

THE FAMILY STORY

LIFE FOR A LIFE.

WE sat together in the veranda at Shepherd's Hotel. Cairo lay beneath and around us—Cairo filthy, multi-colored, and malodorous, but always picturesque. Suddenly an Arab boy came around the corner, and with a salaam of the deepest, handed some mail to Grimshaw. Then he squatted down on the veranda boards, with his great black eyes fixed on my companion's face, waiting for further orders.

"Your boy, Captain?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Grimshaw, "but a good deal more than that. I should be buried in the Soudan now if it were not for Ibrahim yonder."

"Tell me about it, please," I asked, rather eagerly; for this small Arab in the clear, white tunic, and brilliant turban interested me mightily.

Grimshaw settled himself back in the bungalow chair and began:

"You know, of course," he said, "that I was in Khartoum with Gordon. I did not regularly belong to the General's forces, but I had volunteered as one of his aides-de-camp. Well, we were shut up in that death trap City of Khartoum, surrounded on every side by the forces of the Mahdi—myriads of fanatical Soudanese Arabs following that high priest of bloodshed. We English were but a mere handful of men; the auxiliary forces were wretchedly small. Our only hope was aid from Egypt; and, as the whole world knows, that never came. Poor Gordon was allowed to fall a victim to the Mahdi's sword, and most of the garrison were slain. With the exception of Slatin Bey, who became a Mussulman, I think I was the only European who got out of the doomed city with his life. That I did so was due to Ibrahim."

Here the Arab boy—hearing his name mentioned—looked up and smiled, showing a row of teeth exceptionally even and white.

"A few days after we entered Khartoum," continued Grimshaw, "I was patrolling the town under Gen. Gordon's order, when we came across a great rabble of boys, hallooing and shouting at a deafening rate. I sent an Egyptian soldier to discover the cause, and he reported that the young 'fuzzy-wuzzles' (it is so that Private Atkins of her Majesty's troops denominates the Soudanese) were 'having fun' with one of their number. I was then, as now, intensely interested in native manners and customs. Halting my men, I entered the boisterous cordon of boys to determine the reason of their tumult.

"The little rascals were teasing one of their number. 'Teasing,' indeed, in this case, is too mild a word. They were beating and stoning the lad, who lay bruised and half-blinded in the gutter. His turban was off, and his already scant clothing had been torn to shreds. I sprang into the middle of the mob and demanded the cause of such brutal treatment. At first they affected not to understand my Arabic, and went on beating their victim; but when I had soundly cuffing one or two and summoned my interpreter to my aid, I succeeded in making them answer.

"He is the renegade's son," said a ringleader—Hassan, the renegade's son. Stone him, in the name of the prophet."

"Then I understood. The poor boy's father had taken service with Gordon, leaving his offspring to suffer all the cruelties which the Khartoum children, egged on by their elders, were sure to inflict upon him. I lost no time in calling up a few men and sending that pack of youthful fanatics to the right about. They went away, rowing dire vengeance on the 'renegade's brat,' and I raised my protégé from the dust. He had fainted from pain and loss of blood, but one of our surgeons soon brought him to. When he opened his eyes and saw me he smiled like a little coffee-colored angel and wanted there and then to give me his best salaam. Of course I made him lie down again, but he blurted out his gratitude for preservation so vigorously that he came near fainting again.

"Next day his father, Hassan, one of Gordon's servants, came to see him. The two had a long talk, and finally Hassan announced that for his son's sake he had decided to leave the General and go back to his cobbler's stall in the bazaar. Ibrahim—for the lad whom I had helped to rescue was the same one now sitting before you—soon recovered, thanks to his native, tough constitution. He left my hut, absolutely refusing to touch any of the money which I offered him.

"Protector of the poor," he said in his quaint, grandiloquent Eastern way, 'you have saved your servant's life. Did not the mouse once repay the lion that had been his benefactor? Lo! I am the mouse, effendi; and you are the lion. Perhaps some day I may repay you. Salaam, friend!' Then he backed out of my hut, and I saw him not for many days.

