

### COLONEL FURLONG FOUND THAT TRAVELLING WITH ARABS HAD SOME DIFFICULTIES; MORE THAN ONCE HE HAD DIRE NEED OF HIS GUN ARM



Adventure? It has drawn men to the far places of the earth to every point of the compass. Life and limb are risked in courting the thrills that adventure may give, and many are the thrills that have been so found by those who get away from the beaten path.

How it felt to risk his life against the machinations of a group of Turks in a ride across a desert is told by Charles Wellington Furlong in an article which was published in Harper's Monthly. The story, as related by Col. Furlong, is as follows:

I suspected Muraiche, suspected him of indefinite something, but the workings of his wily old Arab mind, its reasons and its purposes, were to me as mysterious as the great wastes of the Sahara (Sahara) over which for days we had been crawling, and as elusive as the noxious sand-blows which now and again scurried from beneath our horses' feet.

The long, hot caravan trail along which we had crawled during the day had led over the sun-scoured, rocky wastes of the Djebel Sahab (Sahab) Mountains, and a sundown emptied us into the little Arab town Khoms. Here we parted with a small caravan forty camels strong bound for Misurata, with which we had traveled for the last three days. My two men, Mohammed and Ali, who were on foot, drove a large fast-walking pack-donkey; while Muraiche, like myself, rode an Arab stallion. His bent old figure, now ahead of me now by my side, seemed lost in the folds of his barracan.

Some months previously, a vised passport and other documents had landed me safely within the confines of the town of Tripoli, and later, after some difficulty, permission to travel into the desert had been granted by the Turkish Pasha who commanded the Turkish forces in that country. Many Arabs there were in the town who would gladly have risked the dangers of the desert as draughtmen, but as my object was to obtain information of desert life, a man who could get also as interpreter or was indispensable, and Muraiche proved to be the only available man. It was so warned by certain members of the little English colony there. But his broken English and Bogza French, who valuable assets, besides forewarned was forewarned, so it came about that Mura-

che picked the other men and became my draughtman.

Since sunrise, as approached Khoms, a change had come over Muraiche; he no longer obeyed my orders with alacrity, and when several times I was necessary for me to repeat a start from deep meditation. This, at the time I attributed to the fatigue of our journey and anticipated relaxation, for I had promised a rest at Khoms following a custom of the country. I reported to the Turkish governor on our arrival, saw my men and an animal comfortably fixed in a fandak (caravansary), with orders to have everything in readiness to start at two the following afternoon, then spent the night at the house of Mr. Tate, the only Englishman in the place.

This night in mid-July and the following night, strangely different, stand out strongly in my memory—perhaps for the contrast with the dusty, monotonous traveling of other days and the sleeping in dirty, crowded fondaks; or perhaps in contrast with each other. If you would know the pleasure of bathing, of sleeping between the snow-white sheets of a bed, travel day after day on the burning, scorching, yellow-red sand of the Sahara; fill your eyes, nose and ears, your very soul, with its fine, powdered dust; the your headstache, after the manner of the Touaregs, across your mouth to prevent evaporation, that your throat may not parch too much. Travel early and late to make the most of the cool of the morning and evening. Sleep lightly if you are a lone stranger and do not mind the uncomfortable lump of your pistol-holders under your arm; they are better in your hands than in the other fellows. So when, sunburnt, saddle-sore, and tired of long riding and little sleep, you find what I did, a bath of delicious cool water, brought from an old Roman well still used by the Arabs in Khoms, and a snow-white bed, give praise at Allah. Then let the barbaric noises of the wild Sudanese dance in the distance and the musical chant of the Muzzein melt away with your thoughts in the quiet of the African night.

