

HAFIA, the Albino

A Story of a Narrow Escape

By Clarissa Mackie

"Now, Mr. Hanford, it is your turn to spin a yarn," remarked Professor Krayle one evening at the stentzship Neptune, with a party of tourists, was skirting the African coast.

"Do, James," urged Mrs. Hanford, as the seven tourists drew their chairs into close proximity. "I know positively that you had an adventure with that albino dragoman you hired at Cairo."

"An albino dragoman?" laughed Arthur Clayton. "Ye gods, what a sight! Was your man Egyptian, Arabian, Mussulman or Christian?"

"He was not exactly an albino, he was very fair and light haired, was not, James?" questioned Mrs. Hanford referring to her husband, who was listening with a smile of amusement.

"Light headed," he corrected. "Hafia had an Egyptian mother, an Arabian father. The mother was a Christian and the father a Mohammedan; Hafia was an out-and-out heathen and is now all I know."

"That is not all of your story," protested Miss Genevieve Gray. "That says too much of tabloid fiction."

"It isn't much of a story," admitted Mr. Hanford reluctantly. "Indeed, I can't understand how Harriet got the idea there was a story connected with Hafia."

"I never suspected there was until I saw you kicking him down the steps of the hotel," retorted Mrs. Hanford quickly, and amid the laugh that followed Mr. Hanford began his story.

"Well, Hafia, the heathen came to me the first day we arrived in Cairo and, after assuring me that he was the most efficient interpreter and guide between the Red sea and the Atlantic ocean, he produced innumerable tattered bits of paper that he swore were recommendations from former patrons, and as I did not care to examine them I was compelled to take him at his own valuation.

"Of course, I was mainly interested in the excavations around Naus Belak and Hafia professed to have been born in the very shadow of the Naus pyramid, so I was confident that our expedition would be accomplished with out mishap, as he was doubtless well acquainted with the vicinity.

"These pyramids are a half day's journey to the east of Cairo, and on the morning of our start my dragoman appeared with two camels, and soon we were leaving the city streets behind and rocking over the sandy road past the waterworks and out toward the Arabian desert.

"Master," remarked Hafia to me a few hours later as we ate luncheon beside a little spring of water, "I have been thinking that there is a pretty pyramid much nearer than that of Naus, where there are no excavations being made and where it is better and quietness instead of the sandy journey. One could sleep refreshingly there."

"Hafia," I said sternly, "we go to investigate, to observe, to discover, not to sleep. We shall sleep when we return to Cairo. Remove the luncheon and let us be on our way."

"What ill grace my albino dragoman tossed the remains of our meal into the sand and brought my camel to its knees before me. We rode on in silence for several hours. Instead of the cheerful conversation which had lightened the burden of the sandy journey, we maintained an unbroken silence, for Hafia was sulking openly and I was out-of-patience with him and beginning to have serious doubts as to his integrity.

"You said it was a half day's journey," I exclaimed at last. "It is now 6 o'clock and we are still in the desert."

"I came the long way, master," growled Hafia moodily.

"Why did you do that? I demand of, thoroughly angry.

"Hafia shrugged his shoulders. "I have forgotten the short way. Besides, it is rough and infested with robbers."

"How soon shall we arrive at Naus?"

"In an hour, master, but I will question this caravan."

"Approaching the caravan, the white man was a string of some ten or a dozen ragged looking camels, whose riders were the dirtiest and most rascally looking lot I'd seen in many a day.

"Don't let them know we are alone, Hafia," I warned him. "They look like robbers."

"Hafia rolled one of his queer light colored eyes toward me as he nodded, reassuringly. He held a few minutes low toned conversation with the leaders of the caravan, and then, dismissing them with a rough spoken word, he turned and watched them as they disappeared behind us through the golden sunset haze.

"When the first star has risen we shall see the pyramid of Naus, master," said Hafia good naturedly, and from that moment he chattered on with high spirits until I had almost forgotten his morose fit.