II.

"One evening, while hurrying through the bazaar on my way to Gen. Gordon's quarters, a boy sprang out of a cobbler's stall and handed me a tiny bundle—slipping away into the darkness before I had time to do more than recognize him as Ibrahim, son of Hassan. I carried the bundle to the General, and together we undid its fastenings. Have you ever deciphered an Oriental object letter? I mean a letter which is not written upon paper, but of which the sense is conveyed by objects—flowers and the like. The bundle handed me by Ibrahim was just such a communication. It contained a queer collection of articles. They were: A piece of broken knife blade, a scrap of green cloth, two flowers (marigolds, I think) with only the heads remaining, a brick from the walls, and, lastly, an iron affair, which I at once recognized as the point of one of those sticks with which camels are urged onward.

"Gen. Gordon lost no time in unravelling the mystery of this missive. 'The green cloth,' he said, 'means the Mahdi, because his sacred flag is green. The knife blade stands for a sword, and the decapitated flower means that our heads are going to be cut off. The brick, I take it, hints of treachery inside the walls. The camel-spoke advises you to fly from Khartoum immediately. Where did you get this?'

"When I told him the source of my information he was inclined to pool-pooch Ibrahim's letter. 'It is a boy's fear and fancy,' he said. 'We shall be relieved in a few weeks.'

"But the Mahdi's men formed an impenetrable circle around the town—a circle that grew narrower and narrower. Day after day we scanned the desert horizon for some sign of the expected relief, but without avail. Day after day the impression grew stronger upon each and all of us that we were doomed.

"During an early morning walk Ibrahim accosted me as suddenly as he had done before. 'Fly, effendi,' he whispered. 'The city is betrayed. My father and other Mussulmans have decided to let the Mahdi within the gates. Disguise yourself and fly before it is too late!'

"I shook my head, for duty kept me in Khartoum; and Ibrahim retreated with tears in those big, honest eyes of his.

III.

"The very next night his warning was fulfilled. It would be idle, my friend, to tell you over again all the horrors of the capture, or rather betrayal, of Khartoum. The Mahdi's soldiers were like fiends incarnate. Spent with fatigue and slender fare we could not stand before them. Gordon, poor fellow, was slain, and a remnant of us was driven, fighting for life, from hut to hut across the city. Finally, with empty revolver and broken sword, I found myself in the stairway of a rude minaret, waiting for the death which I felt would be inevitable. It is all very well to meet death boldly on the field of battle, with comrades and friends around one, but to sit down in a dark stairway and count the minutes until its coming might make the bravest man in the world feel uncomfortable. All around I heard the hideous sounds of slaughter and watched through a tiny loop-hole in the wall the red flames shooting across the sky (for it was midnight, and a starless midnight to boot). A sick feeling stole over me. To remain cooped up thus seemed intolerable. I had just resolved to rush into the thick of the Soudanese and sell my life as dearly as possible when a foot-fall on the stairs below arrested me.

"It was the sound of a naked foot, and as I peered, every sense on the alert, into the half-light by the minaret doorway, I vaguely distinguished a dark form and two shining eyes. Was it one of the Mahdis in search of human prey? I gripped my broken sword tighter and prepared for action.

"Effendi!" whispered a voice, 'is it you, protector of the poor?'

"The voice was that of Ibrahim, son of Hassan. My heart gave a leap for gladness and I answered him that it was, indeed, myself.

"It is good," he exclaimed. 'My lord, I have come to save you. Hasten down and don these garments which I have brought you. They belong to the old blind priest who lodged with my father. He died last night, but nobody knows of it yet. You can pass as the old priest and escape. Make haste, sahib, make haste!'

"I saw the chance and seized it. Before you could have repeated the proverbial 'Jack Robinson' many times I had pulled those baggy Mohammedan clothes over my soiled and bloodstained uniform. A turban took the place of my khaki helmet, and around my face I draped the white hood which the Soudanese Arabs wear. Then, before I could protest, Ibrahim coolly seized a

handful of mud and liberally daubed my face.

