

Running A Gantlet

By WILLARD BLAKEMAN

A number of Britishers were recently talking about the question of England's maintaining a supremacy over the Suez canal when one of them said: "They may be able to take it away from us by force of arms, but they can't do it by process of law."

"How so?" asked one of the party. "I was a member of the British embassy at Berlin when the ambassador received a cipher telegram from London saying that a big block of stock of the Suez canal had been offered for sale at Cairo. He was directed to send some one there to make the purchase at any price. He called me into his private office, showed me the dispatch and told me to leave at once to do the job. He said further that every large power would be glad to control the canal in this way, and if it were known to the others there would be a race as to who would get there first to make the purchase. The Germans would be surely after it. If it were known that I was going to Cairo I might be waylaid by the German secret service. I considered this highly probable, and instead of leaving Berlin in my own proper person I stole out after dark.

"The route I chose was by rail to Genoa, thence by sea to Cairo. On the train in the same compartment with me was a lady who from her cast of features, her dark eyes and hair I set down as being Turkish. She was certainly of an oriental type and a very beautiful woman. It is quite a journey from Berlin to Genoa, and the lady and I were in the same compartment together for a long while. Smoking was not allowed in the compartment, but when at a certain time all had left it but she and I she took out a box of cigarettes and asked me in French—the medium between different nationalities on the continent—if I objected to her smoking. I said no, and she offered me the box. I declined the offer, whereupon she took out one, lighted it and began to smoke.

"My suspicions were aroused by seeing her every few moments apply her handkerchief to her mouth and nose, I fancying that she did so to inhale something on it that would counteract an effect. My suspicions were confirmed by a peculiar odor in the smoke and a languor stealing over me. I attempted to lower a window beside me, but was already so benumbed that I couldn't get it down. I had just enough command of my forces to smash the glass with my fist. The fresh air revived me, and when I turned again to the Turkish lady she, in well affected surprise, said:

"Monsieur is sensitive to tobacco smoke?"

"Very," I replied.

"I was satisfied that she had been sent to delay me, and since by my manner I indicated that I was on my guard she made no further attempt to interfere with me. When we left the train at the border to take another I kept my eye on her and saw her heading for a telegraph office. I did not doubt that she would send a message to announce her failure, and some one else who stood ready would take up her work where she had left off.

"The first night out from Genoa I was walking the deck, taking my usual smoke before turning in. It was quite late, and there were but a few persons still up. I was near the stern of the vessel when a gentleman came from the taffrail and as he reached me stop-

ped and said in French with an Italian accent:

"The phosphorous illumination in the wake of the ship is very beautiful."

"Without forethought I went the few yards between me and the taffrail and was looking over when the man who had followed me seized me and lifted me to throw me over. Luckily for me I had been an athlete at home, being fond of cricket, rowing and especially wrestling. My man was very strong, but I withstood his efforts.

"The next morning"—

"Hold on. What did you do with the other fellow?" asked one of the listeners.

"When I tell a story," replied the narrator, "I tell the story as I wish to tell it, and I don't feel obliged to answer questions."

"Oh, go on!"

"The next morning and all the rest of the time that I was on the ship I kept my room. I had become satisfied that some power—mind you, I don't say it was German—had let loose its bloodhounds to tear me to pieces if necessary to keep me from Cairo, and I didn't care to give any more of them an opportunity.

"I reached Cairo at night and, going to a hotel, went to bed thankful that I was not tossed about a corpse in Mediterranean waters. I would have enjoyed a good sleep had I not feared some spy with murderous intent was under my bed. As it was, I merely dozed and the next morning after breakfast went out to get a conveyance to take me to my destination. A Jehu drove up, but before committing myself to his care I scrutinized him. In a twinkling I saw that he wore a wig and a false beard.

"Thanks, no," I said to him. "I've met several of your friends already and have no desire to hobnob with any of you."

"I walked to the place I wished to go, and before I left it the British government owned that block of stock. When I made the return journey I slept all the way. No one was interested in me."

Apartment Life.

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