Had it not been for a casual stroll through the Suk the next afternoon my men might now be recounting a different yarn over their smoking kief and coos-coos. I threaded my way among men, animal, shackles, scattered garden produce, grains and wares, which covered the ground in interesting heaps, and as I pushed through a small crowd which had gathered about me, their curiosity and cupidly aroused by a gold filling of one of my teeth, I stopped for a moment. For there in the middle of an open space beside a Mrabout (saint's tomb), Muraiche was engaged in a low conversation with one of the irregular guards, an Arab in the Turkish employ. Disappearing unobserved to another part of the Suk, I should have thought no more of the matter but for the fact that when later in the morning those two met in my presence, by the Governor's palace, they omitted the customary Islamic and effusive greetings of Mohammedan acquaintances, and by

no word or sign betrayed the least recognition.

Reminding Muraiche of my previous orders to have everything in readiness by two o'clock, I sauntered up to lunch at Mr. Tate's. The route to my next point of destination, the little town of Kussabi, was not only over a rough mountainous country, but was considered by the Arabs dangerous on account of thieves. Being under the necessity of making the journey that day I was anxious to arrive there by sundown. Consequently, when by half past two none of my outfit put in an appearance, I despatched one of the house servants to learn the reason.

First by wily excuses and then by open mutiny, my men delayed the departure until half past five, when by threats to appeal to the Turkish Pasha to have them thrown into prison as a savage new men we were finally ready to start.

"But a guard, Arab (Master)?"

"Yes," Muraiche has asked the question and twice I answered him that I had notified the Turkish officials of my intention to depart at two o'clock. "Did they intend to send a guard they would have done so. However, being desirous of conforming to custom I sent Muraiche to the Governor's palace with instructions to report our departure, but not to ask for a guard as personally I shared in the common opinion that often the traveler is safer without one."

I watched Muraiche after he rounded a corner and disappeared at a gallop down the narrow street to the palace, from which, immediately reappearing, he set off on a different quarter of the town. Questioned on his return, he replied that an officer had sent him to notify a guard who was to go with us.

"You'll see your way all right, for the full moon ought to be up in about two hours, but ride fast," were Tate's parting words. It was good advice and had often been given me before. To travelers in North Africa, particularly those among French colonists of Tunis and Algeria, the saying "Never allow an Arab to ride behind you," has become an adage, and this night in the Gharian I proved its worth.

We rode to the top of the steep trail, down which the slanting afternoon sunbeams shot by in golden shafts. Back and beyond us these sun shafts spear, until striking the white walls of Khoms they broke, spilling over them a flood of orange gold, diffusing her surrounding olive groves and date-palms with a golden green, and through the shimmering, shifting gold mist above it all sparkled a glittering sea of blue.

Our course now lay almost due south to the region of the Djebel Gharian, the region I had hoped to enter and pass through by day.

Resting on the site of ancient Lebda of the Romans, my golden city of Khoms lay nearly an hour's ride behind us and as yet no guard, to my entire satisfaction. This was short lived however, for soon a yell such as I had never yet heard loosed from the throat of a human being came as suddenly to draw us in. Down the steep rocky incline, where an ordinary horseman could but carefully pick his way, out on the sandy plateau upon which we had just ridden, riding wild and giving his wily little animal free rein, dashed a guard, and when abreast of us drew up short out of a full run, after the manner of Arab horsemen.

"Esalam" to Muraiche, and a nod of the head to me, which I slightly reciprocated; yes, very slightly, for before we reached him, one man out of all the Arabs I had ever seen that I would have chosen last for a companion that night. There in the glow of the late afternoon sunlight the stock of his short carbine resting on his saddle and the sweat making bright the high lights on his evil, brassy-bronze face, set the worst cutthroat it was ever my fortune to look upon. Muraiche's friend, he of the marketplace.

Although I had learned not to judge men too much by appearances, I resolved to watch him. After a short conversation with Muraiche, during which the guard's peculiar eyes scanned me from the jewels of my spurs to the top of my sun helmet, I knew that the main objects of his searching glance were in my holsters, covered by my jacket, meantime, however I lost no detail of his weapon, a hammerless magazine rifle of modern make. Then he addressed me in Arabic, but not speaking the language, I turned to Muraiche. "He tells to start," the latter replied.