"The sahib is too white," he explained. 'The old blind priest was always black and dirty—so kick off your boots, sahib, and let me daub your feet.' Off went my boots; and in a minute or two my legs from the knee down were as brown (and as dirty) as they well might be.

"You are all right, now, effendi," said Ibrahim, 'let us make for the Cairo gate.'

"With all my heart I thanked the boy; but he would listen to no thanks. 'You saved my life; I'll save yours,' he said. 'Remember, effendi, the mouse and the lion. Let us hasten to the gate.'

"But you are not coming—," I began; when my protest was interrupted by a troop of black Mahdists surging into the little bystreet where we stood. Never shall I forget the sight they presented, in the false light of the burning city, with their huge piles of hair, their ferocious faces and their spears and scimitars a-drip with blood. I had given myself over for lost, when Ibrahim, gripping my hand, led me onward, calling in sing-song tones: 'Room for the blind priest. Room for Amed, son of Ali, the soothsayer. The light of Allah is upon the blind priest.'

"Taking the hint I plucked up courage enough to shout the war-cry of the Mahdi. The 'fuzzy-wuzzles,' entirely deceived, joined in my cry. 'Bide your time, holy father,' said one of them; 'we'll give you plenty of Christian heads later on.' Then they left us—whooping like demons down the street, but Ibrahim plucked at my sleeve and mechanically I followed him. Many times we met parties of the Mahdists, but in the darkness our ruse succeeded beautifully, and we reached Cairo gate in safety.

"Around the gate, despite the confusion, a strong guard had been posted. In the open space without many scores of camels were sprawling.

"A camel for the Mahdi's messenger," cried Ibrahim in his shrill voice. 'Ho, brothers! A camel for the blind soothsayer, Amed, son of Ali, who bears the Mahdi's defiance across the desert.' A dozen dusky warriors surrounded us, and as many awkward camels were prodded to their feet. One of these ungainly beasts was made to kneel, while Ibrahim made a great show of helping the supposed blind priest to a seat upon his back.

"Just then a tall fuzzy-wuzzy—clearly an officer—rushed forward. 'Who is this?' he demanded. 'Where does this man go? The orders are that no man shall leave the gates before daybreak.'

"My heart sank, but fortunately for us the natural superstition of the Arab came to our aid. 'Have a care!' cried one of the soldiers. 'It is a blind priest—a soothsayer. He may curse you.'

The officer stepped back involuntarily, eying me with fear. 'Give us your blessing, holy father,' cried a dozen on-lookers.

"Here was a new predicament. I could not remember enough Arabic at the moment to give the desired blessing; but a whisper from Ibrahim recalled to my mind a simple form of words, which, eked out by discreet mumbling, on my part and the loud responses of the boy, suited the Arabs well enough. They prostrated themselves—the officer with the rest—amid a great cry of 'Allah Akbar.' Then Ibrahim smote our camel soundly, and away we went, through the outposts, speeding fast from the gory City of Khartoum.

IV.

"The perils and adventures of the journey were too numerous to be told at one sitting, but it was nearly a month after that awful night that our camel limped into Cairo, carrying on its back two emaciated fugitives who had once been an officer of the line and an Arab boy.

"Ibrahim has been all around the world with me since, and will probably continue to be my comrade until one of us twain departs this life forever, eh, Ibrahim, old friend?"

The Arab had smiled and spread out his hands. 'My fate is thine, effendi,' he said, 'you saved my life.'

"On that score, Ibrahim," answered Capt. Grimshaw, 'I think we are quits. Remember Khartoum.'—Atlanta Constitution.

Statues of Corpses.

