

The Brethren

By RIDER HAGGARD,
Author of "She," "King Solomon's Mines," Etc.

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(Continued from Last Week)

the rise of the opposing slope the
of Flame and Smoke at last
to fall beneath their double bur-
They panted and trembled and,
in short rushes, no longer answer-
to the spur. The assassins saw and
on with wild shouts. Nearer and
er they drew, and the sound of
horses' hoofs beating on the sand
like the sound of thunder. Now
more they were fifty yards away,
now but thirty, and again the
rs began to flash, though none
ck them.

Masouda screamed to the horses in
hic, and gallantly did they strug-
plunging up the hill with slow, con-
ve bounds. Godwin and Wulf
ed at each other, then, at a signal,
ed their speed, leaped to earth
turning, drew their swords.

"I am not bitter," answered Wulf,
"but I always pay for my drink, and
we will settle that score yet."
"Hush!" broke in Rosamund. "Al-
though he stole me, he is also my de-
liverer and friend through many a
peril."
"I do not know all the story, but,
princess, it seems that you should
thank not me, but these goodly cousins
of yours and those splendid horses,"
said Hassan.

"There is another whom I must thank
also—this noble woman, as you will
call her also when you hear the story,"
said Rosamund, flinging her arm about
the neck of Masouda.

"My master will reward her," said
Hassan. "But, O lady, what must
you think of me who seemed to desert
you so basely? Yet I reasoned well.
In the castle of that son of Satan,
Sinan," and he spat upon the ground,
"I could not have aided you, for there
he would only have butchered me. But
by escaping I thought that I might
help, so I bribed the Frankish knave
with the priceless star of my house,"
and he touched the great jewel that he
wore in his turban, "and with what
money I had, to loose my bonds, and
while he pouched the gold I stabbed
him with his own knife and fled. But
this morning I reached yonder city in
command of 10,000 men charged to re-
scue you if I could; if not, to avenge
you, for the ambassadors of Salah-ed-
din informed me of your plight. An
hour ago the watchmen on the towers
reported that they saw two horses gal-
loping across the plain beneath a dou-
ble burden, pursued by soldiers whom
from their robes they took to be as-
sassin. So, as I have a quarrel with
the assassins, I crossed the bridge,
formed up 500 men in a hollow and
waited, never guessing that it was you
who fled. You know the rest—and the
assassins know it also," he added grimly.

"Follow it up," said Wulf, "and the
vengeance shall be better, for I will
show you the secret way into Masyaf—
or, if I cannot, Godwin will—and there
you may hurl Sinan from his own tow-
ers."

Hassan shook his head and answered;
"I should like it well, for with this
magician my master also has an an-
cient quarrel. But he has other feuds
upon his hands," and he looked mean-
ingly at Wulf and Godwin, "and my
orders were to rescue the princess and
no more. Well, she has been rescued,
and some hundreds of heads have paid
the price of all that she has suffered.
Also that secret way of yours will be
safe enough by now. So there I let the
matter bide, glad enough that it has
ended thus. Only I warn you all—and
myself also—to walk warily, since, if I
know aught of him, Sinan's fedals will
henceforth dog the steps of every one
of us, striving to bring us to our ends
by murder. Now here come litters.
Enter them, all of you, and be borne to
the city, who have ridden far enough
today. I go to count the slain and will
join you presently in the citadel."

So the bearers came and lifted up
Wulf and helped Godwin from his
horse—for now that all was over he
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Rosamund and Masouda. Placing them
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the Orontes into the city of Emesa,
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The four—Rosamund, Masouda, God-
win and Wulf—after the hurts of Wulf
had been tended by a skilled doctor,
went to their beds, whence they did not
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Hassan! Prince Hassan! Is it in-
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The emir looked at her, her long hair
down, her face stained, her veil torn,
and still clad in the silk and gleaming
with which she had been decked
as the bride elect of Al-Je-bal. Then,
to the earth he bent his knee, while
the gracious Saracens watched, and,
kissing the hem of her garment, he kiss-

ed her. "Soldiers, salute!" he said. "Before
stands the Lady Rose of the
World, Princess of Baalbec and niece
of our lord, Salah-ed-din, commander
of the faithful."

Then, in stately salutation to this
queen, outworn, but still queenly

she bowed.

Why, it is our merchant of the
wedged wine—none other! Oh, Sir
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of the accursed fort of the mountain,
Sinan, and that you are now safe in our
city of Emesa, guarded by many thou-
sands of our soldiers, and with you a
woman named Masouda and your kin-
men, the two Frankish knights, by whose
skill in arms and courage you were saved.
Now, this is to command you to come
to our court at Damascus so soon as you
may be fit to travel, knowing that here
you will be received with love and honor.
Also I invite your kinsmen to accompany
you, since I knew their father and would
welcome knights who have done such
great deeds, and the woman Masouda
with them; or, if they prefer it, all three
of them may return to their own lands
and peoples.