This sudden assumption of leadership came most unexpectedly, his seeming intention to bring up the rear. Now Arabs are daring though ignorant; but like all Orientals, fully only one thing, and that is a just and strong hand, which they must feel in order to appreciate. Consequently my course was plain. "Tell the guard to head the caravan, and that if he goes with me, he goes as one of my men." As we got under way, the guard rode slowly ahead, meanwhile taking sidelong glances at me, out of the corners of his villainous gray-green eyes, filled with all the hatred of the Muslim for the Christian. I realized that never in my life had the assets and liabilities of my status quo received such careful auditing.

When the great red lantern of the sun disk had sunk beneath the curtain, from without the deep mysterious valleys crept the blue-violet mist films of twilight shadows, absorbing and leaving into their dark dunes the lurid crimson afterglow, against which moved the dark shapes of horses and men. Suddenly they bunched themselves and the guard dismounted, then Mohammed and Ali went on with the pack-donkey.

"The guard's saddle-girth is broken," Muraiche informed me. "But we will fix it and you can ride on very slowly."

"I will wait," I replied, my hand instinctively resting on one of my pistols. "But you ride on Muraiche?"

The girth was soon fixed, which consisted in a vain effort to hitch it up another hole.

Steeper and more rugged grew the trail and we entered the range of the Gharian. As daylight dimmed, an uncomfortable darkness hung over the

mountains for a short space. Then the moon-glow appeared in the East, and soon the moon itself lifted its pale, distorted shape above the horizon, and suffused everything with its pale blue-green light, so cool and satisfying to the eye and mind in contrast to the hot sun glare that during the day reflected through to the very brain.

But the dark shadow masses of ledgers, perched shrub patches, and shaded slopes, what uncanny things might they not contain? And those gorges, too, which in the day reflected heat light like an oven from their hot, red sides? Now they were cold, damp and forbidding, and a shudder passed over me. For a moment a sense of weakness, of fear, of almost helplessness, took possession of me; then I reasoned with myself. I was tired, unduly apprehensive, the conditions of heat and long days in the saddle had overtaxed my nerves. I fell to watching the agile bodies of my Arabs on foot, as, tiring of the pace they dropped back, until just in front of me Mohammed in particular; how the lights and shadows played over his great, powerful, animal-like form, how subtly his shoulder and calf muscles moved under the sleek dark skin; how they fascinated me! Willing through the long journey they had served me, save at Khoms, I started, my dreaming suddenly ended, and almost involuntarily my spurs caused by horse to start ahead. The two men had so imperceptibly lessened their pace that now they had dropped just back of me, one on either side of my horse, and in Mohammed's hand was a

wicked-looking nooded club, which usually he had kept stuck in one of the packs. I knew that each carried a long Arab knife so I ordered Muraiche to tell the men to keep along side of the donkey.

Down the other side of the moonlit valley I saw a caravan coming towards us heading for Khoms. Taking a small note-book from my pocket, I wrote "Should any accident occur to me, thoroughly investigate my men, including the guard," and signed it. Tearing the leaf from the book and folding I watched the great lumbering camels approach us, and dropped a little farther behind, intending to give it to the head man of the caravan for him to bear to the Pasha at Khoms. Then I decided that under the circumstances there was not sufficient evidence to thus prejudice the Turkish authorities against my men, so I chewed it up and spat it into a patch of sand-hills.

From the distance came the faint report of gun. Every one of my men heard it, I knew, but no comment was made, and we pushed deeper into the mountains. On our left, looking toward the moon, objects were indistinct in the half-tone and shadow, while seen from there we appeared in full moonlight. Now and then I sensed moving shadows from that direction, but it was some time before I was sure that they were living forms following us, perhaps hyenas, jackals, or some sly chetah.

As we made sharp turns at times in

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