The pleasing possibility of transforming the dear deceased into a marble-like statue that may be set in a niche or on a pedestal was suggested to the members of the Academy of Sciences of Paris recently by Mr. Martin, who read a paper detailing his discovery of a process of converting animal matter, before decomposition sets in, into a substance resembling marble, being sufficiently hard to allow of its being sculptured. He called the attention of the society to the possibility of his invention, which he has taken the precaution to patent, being utilized to preserve human bodies after death. Inasmuch as this marble-like substance can be sculptured, it is possible to remedy little physical defects that, unnoticed or at least not obtrusive in life, might detract from the attractiveness of a statue. This process is a step ahead of the St. Louis silver-plater who for ten years has been experimenting upon a plan to succeed embalming by hermetically plating in gold, silver or nickel the ancestors of such people as are willing to undergo the expense of having them decorated for future inspection.



Strengthening Iron.

It was formerly believed that cast iron, when subjected to long-continued shocks and jarring, became "crystallized" and brittle; but Mr. A. E. Outerbridge, Jr., of Philadelphia, has recently shown, by a series of experiments, that instead of being weakened, cast iron is really strengthened by repeated blows and concussion.

A Ghostly Cat.

An invention calculated to terrify mice and rats is described in Popular Science News. It consists of a metallic cat, which, being covered with luminous paint, shines in a dark room with a mysterious radiance which, the inventor thinks, will be more effectual than traps, or even genuine cats, in ridding houses of rodent pests.

Carnivorous Plants.

That such plants as "Venus fly-trap" actually catch and squeeze to death flies and other insects alighting on their leaves has long been known, but the discovery is comparatively recent that the plants digest the softer parts of their prey by means of a peptic ferment secreted by the leaves. These, then, are real instances of plants feeding upon animals.

Marvelous Measurement.

At the recent "conversazione" of the Royal Society in London a pendulum instrument was exhibited, intended to record the slightest tilts and pulsations of the crust of the earth. It was asserted that this instrument would render observable a tilt of less than one three-hundredth of a second of arc. In other words, if a plane surface were tipped up only so little that the rise would amount to a single inch in a thousand miles, the instrument would reveal the tilting!

A Beach of Iron Sand.

On the western coast of the northern island of New Zealand immense deposits of magnetic iron sand are found. The sand is brought down by many streams from the slopes of Mount Egmont. The cliffs consist of a mixture of ordinary silica sand and iron sand, but the waves sweeping the beach carry the lighter silica sand away, leaving an almost pure deposit of iron sand fourteen feet in depth. Furnaces have been erected by which the sand is smelted and formed into pig iron.

Killed by Light.

Dr. James Weir, Jr., who has studied strange inhabitants of the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, says that the celebrated blind fish from that cavern, when placed in illuminated aquaria, seek out the darkest places, and he believes that light is directly fatal to them, for they soon die if kept in a brightly lighted tank. The avoidance of light seems to be a general characteristic of the sightless creatures dwelling in the great cave. Doctor Weir has seen an eyeless spider trying to avoid the light, and animalcules from the waters of the cavern hiding under a grain of sand on the stage of his microscope. He thinks the light in these cases is in some manner perceived through the sense of touch.

An Air Tester.

An instrument for measuring the amount of impurity in the air of a room or shop was shown at the Zurich Industrial Exhibition recently. It consisted of a glass bulb containing a red liquid which turns white on contact with carbonic acid gas. The liquid in the bulb was kept from the air, but once in every 100 seconds a drop, drawn automatically from the bulb through a bent tube, fell upon the upper end of a stretched cord and began slowly to descend the cord. If the air was foul with carbonic acid the drop turned white at the upper end of the cord, and the purer the air the farther the drop descended before changing color. Alongside the cord ran a scale, like that of a thermometer or barometer, indicating the degrees of impurity of the atmosphere.

Queer Facts About Colors.

According to information given by a German officer to the Horse Guards' Gazette, an experiment was recently made in Europe to determine what color in a soldier's uniform is the least conspicuous to an enemy. Of ten men two were dressed in light gray uniform, two in dark gray, two in green, two in dark blue and two in scarlet. All were then ordered to march off, while a group of officers remained watching them. The first to disappear in the landscape was the light gray, and next, surprising as it may seem, the scarlet! Then followed the dark gray, while the dark blue and the green remained visible long after all the others had disappeared. Experiments in firing at

blue and red targets, according to same authority, proved that blue can be more easily seen at a distance than red.

