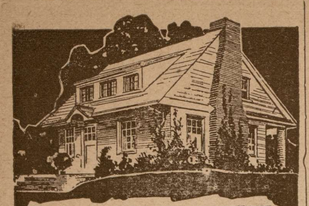
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OUTWITTING DEATH IN THE RED DESERT—FRENCH EXPLORER FIRST WHITE MAN TO CROSS.

(Continued from Page 4)

started, and to combine against me in a very dangerous fashion.

I watched my two emissaries disappear among the palm-trees and continued to head toward Tellab,, awaiting their return with impatience. I had the feeling that the decisive moment of my adventure had arrived, and th emore I thought of it the more risky the whole thing appeared. When we were not more than a thousand yards from the trees, a man mounted on a camel dashed out and headed toward us at a fast trot. The rider was Suleyman. He looked rather excited, and a little perplexed. "Things are not going so badly," he told me in substance. "The chief is away at Djof, but his young son is here. There is nothing to do but go ahead into the village."

The absence of the chief was a serious accident. I was likely to find myself in the presence of a mob prone to the emotions of the moment. But I did not have much time to lose myself in reflection. For the last few seconds a mounted man had been in plain view. He approached. Others appears and joined him. I dismounted from my camel, my little troop remaining mounted behind me. In silence, contrary to their usual custom, and without saluting me, the strangers surrounded me on all sides. They were without any visible weapons. Nevertheless, I found that they were beginning to edge in on me very closely, obviously with the idea of separating me little by little from my escort. My men must have had the same impression, for I heard them begin to cock their guns which had already been loaded. This move was not a very adroit one. I decided to insist, perhaps even emphasizing a little, the tactics which I had previously adopted, namely, to arouse kindliness by a display of confidence. A certain amount of psychology is necessary in these explorations. You need psychology, patience and perfectly tuned nerves. These are the three indispensable elements in success. I turned around and ordered my men to lower their guns. Then I advanced ahead of my escort with measured strides, first openly leaving my own gun and my revolver on the saddle of my camel. I finally arrived all by myself at the door of a hut where a crowd was waiting for me.

They bade me go in. In the interior on the bare ground was stretched some carpet. There were about a dozen men—Zoueyan Arabs. Their reputation is rather sinister. My reception was very cold, the greetings reserved, and the bearing of every one repressed. There were no handshakes. I sat down and began to talk. I explained that I had come as a friend and gguest, that I had no soldiers with me, that my desire was to see Sidi Mohamed el Abid, and that I wanted some one to carry to him as quickly as possible the letter announcing my arrival. This gentlemen's abode was at Jaj, several hours from Tellab. I succeeded in partially making them understand me. Then I had them call Ahmed in order that he might act as an interpreter. He told me that the tribesmen had made him halt the camels several hundred yards away and that they were unloading them.

My explanations were received with stern faces, but with perfect politeness. They would, said they, send a man at once to Sidi Mohamed with my letter. At the same time, he could go by way of Djof and let the chieftian of the village know what had happened.

Two hours passed without any one bringing in either tea or water. Visitors came in one after the other, saluted, whispered to the others a while, and stared at me, turning away their sullen eyes whenever my glance met theirs. Finally quite a number of them, one after the other, went out. The diminution in numbers gave me almost an impression of intimacy. I profited by it to ask several questions. They responded with a sufficiently good grace.

Suleyman came back. Of course, I knew nothing of what was passing outside during this time. He was so pale that his complexion was almost gray. He made me a little secret sign as he cast open his burnous, and I gathered from it that no new complication had arisen. My men, just like myself, seemed to understand that everything now hung by a hair. Then Denis came in. He asked me if I had had anything to eat. As a matter of fact, I was perishing of hungger. But the nearest one of the tribesmen to me interrupted him at once. They would bring me something to eat, said he, right away—something for me and for my men as well. It happened that the hut in which I happened to be was that of the chief's son. All my needs would be provided for. The man's words had this importance. I had now become a guest and I had before me at least the three traditional days of Mussulman hospitality. This was a slight turn for the better.

A few dates and a little water were what gave the explorer a new lease on life in both senses of the word.As a guest who had eaten their food, he was now safe for at least three days, and almost at once the faces of the tribesmen in the hut became more open and less hostile. They began asking to see various things he carried, and a watch and safety pin were examined with equal amazement. On being asked for his weapons, he sent for them and they were passed around from hand to hand.

The next morning at 9 o'clock, he tells us how the chief, Amran, a tall weather-beaten, decisive-mannered Arab, strode in. It turned out that he had a son in French territory at Ounyanga, and that the explorer might rely absolutely on the people of Kufra. If Sidi Mohamed, said the chief, was not willing to accept the explorer, he,, himself, would see that he got back safely to French territory without being attacked on the way. Thus another day passed marked only by the arrival of Toroe and Sidia, who went through their usual series of comforting speeches. The intrepid Frenchman listened to them "gaily," and turned with a heart guaranteed "white" for one more day.

The next day there was a great bustling about, and soldiers began to arrive. These soldiers, explains de Laborie, were perfectly fitted out in European style, with khaki uniforms, brass buttons, leather puttees and boots, and light machine-guns equipped with short but very wicked looking bayonets. The commander of the soldiers had orders to bring the Frenchman before him at Taj, and they packed up and left that evening. From here on, the author's troubles grew progressively less and less. It was not, says he, due to any ability of his own, but to the wise and humane French colonial policy of the previous two years.

