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I thought! They have Martinis!" He turned and threw up his hand again. Another volley rippled along the entire line, and as it was immediately followed by others as rapidly as the men could reload their guns Dick knew that from now on the firing would be continuous. Owing to the speed of the onslaught the gunners were not firing so successfully, owing to the constantly changing range. Buhammei's battery was steadily banging away; but so far had not placed a single effective shot.

Back of the charging tribesmen on the grass spotted sandy plain white figures and horses could be seen twisting and writhing, and here and there riderless animals ran wildly backward and forward.

Up to this time there had been no rifle discharged from the Sultan's army, although desultory firing and mostly without effect had marked the advance of Buhammei's forces. Now, as they approached the sandy level back of the stream, along the entire line of the Sultan's army a rifle fire broke out with what seemed to the American fairly precise delivery. For a moment it appeared as if, crowded on by their own weight, Buhammei's men would, with horse and rider, fill the brook to the brim and ride across their own dead; then in a splendid turn the whole front swirled like a whirlpool which in its revolution carried the white legions back from the zone of gunfire.

The Kaid's batteries were still firing at the white mass; but now, owing to the rapidity of motion, their shells seemed badly timed. For so long a time the shrilling shells of Buhammei's batteries had passed over their heads that Dick had grown unconscious of their noise. Suddenly he was thrown to his feet and almost immediately afterward heard an explosion behind him. Half dazed, he got to his knees and looked around. The Kaid also was regaining his feet.

"They're getting the range," he said imperturbably.

DICK looked back where the shell had exploded and saw that it had dropped at the edge of the little camp on the hill with serious effect. One man was staggering blindly toward him with blood streaming from his face, but suddenly pitched prone to the ground with hands outstretched, and another still conscious was feebly wriggling his mangled body around so that he might die facing that mysterious east, the Mecca of the Muslim's God. The American, still on his knees, stared down over the surrounding plain. Everywhere were little spots in suggestive motion,—a man supporting another to one of the tents, others twisting convulsively on the ground, and still others lying in deadly stillness. The agonized screams of the tribesmen in the rear, who were impatient to move to the front, and the shrill commands of officers holding their men steadfast, made a bedlam of sounds intermittent with the constant boom of artillery. Buhammei's men had found the range.

Immediately behind him Dick heard stentorian yells and, running back to the edge of the bluff, discovered Sidi Suleyman, who was directing a force of men intent on dragging a heavy 4.7 howitzer up the sharp incline. He did not interrupt the scar faced Captain; but the latter turned and gave a friendly grin.

"Pretty soon I stop them," he said, and then whirled back to deluge the unfortunate soldiers with his choicest epithets. Dick, unable to stand in idleness, ran down and caught hold of the rope, tugging mightily with the rest. They found breath to give him a gasping cheer, and, as if his presence had renewed their strength, brought the gun up the slope with a final rush. They shoved it forward until it stood almost in front of the headquarters tent, and Clarke looked round and nodded approvingly. The battery men jerked open the breech and threw in a long, shining sixty-pound shell, and to Dick's surprise Sidi Suleyman strode in between the men and aimed the gun. The men sprang back to avoid the immediate concussion, and Clarke, staring steadily through his binoculars, gave a sententious, "A little short, Sidi. Elevate her about a degree."

Up to this time the American had not been aware that this strange Arab was also an expert gunner; but now he recognized in him a trained marksman.

Again the gun leaped back, and this time the Kaid wheeled round with exultation on his face.

"Two guns out of business over there!" he said, lowering his binoculars. "Good work, my men, good work!"

Almost before his words had died away the Arab was again taking sight. As the third shot screamed out, the Kaid handed the binoculars to Sidi, who had run to a position close beside him, as though eager to know of his success.

"Remarkable shot, that!" the Kaid said,

turning to Dick. "Nearly cleaned them out. Those fellows over there are a big mistake. Their guns are too old together. At all events, there's no one of them now."

DICK, in watching the battery, had a moment lost sight of the white mass, but now, warned by the shouts that suddenly arose everywhere, he saw that they had reformed and were charging again with a less solid front than in the first onrush. Neither rifle fire nor shrapnel drove them from coming on. Desperate they drove downward on the stream and showing prearrangement, narrowed to a blunt apex which suddenly drove forward toward the guns of the first. Clarke, recognizing a crisis, leaped to the edge of the bluff and ran down, thrusting men right and left, to gain the immediate scene of action. For one moment Dick hesitated, and then, mad with lust, plunged after him. Down by the guarding the ford, were the chosen Marrakesh men. Into the ford, upon their own dropping men, plunged mountain riders. Dick had no well-idea of what happened.

For an interminable time the battle raged backward and forward over a space. Once Buhammei's men were of the battery and for an instant a session of the guns. He heard the shouting fierce orders and felt his own hoarse before he realized that he had been yelling at the top of his voice, become a hand to hand conflict. His his way through to the nearest gun, that a shell was in it, but that the lid not closed. He jammed it shut and, tempting to discharge it, when he rushed upon him, almost throwing the ground. A fierce tribesman, broken similar, was in the act of striking him. He caught the man's wrist, and for a moment, and then succeeded in dragging a pistol from his holster. He had no knowledge of firing, but rather curious interest in the way the same before him suddenly distorted into agony and slipped backward and the body fell across the gun itself. He had discharged the gun; but to his life could not explain why, in that moment of frenzy, he took up the cry of the tribesmen and shouted "Bismillah, Allah!" He was not aware that he himself had the tide of battle and repulsed the tribesmen until the Kaid beat him enthusiastically back and shouted in his ear:

"Gods! What did I tell you? As my back! Give it to them!" and again.

He discovered after a while that before him was nearly damped and dying men; that all around him was a terrible proof of the fray, and that the Marrakesh still held the ford. Buhammei's men had been repulsed and in wild were riding backward to safety. If he had been absorbed in a terrible in which for untold ages he had fired, reloaded and fired, reloaded and fired, to take mechanical aim at intervals always chained to the gun.

Now, relaxed and drenched with blood, bloodstained from a slight wound on his face, and exhausted, he leaned against the long gray barrel of the gun, was hot to his touch.

Men from the other guns, fierce skinned, bearing marks of battle and of them stanching their wounds, rushed to him. One of them, whom he now recognized as the Captain of the battery, threw round his neck and called him brother, backing off, addressed the others:

"He is one of us! Great is the Nazarin has found the light, do not shout, 'In the name of God, there is one God!' as he fired his gun?"

Dick broke away from the festivities and started toward the hill, using up its steep shoulder, he nearly ran with Sidi Suleyman, who was plunging forward, but paused long enough to shake his shoulder:

"The Kaid wants you, quick!"

PANTING with exertion, he saw the crest and was astonished at the sight. Service tents had been struck down in apparent madness of haste were their horses. The Kaid, motionless when waving a hand to emphasize his order, was standing on the very brink of the bluff with his white helmet jutting over his eyes. Dick paused to look across the broad stretch of plain to the enemy. In a solid body and riding toward men had swung round to the north.

He whirled back for another look at his own forces and saw that on their bank of the stream was nothing but a rushing ribbon of white. The tribes-

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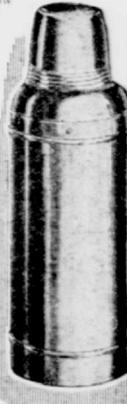
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