Mausoleum in a Tree.

One of the most curious mausoleums in the world was discovered the other day in an orchard at the village of Ebbentz, in Saxe-Altenburg. A fine oak tree, which a storm had riven of its crown, was up for public auction. Among the bidders happened to be Baron Von Thummel, scion of a family of ancient lineage that has enriched the world of literature one chamber poet and the Fatherland many distinguished statesmen. The Baron, who lives on a neighboring estate, had been to the auction place quite accidentally. Finally the tree was known down to him for 200 marks. Upon arrival at the castle he told an old servant of his purchase, describing the tree and its situation. The old servant said he remembered attending the funeral of a Baron Thummel seventy-eight years ago, and that the body had been buried in a 1,000-year-old oak, belonging to the parsonage. Investigation clearly proved that the orchard had once been the property of the village church, and that at one of the old oak was an iron shaft, rusty and time-worn, that the people of the town had always supposed to have been placed there by some mischievous boys. The iron shaft proved to be the gate to the mausoleum of Baron Hans Wilhelm Von Thummel, at one time Minister of the Saxe-Altenburg, who died in 1824 and wished to be buried "in the 1,000-year-old tree he loved so well." In the hollow of the tree Baron Hans caused to be built a sepulchre of masonry, large enough to accommodate his coffin. The coffin was placed there as the church records show, on March 3, 1824, and the opening was closed by an iron gate. In the course of time a wall of wood grew over the opening, which had been enlarged to admit the workmen and the coffin, and for many years it has been completely shut, removing the last vestige of the old use to which the old tree had been put.

Imitation Seed Packages.

There seems to be no end of trouble to the Agricultural Department from the distribution of seed this year. The department has learned that requests have been made on commercial seedmen for seed put up in papers similar to those used by the Government and printed in simulation thereof. Acting Secretary Dabney has sent out notice to a large number of seedmen in regard to the matter, stating that the department cannot permit the Government seed contractors or any seedmen to sell seeds in packets bearing the name of the Department of Agriculture, or any words which might cause the receiver of the packet to believe that it was a part of the Government seed distribution. No seed can be distributed free of postage through the mails except that delivered upon the orders of members of Congress by the Department of Agriculture, or sent out directly from the department. The act of March 3, 1875, confines the franking of seeds by members of Congress to those seeds which they receive for distribution from the Department of Agriculture.

Cushing's Heroic Deed.

In 1861, at the very beginning of our civil war, a young lad named William Barker Cushing entered the navy as a volunteer officer, though he had previously been through the Naval Academy at Annapolis. He was only 19 years old, but a braver or more reckless sailor never grasped a cutlass or stood by a gun. Never a fight but he was the thick of it, never a battle but Cushing's name was mentioned in orders. He dared do anything that man dared. One dark night, at Plymouth, N. C., he took a boat's crew and, stealing quietly away, he crept up beside the Confederate ram "Albatross" and, taking the chances of almost certain death, he sank her by a torpedo fired from his steam launch. Then he fought at Fort Fisher with great bravery, and, what is ever rarer, he used sound judgment, securing for his command all the fruits of the victory.—St. Nicholas.

A Chinaman Sees a Piano.

A Chinaman, lately returned from a trip to Europe, related his countryman to the following description of the piano:

"The Europeans keep a four-legged beast, which they can make sing at will. A man, or more frequently a woman, or even a feeble girl, sits down in front of the animal and steps on its tail, at the same time striking its white teeth with his or her fingers, when the creature begins to sing. The singing, though much louder than that of a bird, is pleasant to listen to. The beast does not bite, nor does it move, though it is not tied up."

Flower Perfumes.

It is claimed that the perfume of flowers disappears as soon as the starch in the petals is exhausted, and it may, it is said, be restored by placing the flowers in a solution of sugar, when the formation of starch and the emission of fragrance will be at once resumed.

Every man is more or less of a fool about some things.

Every thoroughbred is able to make his own salad dressing.