

FATIMA

A Romance of the Sahara Desert

By F. A. MITCHEL

Hendricks was cut out for a globe trotter and was furnished by inheritance with the wherewithal to be a world traveler. By the time he was twenty-five he had traveled in every civilized land on the face of the earth and with many of them was quite familiar.

Then came the semicivilized countries. He determined to begin with north Africa. He had read much of the great Sahara desert, its ocean of sand spread out with all the infiniteness of the waters of the deep, the glare of day, the splendor of the stars above it at night. But it was the danger of traveling among the treacherous, cutthroat people who inhabit it that made Hendricks long to travel there. As soon as he had become familiar with peoples similar to his own countrymen he went to Morocco, intending to plunge down into the desert.

Leaving Paris he made for Gibraltar, crossed the strait and found himself in Tangier. The transition across this narrow water was like going to sleep in England and waking up in Baghdad. On the one hand were officers of the English army surrounded by the people of Spain. On the other were Arab soldiers in the white brava uniforms, with their swords, and a people as one would meet in any Mohammedan country. It seemed to Hendricks that he had suddenly left the protection of civilized law to be subject to uncivilized plunder.

The first thing to procure for a trip into the desert was camels, which were to be bought outright. Hendricks purchased several of these beasts and hired a couple of dozen natives, including a man to manage them who had a number of names, among which was Ali, and Hendricks at once seized upon it to designate the man. All attended to the purchase of the rest of the outfit, including tents, arms, ammunition, blankets, food, etc. The arms and ammunition were about the most important articles, for the principal occupation of the denizens of the desert was robbery. The large through caravans were so well protected that little plunder was to be gained from them. The little force supporting a rich American having many tempting articles was a different matter. All informed the master that they would be subject to all sorts of stratagems for stealing purposes, but would not be likely to open an attack. To be robbed at wholesale they would doubtless be led into an ambush, in which case they would all be murdered.

All this led to the expedition among the American's reasons for plunging into such an unattractive country one was to outwit the Bedouins.

He had not got well into the desert before the performance commenced. Of course a guard was established at night. The third night after leaving Moroccan territory a sentinal was shot.

"Why did they do that?" asked Hendricks of Ali. "It seems to me murder for nothing."

"Don't deceive yourself, master," said the black. "Tonight another watcher will fall, and the next night another, and so on until our force is reduced to so small a number that they may overpower us."

Hendricks thought much during the day as to how this prospective killing might be eliminated. Before time for posting the guard for the night he said to Ali that the men were too stupid to be trusted on a watch, he would do guard duty himself that night. Taking his rifle he stationed himself behind a heap of sand and kept a sharp lookout for an enemy. The party had traveled all day without seeing a human or an inhuman being. It seemed impossible that some one should rise up out of the sand at dead of night to kill a guard. Nevertheless Hendricks kept awake and what was equally important, kept his eyes open.

Just before dawn he spied some sort of an animal in the distance wandering about as though searching for food. Hendricks watched the beast for a while and made up his mind that there was a man under his skin. Going into his tent, he brought out a rifle, stuck the muzzle into the sand and hung a baranca over the butt. Having done this, he again took position behind his sand hill. It was not long before he saw a flash from where the animal stood and a ball passed through the baranca. Her ribs cracked at the heart, and it made off apparently mangled with the sand.

That was the end of plucking at sentries. The party traveled for several days without further molestation, to a place where they passed over a sand dune to earth, trees, flowers, houses and above all, to water. The water, it is common to find here, is a chief necessity on the desert.

Hendricks, leaving his outfit and his men in charge of Ali, put up at a hotel to enjoy the comfort of living in a house surrounded by tropical shrubbery. Directly opposite lived an Arab

trader, and when Hendricks was sitting by his window a woman, young and somewhat comely in appearance, was to be seen in a room on the same floor as the American. She saw him looking at her and smiled at him.

Hendricks, though in the heyday of life, was averse to interfering with a woman belonging to a Mohammedan and went away from the window. The next morning a caravan started from the trader's house, and since Hendricks was prepared to move his own outfit, he left an hour later. When he went into camp in the evening the trader, more pretentious encampment was not a mile away. During the evening the Arab called on the American, appearing desirous of making his acquaintance. Indeed, before he left he seemed to have taken a great liking to Hendricks.

He had no sooner departed than Ali came to his master and warned him, declaring that the man might be a trader, but if he could overtake a smaller caravan than his own in the desert, kill every one connected with it and possess himself of the loot he would not scruple to do so. Hendricks assured his man that he would be very careful what he did, but said nothing of the woman who had smiled at him through her window.

