

# RAISULI, THE BANDIT

## The Kidnapper of Perdicaris

By CHARLES SOMERVILLE

**R**AISULI, a bandit among the foothills of the Atlas Mountains in the unchanging land of the Moors, a cunning marauder, a swaggering figure in scarlet and gold, with a white, jewel-clasped turban above his swarthy features, a scimitar at his side, a muzzle-loading gun inlaid with polished brass across his shoulder, stands as the romantic cause of a striking historical coincidence in the affairs of the United States.

The hundredth anniversary of the punitive expedition that was sent out by the Republic in its infancy to break up the piracy on the Barbary Coast is in this year. How well and heroically Commodore Preble carried out the task that England and France shunned in dread of the murderous marauders of the African Coast was attested in the entire disappearance of the Barbary cutthroats and their ships and the complete safety that came to merchantmen.

In place of the old American frigates the Barbary waters have shown the white, steel bodies of the modern warships of the United States. The object of their presence was almost the same. The liberty and even the life of an American citizen were at stake, and the Republic, a giant now, announced that to the land pirate Raisuli must be dealt the same drastic punishment that met the thieving barbarians of old.

In the course of diplomacy demands have been made upon the Sultan of Morocco that he deal with the remarkable Raisuli; that the ruler of the Moors secure the safe return of Ion Perdicaris and his son-in-law Cromwell Varley, who were kidnapped from their home within two miles of the legations of the world's great Powers.

But this demand was nothing more than a formality. Everybody who has ever visited the land of the Moors will know this to be true. Everybody who knows of the career of Raisuli will also know its truth. They will know that for years this bandit of gorgeous costumes, this medieval figure moved among the paths of the hills astride a fleet and beautiful horse adorned with elaborate trappings, surrounding himself with a small band composed of only the most desperate characters of Northwest Morocco, and successfully defied his King and the armed forces of the nation. He worked his sweet will. He despoiled countless caravans of their ivory, their gold and the slaves that they were bringing from the Soudan to Fez, the Moorish capital, where human creatures of both sexes are still offered for sale on the block.

The kidnapping of two Spanish children, who were brutally put to the knife when it became apparent that his little victims' parents could not pay the ransom demanded; the shrewd and masterful ingenuity of his plotting whereby the Lieutenant-Governor of Tangier in seeking to capture the bandit was himself captured and put to horrible torture; the kidnapping only a year ago of Walter B. Harris, a wealthy British resident of Tangier and correspondent of "The London Times," who was kept for more than a week in the

same room with a headless corpse as an evidence of the fate that awaited him in case of the non-payment of the ransom; then the mulcting of Harris of ten thousand dollars as a ransom; and finally the brazen kidnapping of Perdicaris and his son-in-law from a spot not more than a mile distant from the arsenal and barracks where one thousand of the Sultan's army were quartered, followed by the extraordinary demand, born of past successes, that he receive official recognition as an

absolute security—in such security, indeed, that often in his most gorgeous costumes he has boldly entered the cities, with a curl of his lip for the frowns of the officials, knowing full well that they did not dare raise a hand against him, for dread of the revenge that would follow at the hands of his desperate followers.

Morocco has no roads except rough and beaten camel paths. There is nothing on wheels in the country. There are no railroads. Europeans once tried to build one between Fez and the seaport of Rabat on the southern coast. Ten miles of track was laid,

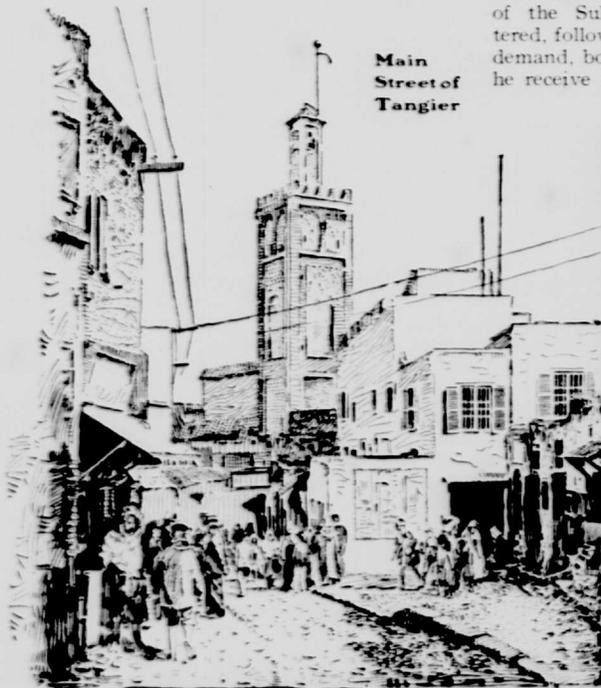
and the first engines started puffing. The natives arose in fierce demonstration against the innovation. In their superstition and fanaticism, as keen to-day as when Mohammed led his forces in person, they deemed the steaming locomotive to be a pagan demon. They wrecked the modern vehicle, tore up every foot of tracks, and threw the rails into the sea. Telegraph wires do not string across the land. The courier of ancient times is still the means of communication between centers.