"Just after the sun had set and while the swift twilight was falling, Hafia, out of a sudden, or so he said, I thought I heard the rattling of camel hoofs passing by on the sand, and I started my eyes to the left and saw a shadowy figure, a dark gray and a shadowy figure, a dark

and camels passing on. In an instant they were out of sight ahead of us, and I believed the vision to have been an hallucination of sight and hearing, so I did not mention the matter to Hafia, and afterward I was glad that I did not.

"All at once a dark shape loomed out of the twilight, and just above it I saw the dim tuster of the first star.

"The pyramid," I exclaimed.

"Have I spoken the truth, master?" demanded Hafia proudly.

"Yes, Hafia. Is there not a camp nearby where the expedition in charge of the excavations have their quarters? I would speak with the great man in charge. I have letters of introduction, and I would spend the night in his camp."

"There was an instant's hesitation, and then Hafia's voice came soft and velvet through the semidarkness.

"The camp of the learned men lies a half mile beyond the pyramid. It is on a high slope far above the sand dunes."

"Never mind. Ah, some of them must be here now. There is a light within the pyramid."

"Afterward I learned that the light was a small lantern carried up the outside of the edifice to guide us on the way."

"Let us get off here and see if Professor Georges is inside."

"That is a great idea of the master, assented Hafia eagerly, and he slipped from his camel and commanded mine to kneel. In another instant I was on the ground and stumbling down into an excavation, at the end of which was an oblong of light. It was the open doorway to a passage leading into the pyramid.

"As I entered the passageway I put my hands to my lips and uttered our old college yell in order to apprise Georges of my arrival. What happened afterward seems as dreamlike as the shadowy caravan I saw in the desert.

"Around a corner of the passageway a long brown arm shot out and extinguished the swinging lantern that had lit me there. Then a score of lean fingers attacked me in the darkness, and I was aware that I was being robbed of watch and money and what ever else of value I possessed. But, quick as lightning, my hand had snatched at the revolver at my hip, and I managed to free my right arm and fire it upon my enemies.

"The flash and the echoing report threw the robbers into panic. The wounded one yelled terrible curses upon me unto the twentieth generation until distance silenced his voice.

"I groped my way into the open air and beneath the stars found my camel. Hafia and his beast had disappeared. I wonder if any of you ever tried to mount a camel when he was standing humped before you and you didn't know the password that would make him drop on his caulsed knees. Well, I tried every way I could think of to make that camel kneel. I prayed to him, and I swore in seven languages, but he stood there in the moonlight, with sulky, protruding lower lip and obstinate pose. Once I essayed to climb up by the gorgeous trappings of leather that served as harness, but he turned and snarled at me viciously.

"I was quite desperate when I stepped out of the shadow of the pyramid, there came a single word hoarsely whispered but quite audible. A word of command that brought the camel to his knees in a trice. I scrambled upon his back, turned him about as he arose, to his height, and away we went over the track we had come. I trusted on directly to the camel to take me back to Cairo, and we reached there just as day was dawning. My camel chose his own way and we entered the city by way of the citadel, and I inquired of a soldier concerning the pyramid of Naus, and I told him of my adventure of the previous night.

"He laughed and assured me that I had never been within twenty miles of Naus, that Hafia had deliberately led me to a small tomb which was a rendezvous for a gang of robbers and he said that the shadowy caravan who had robbed me.

"Your guide was Hafia, the albino?" he asked skeptically.

"I nodded assent.

"Then it is a wonder that your throat was not cut," he said dryly and turned his back. I placed the matter in the hands of the police, and toward evening they returned my watch, but the money had disappeared beyond recall.

"I was preparing for bed when a servant informed me that a dragoman awaited my coming in the veranda of the hotel. I suspected it was Hafia and went down. There he was, his cloak draped closely about his face quite disguising his features and complexion, but I caught the gleam of his pale, wicked eye.

"Master," he whined cringingly, "my camel ran away with me, and I returned too late to be of assistance to you. Shall we start again for the pyramid of Naus in the morning?"

"You may start now," I said rudely, and then it was that Mrs. Hanford saw me administer a well deserved kick to Hafia, the albino. That is the end of the story."

"Oh, James, I would have died of fright if I had known you were in such danger!" cried his wife.