Hendricks had promised the trader, or robber, or both, that he would return his all in the morning, breakfasting with him. Had he been warned by Ali earlier he would possibly have declined the invitation on the ground that he intended to move early. He did not fear a complication with the woman for an Arab does not usually introduce his woman to his men friends. In this case Hendricks was mistaken. The trader had three wives and they were all at breakfast with him and his guest. One of them was the woman who had smiled at Hendricks from a window, and she was the most attractive in appearance of them all.

She behaved deceptively at table, but when Ali arose with his other wives to go into the living tent this woman whom he called Fatima, kept her seat. When Hendricks started to rise she gave him a look that indicated she wished him to remain. After a moment's hesitation he decided to accept her invitation. She spoke Spanish in a different way and Hendricks spoke a little of all the romance languages consequently with a mixture of French, Spanish and Italian they managed to make themselves understood.

Though the trader did not appear to object to his wife's tete a tete with the American, Hendricks felt uneasy. The woman seemed desirous of keeping him with her, but, seeing that he desired to get away, she at last arose and they departed the others. Before he took his departure, while unobserved, she thrust a bit of paper into his hand. On reaching his camp he read it.

Remain in your present camp. Meet me after dark midway between your tent and ours.

No one but a fool or one ready for a desperate adventure would have accepted this invitation. Hendricks was not a fool, but he was ready to take any risk to gratify his curiosity, and he liked adventure. However, since he knew he would be risking his life and did not wish to leave the world without some provision therefore he took Ali into his confidence.

All said at once that the woman was acting under the orders of her husband, that Hendricks would meet a bullet instead of a woman, after which the trader would swoop down on the others, murder them all and take possession of the effects. He begged his master not to keep the appointment.

"His pleadings were of no avail. Then Ali asked him to permit him to go in his place. He would make it known that he was not the American, but an Arab, which he knew well how to do, and would thus discover the plot without getting killed. Hendricks was tempted by this plan, but could not bring himself to permit any of his men to take a risk that he would not take himself.

"No, Ali," he said, "I will keep this appointment, but I will go with a rifle at my shoulder and cocked."

"Your figure will be seen against the sky," replied Ali, "while one who meets you cannot be distinguished from the sand."

Hendricks profited by this advice and wore a light gray suit with a handkerchief tied over his head instead of a hat. Half an hour after dark he sallied forth, taking care not to expose his silhouette against the sky. Presently he saw a figure thus revealed. The Arab dress is such that he could not distinguish whether it was man or woman. He watched it advance toward him, Hendricks taking care not to present a mark for a bullet. But a bullet came, and presently he heard a woman's voice say:

"Follow me; I will guide you to my mistress."

Hendricks decided to take the risk. He followed the woman to a point a few hundred yards from the woman's quarters in the trader's camp, and there stood the woman he was to meet.

"I am a white woman," she said. "My complexion is faded. I was captured with a caravan that was attacked and looted by a caravan being said to have taken." She turned and looked at Hendricks.

"How do you get your camp? Move on a dark night, a caravan that will avoid the sentries."

"Why did your husband permit you to talk with me alone?"

"I offered to do you, agreeing to take my boys tomorrow."

"I have a few moments left," she said, "before I am called."

"Come with me."

The next morning when the trader and his men were seen from the horizon and a short distance from an oasis Fatima was missing.

NOTABLES IN THE LIMELIGHT

Charles J. Vopicka, United States Minister to Balkans.



Probably none of Uncle Sam's representatives at foreign courts has had so many annoyances to contend with and difficult situations to untangle as Charles J. Vopicka, United States minister to Roumania, Bulgaria and Servia. Only a few days ago he was called upon to secure the release of the ambassador of the American legation at Sofia, who had been arrested by Bulgarian officials, charged with bribing a police officer to issue passports.

Minister Vopicka makes his headquarters at Bukharest, Roumania, which is a much larger city than Sofia or Belgrade, the capitals of Bulgaria and Servia. Mr. Vopicka was born in Prague, Bohemia, in his fifty-eighth year and came to this country at the age of twenty-two. At the time of his appointment in the fall of 1913 he was said to be the first foreign born citizen of the United States to receive such an important post in the diplomatic service. Another interesting feature is the fact that he is a Slav and as such was the first man of his race to be accredited to the United States to the twin Slav countries—Bulgaria and Servia. Roumania is a Latin country.

In private life Mr. Vopicka is a wealthy Chicago banker. He has been prominent in politics in the city and has been a liberal contributor to Democratic campaign funds.