Hasten, my niece, Lady Rose of the
World; hasten, for my spirit seeks you,
and my eyes desire to look upon you. In
the name of Allah, greeting.

"You have heard," said Rosamund,
as Godwin finished reading the scroll.
"Now, my cousins, what will you do?"
"What else but go with you, whom
we have come so far to seek?" an-
swered Wulf, and Godwin nodded his
head in assent.

"And you, Masouda?"
"I, lady? Oh, I go also, since were I
to return yonder," and she nodded to-
ward the mountains, "my greeting
would be one that I do not wish."

"Do you note their words, Prince
Hassan?" asked Rosamund.

"I expected no other," he answered,
with a low. "Only, knights, you must
give me a promise. It is that upon
this journey you will not attempt to
escape with the princess whom you
have followed from oversen to rescue
her out of the hand of Salah-ed-din."

Godwin drew from his tunic the
cross which Rosamund had left him in
the hall at Steeple, and, saying, "I
swear upon this holy symbol that dur-
ing our journey to Damascus I will at-
tempt no escape with or without my
cousin Rosamund," he kissed it.

"And I swear the same upon my
sword," added Wulf.

"A security that I like better," said
Hassan, with a smile, "but in truth,
knights, your word is enough for me."
Then he looked at Masouda and went
on, still smiling: "Nay, it is useless, for
women who have dwelt yonder, oaths
have no meaning. Lady, we must be
content to watch you, since my lord has
bidden you to his city, which, fair and
brave as you are, to be plain, I would
not have done."

That same afternoon they started for
Damascus, a great army of horsemen.
In its midst, guarded by a thousand
spears, Rosamund was borne in a lit-
ter. In front of her rode Hassan, with
his yellow robed bodyguard; at her
side Masouda, and behind the breth-
ren, mounted upon ambling palfreys.

After them, led by slaves, came the
chargers Flame and Smoke and then
rank upon rank of turbaned Saracens.

That evening they camped in the
desert and next morning, surrounded
by wandering tribes of Bedouins,
mounted on their camels, marched on
again, sleeping that night in the an-
cient fortress of Baalbec, whereof the
garrison and people, having been
warned by runners of the rank and
titles of Rosamund, came out to do her
homage as their lady.

Hearing of it, she left her litter and,
mounting a splendid horse which they
had sent her as a present, rode to
meet them, the brethren, in full armor
and once more bestriding Flame and
Smoke, beside her and a guard of
Saladin's own mamelukes behind. Sol-
emn, turbaned men, who had been
commanded so to do by messengers
from the sultan, brought her the keys
of the gates on a cushion, minstrels
and soldiers marched before her, while
crowding the walls and running along-
side came the citizens in their thou-
sands. Thus she went on, through the
open gates, past the towering columns
of ruined temples once a home of the
worship of heathen gods, through
courts and vaults to the citadel sur-
rounded by its gardens that in dead
ages had been the Acropolis of forgot-
ten Roman emperors.

Here in the portico Rosamund turned
her horse and received the salutations
of the multitude as though she also
were one of the world's rulers. In-
deed, it seemed to the brethren watch-
ing her as she sat upon the great
white horse and surveyed the shouting,
bending crowd with flashing eyes,
splendid in her bearing and beautiful
to see, a prince at her stirrup and an
army at her back, that truly by blood
and nature she was fitted to be a
queen. Yet as Rosamund sat thus the
pride passed from her face and her
eyes fell.

"Of what are you thinking?" asked
Godwin at her side.

"That I would we were back among
the summer fields at Steeple," she an-
swered, "for those who are lifted high
fall low. Prince Hassan, give the cap-
tains and people my thanks and bid
them be gone. I would rest."

Thus for the first and last time did
Rosamund behold her ancient fief of
Baalbec, which her grandsire, the great
Ayoub, had ruled before her.

That night there was feasting in the
mighty, immemorial halls and singing
and minstrelsy and the dancing of fair
women and the giving of gifts. For
Baalbec, where birth and beauty were
ever welcome, did honor to its lady,
the favored niece of the mighty Salah-
ed-din.

At dawn the next day on orders re-
ceived from the sultan they left Baal-
bec, escorted by the army, and many
of the notables of the town. That same

night they passed through the gates of
the city of Damascus, Bride of the
Earth, set amid its seven streams and
ringed about with gardens, one of the
most beautiful and perhaps the most
ancient city in the world.