"Not much danger in such a pack of cowards," reassured her husband easily.

The ladies of the party separated from the group and chattered together while the four men grew closer.

"Is that the reason you had a sudden attack of rheumatism in your left arm, Hanford?" asked Arthur Clayton.

"What was it—a kick?"

"Yes," snapped Mr. Hanford, reticently.

SAVED BY HIS BOOTS.

The Way a Writer Dodged Death in the French Revolution.

In the French revolution a fenilsonian named Schlaberdorf, who possessed considerable ability as a writer, by heartily espousing the cause of the Girondists in all that emanated from his pen rendered himself obnoxious to Robespierre and at the dictation of that fierce leader was incarcerated. When the death set one morning came to the prison for his load of those that were that day to be butchered Schlaberdorf's name was on the list of the condemned. The jailer informed him that such was the case, and the writer dressed himself for his last ride very nonchalantly and he was extremely fastidious as to his personal appearance—with great care. His boots, however, he could not find. Here, there, everywhere, assisted by his jailer, he looked for them to no avail.

"I am quite willing to be executed," said he to the jailer after their fruitless search, "but really I should be ashamed to go to the guillotine without my boots. Nor do I wish to detain this execution party," he added, smiling grimly. "Will it make any difference if my execution is deferred until tomorrow? By that time I shall probably succeed in finding my boots."

"I don't know that it will matter particularly when you are guillotined," responded the functionary, between whom and Schlaberdorf there had existed a sort of friendship. "Suppose we call it tomorrow, then?"

"All right," and the jailer allowed Schlaberdorf to remain, not unwillingly, as, owing to his universal good humor, he was especially liked by all the jail attendants.

The following morning, when the cart drew up before the prison door for its batch of victims Schlaberdorf dressed in his best, including the boots, that had been found, stooping waiting the summons of the jailer to take his place therein. Meantime, however, a new jailer had taken the place of the old one, the latter himself having suddenly been displaced by reason of suspected disloyalty to the revolutionists, and Schlaberdorf's name was not called that morning. Nor was it called the next morning, nor the morning after that nor, indeed, ever again. It was believed by all outside of his friends in the jail that he had perished on the morning originally set for him. He remained in prison until the sway of Robespierre had ended. Then he regained his liberty, as did the rest of those prisoners whose heads had not fallen beneath the bloodstained ax. —New York Press.

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS.

Climax to the Tiff Between the Lady and Her Husband.

The man and his wife, or perhaps it might be more proper these days to say the lady and her husband, had been having one of those cute little breakfast table chats wherein husband and wife twist each other about their relatives and get very personal in their observations. These things happen in the best regulated families occasionally.

The argument had grown heated and had reached the point where the wife usually makes up her mind to go home to mother when the telephone bell rang. The wife answered the telephone. A sweet voice asked over the phone.

"Are you having trouble?"

"Well, of all things," snapped the wife in reply. "What if we are? It's none of your business."

"Oh, yes, it is some of my business. Locating trouble is the only thing I do."

"Well, you've got a nerve," replied the wife. "The idea of butting into private family matters like that!"

"If you had reported your trouble to me I would have had it attended to. One of your neighbors reported it."

"One of the neighbors? Great Scott! Could the neighbors hear it?"

"Your neighbor reported it this morning."

"Well, I'd thank my neighbors to attend to their own affairs. My husband and I settle our difficulties without help from them or from you. Who are you anyway?"

"I am calling you from the trouble department of the telephone company. The neighbor reported that there was something wrong with your phone."

"For the love of Mike!" shrieked the wife as she dropped the telephone receiver and nearly fainted away.

"Caught with the goods!"—Brooklyn Eagle.

DICKENS AS AN ACTOR.

When Boz Became a Writer the Stage Lost a Star.

No one ever paid a much higher tribute to Dickens than did Kate Field. She had the soul of a poet, a discriminating taste in art and literature and wide knowledge of the world. In men tally she was truly as strong as either of her brilliant brothers, David Dudley, Stephen J. or Cyrus W., and she certainly was as good if not a better judge of character.