Commandant at Columbus, N. M. Major William R. Sample, commanding officer of the base camp at Columbus, N. M., is a veteran of the Spanish-American war and is an experienced campaigner. The recent concentration of troops at the Columbus base was for the purpose of protecting the border

from fear of raid by roving bands of raiders from across the line and for forwarding supplies wherever needed by Uncle Sam's troops.



Photo by American Press Association. Major William R. Sample.

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During the Spanish war Major Sample served as an assistant adjutant general of volunteers from the beginning of hostilities and was active in the advance at San Juan. After hostilities ceased he returned to the regular service with the rank of captain. He is a native of Tennessee, fifty years old and was appointed to the Military Academy at West Point in 1881 from Arkansas, to which state he had removed. After his graduation, in 1888 he was appointed to the adjutant general's department, going thence to the Third Infantry. He reached the grade of major in 1911 and is at present in command of the First battalion of the Twentieth Infantry.

TIPPING IN HOTELS.

How the Daily Expenses Soar in the Fashionable Resorts.

What the public pays for service in hotels of the better class, in addition to the prices regularly charged by the hotels, was a subject discussed a few days ago by a group of hotel men, who termed the tipping system a "necessary evil."

As a basis of computation it was assumed that a man and his wife were traveling from city to city, stopping at first class hotels. What their extra or "velvet" expense would be was figured on what was said to be a conservative estimate to amount to from \$1.85 to \$2.25.

"Of course there are exceptions," one of the hotel men said, "but the average figures out very well. On arrival at the hotel in a taxi the carriage man sometimes gets 10 cents. Then the bellboy takes the guests to their apartment and gets a fee of from 10 cents to 25 cents. Perhaps the room lacks an extra blanket that is desired, or a towel, and the chambermaid is called. That means another tip of 10 cents. Then the porter arrives with the trunks, and the tip is from 25 to 35 cents, according to the number of trunks and the generosity of the tipper toward the tipped.

"The couple have arrived on an early train, we may say, and plan to have breakfast. Still another tip, and again at luncheon another tip, and the same at dinner time. Then add the tips to the girl who checks your hat and your wife's coat and you have added at least 20 cents more to the grand total.

"Possibly you even go out that night and your evening clothes need pressing. The hotel valet is at hand, but when he brings back the suit he expects and gets a tip on top of the price paid for the work. "Of course there are other ways and plans of spending money on tips, but these seem to summarize the usual amounts expended in this manner."

As long as the public is composed of human beings, tipping will prevail," another hotel man said. "Some people doubtless would prefer to do away with tipping altogether, but there are many more who would feel it an infringement on their personal liberty to place a ban on the custom, which, I may say, is growing."—Boston Post.

Peasant and Pigs.

A clever smuggling trick was played on a customs officer on the Russo-German frontier. An innocent looking peasant reported to the officer a plot that was on foot for getting a large number of pigs across the frontier. The method, he said, would be to drive across at intervals of half an hour, 3, 6, 12 and 200 pigs, the smugglers arguing that if the first three lots could be sent over there would be no trouble with the 200.

The officer was naturally on the alert. In accordance with the peasant's statement three pigs were driven over, then six, followed by twelve. All were allowed to pass, and preparations were made to receive the 200. But no more pigs appeared, and the twenty-one animals admitted had in the meantime been lodged in safety.

Languages in the British Isles.

Has anybody ever reckoned how many languages are spoken in the British Isles? Few people would put the number as high as seven. But take a census thus: English, Welsh in Wales, Erse in Ireland, Manx in the Isle of Man, Gaelic in Scotland, French in the Channel Islands, and Cornish was spoken in Cornwall far more recently than either historians or the public know. The total is seven languages for the British Isles, and yet the Englishman is the poorest linguist in the world.—London Spectator.

Black Cats' Island.

"The Island of Black Cats" is a name applied to Chatham island in the Pacific ocean, about 730 miles west of the coast of Ecuador. It is overrun with black cats. Indeed, cats of no other color are seen there. These animals live in the crevices of the lava foundation near the coast and subsist by catching fish and crabs instead of rats and mice. Other animals found on this island are horses, cattle, dogs, goats and chickens, all of which are perfectly wild.

Bread in Sweden.

In Sweden the bread of the people is for the most part hard, thin as a dinner plate and about the size of one. It is baked without yeast, and the water is practically all extracted in the process of baking, hence, relatively per pound of bread, its cost is much higher in the common forms of bread as we know them, containing one-half their weight in water that has cost nothing. Loaf bread and rolls in Sweden are a luxury.

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