Dressed no longer as a Bedouin, but clad in European clothes, de Leborie was received at Taj by the great chief Sidi Mohamed. To his great surprise, he was received as a distinguished visitor who represented a powerful country with which they wished to be friendly. For a week he remained in this capital of the wild Senyussis, and every day conferred at length with Sidi Mohamed at dinner. He tells of one interesting incident which closed his stay there:

At the end of my last dinner at Kufra they sprang a susrpise on me. When the time for dessert came, one of the servants entered and placed before me a bottle which had a distinctly European aspect. Mechanically I read the label. It bore this surprising inscription, "Castor Oil." I began to wonder if a certain refinement of elegance introduced into Mussulman customs as the very latest word could demand of me that I should toss off a glass of this product to which I should really have preferred the usual excellent coffee. At this moment a second bottle and then a third were placed solemnly alongside the first. On one was written "Tincture of Iodine," on the other "Bicarbonate of Soda"; another brought in was a purgative. It seemed to me that these precautions were a little excessive and bordered upon a social error. I asked no questions, but almost immediately they presented me with the key to this mystery. It seems that Sidi Mohamed had recently secured a certain number of well-known drugs, but as no one on his staff knew how to read French, he did not know what to do with these medicines, and wanted me to explain to him their use and the proper doses.

On his departure from Taj on the 28th of October, Mr. de Laborie decided to dismiss all his followers except one, and attach himself to a small caravan which was headed for Siwa, the farthest outpost of the English Army in Egypt. The situation had changed very considerably. He had a safe conduct from Sidi Mohamed himself, and he left behind hir the comfortable knowledge that the Senyusssis were more favorable to France than at any other time. Barring accident, the trip through the desert should be devoid of any but normal dangers. This it turned out to be.

At last the long trail came to an end at Siwa, where he found an outpost of the British Army, and from which he was escorted on to Alexandria with the utmost care and courtesy on the part of the English. The most important result of his trip was, says de Laborie, the knowledge he brought back of a most startling change on the part of those hitherto implacable enemies of France, the Senyussis.

CURRIED FISH.

Fresh fish are curried whole. Select varieties containing a small amount of oil. Prepare the foundation sauce, clean and skin the fish and lay them in the sauce. Allow the stock barely to cover the fish and simmer in an uncovered frying pan until the fish is tender. Serve with slices of lemon and a border of rice or rice balls.

CURRIED MEATS.

Dice any uncooked meat, pork excepted, or chicken or other fowl. Add it to a curry foundation sauce, mixing it well. Pour the mixture into a stew-pan and simmer for two hours. If it seems dry, add stock to moisten. Serve on a flat platter with a border of rice. Curried meats cooked in a casserole are delicious.

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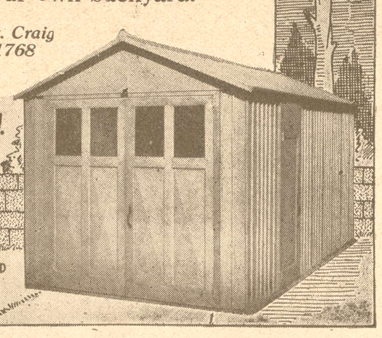
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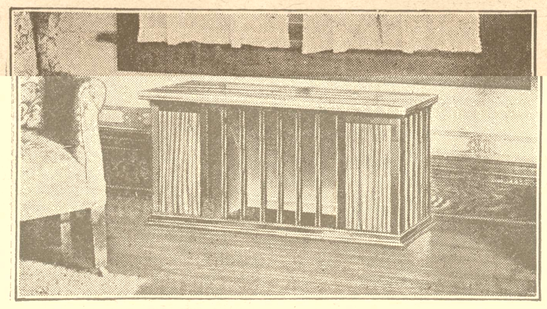
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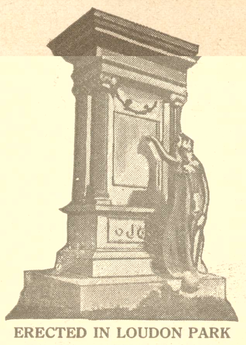
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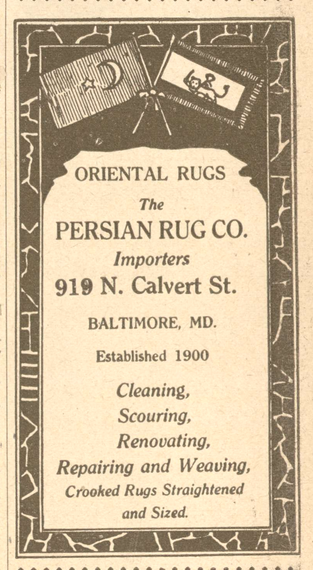
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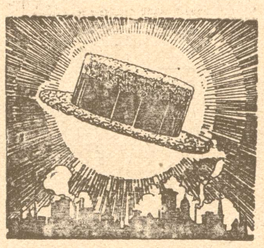
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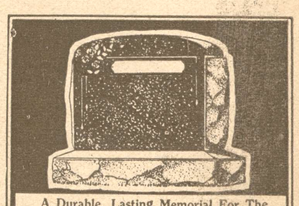
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