She once wrote an appreciation of Dickens in which she declared the world lost its greatest actor when Boz became a writer. She gave a description of one of the Dickens readings in New York that was masterly in its vividness of detail. Such versatility, as she credited Dickens with displaying as he assumed the character of, first one and then another of his creations, the pathos, the humor, the tragedy he put into a tone, the marvelous way in which he stirred the emotions of old and young in his audience, would appear to be a bit extravagant were it not that now and then some old man, looked upon as stern and unemotional, tells with faltering voice, how he stood in line just about as Miss Field wrote, only before he gets far along in his story the tears are running down his wrinkled cheeks—his old heartstrings still attune to the magic of the master as he saw him. —New York Press.

Twelfth Century Skating.

Skating must have been a difficult art before the introduction of steel blades, yet Londoners used to go in for it as early as the twelfth century. Fitzstephen in his "Description of London," published in 1180, records that "when the great fenne or moore (which water) is frozen many young men play on the ice. . . . some striding as wide as they may do slide swiftly, some tie bones to their feet and upon their thin blades, and moving them selves with a little pecked staff do slide as swiftly as a bird flyeth in the air or an arrow out of a crossbow."

New Natural.

Wife Howard: I want some money. Husband: All right, how much? Wife: About \$50. Husband: I just cashed a check for \$100. Better take it all. You'll use it more wisely than I. Get yourself a new dress or something. I blow every cent I have loose. You're the economist of this family. I am sure I don't know how many times we'd be in bankruptcy if it wasn't for you, dear. —New York Times.

The Bride's Pie.

The "wedding cake" of today was formerly called the "bride pie" and in some regions was regarded as so essential an adjunct to the marriage celebration that there was no prospect of happiness without it. It was always circular in shape, covered with a strong crust and garnished with sweetmeats. It was the proper thing for the bridegroom to wait on the bride in serving the cake, hence the term "bridegroom."

Net News to Him.

"Oh, my boy, my boy! When I was your age I had never seen the inside of a theater. I had never tasted a cocktail, and I had never lost money on a bet of any kind."

"I know, dad. Grandmother says you were the runt of the family and always very backward."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Gravity.

A precocious child who had been attending one of the public kindergarten classes fell from a ladder. Her mother caught her up from the ground in terror, exclaiming:

"Oh, darling, how did you fall?"

"Vertically," replied the child without a second's hesitation.—Satire.

A Clever Ruse.

Mr. A.—Nornah seems quite gone on the postman Mrs. A.—Gone? Do you know what that girl does? She mails herself a post card every evening so as to make sure he'll call the next morning.—Boston Transcript.

Always Wanting Something.

Eve—I want—Adam—You are always wanting something. You are no fit; you are a washbowl.—New York Press.

An Old Time Feminine Fad.

A century or more ago women in England were as keen for fads as they are today. In the journal of the Hon. Mrs. Charles Calvert, edited by Mrs. Warrenne Blake, we find recorded on May 4, 1808: "I begin a new science today shoe-making. It is all the fashion. I had a master with me for two hours, and I think I shall be able to make very nice shoes. It amuses and occupies me, which at present is very useful to me." Mrs. Calvert appears to have proved a very apt pupil, for the very next day appears the triumphant entry: "I have just finished a shoe by myself!"—London Spectator.

Old Furniture.

The ordinary furniture polish, very useful when the furniture is comparatively new or well preserved, will not always fill the bill. When furniture is old and badly scratched any desired shade of wood stain mixed with equal proportions of spirits of turpentine will bring back the original shade and newness. Be careful to apply the mixture very evenly, using preferably a flat, bristle brush of rather small dimensions.—National Magazine.

Had His Doubts.

"Is it really a pleasure for you to have me call?" inquired the young man.

"Why, yes," answered the girl in some confusion. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Oh, nothing. Only you seem to take your pleasure sadly."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Nature.

Nature imitates herself. A grain do throw into good ground brings forth fruit. A principle thrown into a good mind brings forth fruit. Everything is created and conducted by the same Master—the root, the branch, the fruits, the principles, the consequences.—Pasca!

Thrilling Racing Drama.

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