Along the narrow streets, bordered
by yellow, flat roofed houses, they rode
slowly, looking now at the motley,
many colored crowds, who watched
them with grave interest, and now at
the stately buildings, domed mosques
and towering minarets, which every-
where stood out against the deep blue
of the evening sky. Thus at length
they came to an open space planted
like a garden, beyond which was seen a
huge and fantastic castle that Hassan
told them was the palace of Salah-ed-
din. In its courtyard they were parted,
Rosamund being led away by officers
of state, while the brethren were taken
to chambers that had been prepared,
where after they had bathed they were
served with food.

Scarcely had they eaten it when Has-
san appeared and bade them follow
him. Passing down various passages
and across a court, they came to some
guarded doors. Next came more pas-
sages and a curtain, beyond which they
found themselves in a small domed
room lit by hanging silver lamps and
paved in tessellated marbles, strewn
with rich rugs and furnished with
cushioned couches.

At a sign from Hassan the brethren
stood still in the center of the room
and looked about them wondering.
The place was empty and very silent.
They felt afraid—of what they knew
not. Presently curtains upon its far-
ther side opened and through them
came a man turbaned and wrapped in
a dark robe, who stood awhile in the
shadow, gazing at them beneath the
lamps.

The man was not very tall, and slight
in build, yet about him was much
majesty, although his garb was such
as the humblest might have worn. He
came forward, lifting his head, and
they saw that his features were small
and finely cut; that he was bearded,
and beneath his broad brow shone
thoughtful, yet at times piercing, eyes,
which were brown in hue. Now the
Prince Hassan sank to his knees and
touched the marble with his forehead,
and, guessing that they were in the
presence of the mighty monarch Sala-
din, the brethren saluted in their west-
ern fashion. Presently the sultan spoke
in a low, even voice to Hassan, to
whom he motioned that he should rise,
saying:

"I can see that you trust these
knights, emir," and he pointed to their
great swords.

"Sire," was the answer, "I trust them
as I trust myself. They are brave and
honorable men, although they be in-
fidels."

of the accursed fort of the mountain,
Sinan, and that you are now safe in our
city of Emesa, guarded by many thou-
sands of our soldiers, and with you a
woman named Masouda and your kin-
men, the two Frankish knights, by whose
skill in arms and courage you were saved.
Now, this is to command you to come
to our court at Damascus so soon as you
may be fit to travel, knowing that here
you will be received with love and honor.
Also I invite your kinsmen to accompany
you, since I knew their father and would
welcome knights who have done such
great deeds, and the woman Masouda
with them; or, if they prefer it, all three
of them may return to their own lands
and peoples.

Hasten, my niece, Lady Rose of the
World; hasten, for my spirit seeks you,
and my eyes desire to look upon you. In
the name of Allah, greeting.

"You have heard," said Rosamund,
as Godwin finished reading the scroll.
"Now, my cousins, what will you do?"
"What else but go with you, whom
we have come so far to seek?" an-
swered Wulf, and Godwin nodded his
head in assent.

"And you, Masouda?"
"I, lady? Oh, I go also, since were I
to return yonder," and she nodded to-
ward the mountains, "my greeting
would be one that I do not wish."

"Do you note their words, Prince
Hassan?" asked Rosamund.

"I expected no other," he answered,
with a low. "Only, knights, you must
give me a promise. It is that upon
this journey you will not attempt to
escape with the princess whom you
have followed from oversen to rescue
her out of the hand of Salah-ed-din."

Godwin drew from his tunic the
cross which Rosamund had left him in
the hall at Steeple, and, saying, "I
swear upon this holy symbol that dur-
ing our journey to Damascus I will at-
tempt no escape with or without my
cousin Rosamund," he kissed it.

"And I swear the same upon my
sword," added Wulf.

"A security that I like better," said
Hassan, with a smile, "but in truth,
knights, your word is enough for me."
Then he looked at Masouda and went
on, still smiling: "Nay, it is useless, for
women who have dwelt yonder, oaths
have no meaning. Lady, we must be
content to watch you, since my lord has
bidden you to his city, which, fair and
brave as you are, to be plain, I would
not have done."

That same afternoon they started for
Damascus, a great army of horsemen.
In its midst, guarded by a thousand
spears, Rosamund was borne in a lit-
ter. In front of her rode Hassan, with
his yellow robed bodyguard; at her
side Masouda, and behind the breth-
ren, mounted upon ambling palfreys.

After them, led by slaves, came the
chargers Flame and Smoke and then
rank upon rank of turbaned Saracens.

That evening they camped in the
desert and next morning