Fez is one hundred eighty miles from Tangier. It takes a week to make the trip. Winding roads and rivers without bridges—there is only one bridge and that was built by Europeans just outside Tangier over a tiny stream—account for it. The rivers among the mountains can be forded only occasionally. After rains travelers have to camp beside the rivers until the waters go down.

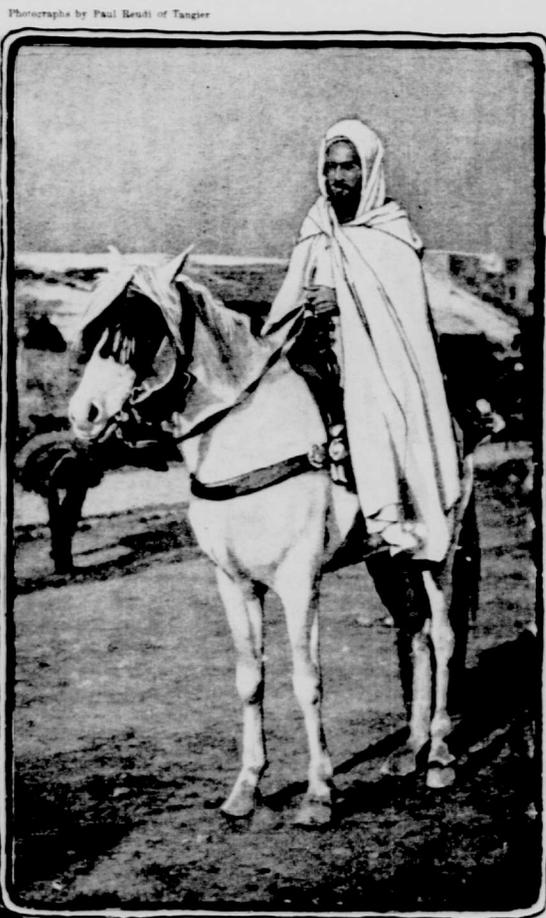
The impossibility of bringing artillery to bear in raiding Raisuli and his desperadoes was apparent. It would have to be guerrilla fighting, and probably a fierce hand-to-hand battle with the murderous chief and his band. Indeed, knowing what I do of Raisuli's career, I am forced to the belief that if he ever was cornered and attacked he would not hesitate at the murder of any or all captives that he might have. His shocking murder

of the two defenseless Spanish children, even after it had been proved to him that the parents were too poor to pay the ransom, shows the villainous depth of the Moor's heart. There, too, is religious fanaticism to nerve his arm. Dealing of death to unbelievers has the full sanction of the Koran.

The Moor has not realized the great size of the



Main Street of Tangier

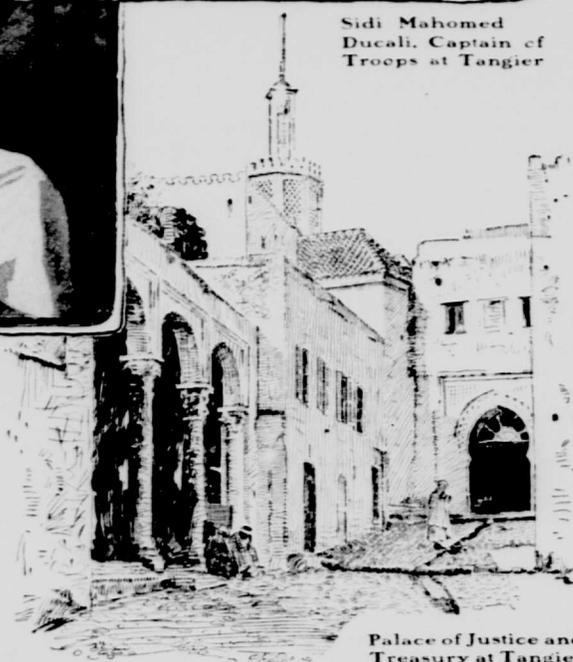


Photograph by Paul Reuli of Tangier

Sidi Mahomed Ducaali, Captain of Troops at Tangier



Ras-al-Aic (Raisuli), the Moorish Bandit



Palace of Justice and Treasury at Tangier

authorized robber at whose mercy a whole province must be placed by his Government, in addition to a heavy ransom for his American and English captives—these form a partial list of the criminal achievements of Raisuli that Tangier legations know about.

And so it will be seen that the demand to the Sultan for the capture of Raisuli who always successfully defied him was only a formality.

The task of taking this bandit was one that England shrank from when its citizen, Harris, was a prisoner in mountain recesses thirty miles from the British Minister's headquarters in Tangier. Such an expedition was considered; but its difficulties appalled the contemplators of it. To explain what these difficulties