept afternoons and nights, being only partly alive in the mornings.

An hour later a palanquin was lowered directly beneath the king's window. To the eye it looked exactly like the one which had departed. He went on writing, absorbed. Had he looked closely, had he been the least suspicious. . .

This palanquin was the gift of Durga Ram, so-called Umballah. It had been built especially for this long wait for occasion. It was nothing more nor less than a cunning cage in which a tiger was huddled, in a vile temper. The palanquin bearers, friends of the dancing girl, had overpowered the royal bearers and donned their costumes. At the moment one of the bearers (Umballah himself, trusting no one!) crawled stealthily under the palanquin and touched the spring which liberated the tiger and opened the blind. The furious beast sprang to the window. The king was too astonished to move, to appreciate his danger. From you harmless palanquin this striped fury!

The tiger in his leap struck the lacquered desk, broke it, and scattered the papers about the floor. Ramabal and his officers were just entering the corridor which led to the chamber when the tragedy occurred. They heard the noise, the king's cries. When they reached the door silence greeted them.

The room was wrecked. There was evidence of a short but terrific struggle. The king lay dead upon the door, the side of his head crushed in. His turban and garments were in tatters. But he had died in the arms of a king; for in the corner by the window lay the striped one, a jeweled dagger in his throat.

Ramabal was first to discover the deserted palanquin, and proceeded to investigate. It did not take him more than a minute to understand what had happened. It was not an accident; it was cold-blooded murder, and back of it stood the infernal ingenuity of one man.

Thus fate took Allahah by the last again and shook her out of the pastoral quiet. What would happen now?

This! On the morning after the tragic death of the old king, those who went early to worship, to propitiate the gods to deal kindly with them during the day, were astounded to find the doors and the gates of all the temples closed. Nor was any priest visible in his usual haunts. The people were stunned. For there could be but one interpretation to this act on the part of the gurus: the gods had denied the people. Why? Wherefore? Twenty-four hours passed without their learning the cause; the priests desired to fill them with terror before they struck.

Then came the distribution of pamphlets wherein it was decreed that the populace, the soldiery, all Allahah in fact, must bow to the will of the gods or go henceforth accursed. The gods demanded the reinstatement as regent Durga Ram; the deposing of Ramabal, the infidel; the fealty of the troops to Durga Ram. Twenty-four hours were given the people to make their choice.

Before the doors of all the temples the people gathered, walling and pouring dust upon their heads, from Brahmin to pariah, from high caste matrons to light dancing girls. And when the troops, company by company, began to kneel at the outer rim of these gatherings, Ramabal dispatched a note to Colonel Hare, warning him to fly at once. But the messenger tore up the note and flew to his favorite temple. Superstition thus won what honor, truth, and generosity could not hold.

Allahah surrendered; and Umballah came forth. All this happened so quickly that not even a rumor of it reached the Colonel's bungalow till it was too late. They were to have left on the morrow. The king dead, only a few minor technicalities stood in the way of Ramabal and Pundita.

Bruce and Kathlyn were fencing one with the other, after the manner of lovers, when Winnie, her eyes wide with fright, burst in upon them with the news that Umballah, at the head of many soldiers, was approaching. The lovers rushed to the front of the bungalow in time to witness the Colonel trying to prevent the intrusion of a priest.

"Patience, sahib!" warned the priest.
The Colonel, upon seeing Umballah, made an attempt to draw his revolver, but the soldiers prevented him from carrying into execution his wild impulse.

The priest explained what had happened. The Colonel Sahib, his friend Bruce Sahib, and his young daughter would be permitted to depart in peace; but Kathlyn Mem-Sahib must wed Durga Ram.
When the dazed Colonel produced the document which had been legally canceled, Umballah laughed and declared that he himself had forged that irregularly document, that the true one, which had not legally destroyed.

Ahmed alone escaped, because Umballah had forgotten him!

(Continued next Saturday.)