

BY E. HOFFMAN PRICE

Author of "Allah Sends a Reaper," "Guns for Ethiopia," etc.



Wayne's captors rode like madmen; and when he reeled from weariness, they tied him to his saddle

Heart of a Thief

One for the book: How a smart doctor made a smart investment in Kurdistan; and how in proper time—though in somewhat unorthodox fashion—he realized one hundred percent on that investment

HARVEY Wayne, M. D., Ph. D., Sc. D. was roughing it. The soldiers detailed by the King of Iraq were too thirsty to curse, and the muleteers were too tired to beat their shaggy beast. But Doctor Wayne sat easily in the saddle of his cream-colored donkey.

Sweat cut channels in the dust that grayed his lean cheeks; his bushy brows and close-clipped mustache were now

modeled in the dust that walled the horizon in bronze. He ignored discomfort, and looked ahead.

A new decoration was in his baggage, but the King of Iraq was entirely out of his mind. The king would live. Whenever worried doctors consulted Wayne, the patient lived.

It was all routine. There was no hearty handclasp, no personal reassurance. Your garage mechanic took far more personal

interest in your Ford than Wayne took in you. He had made a million that way, and could afford to follow his costly hobby.

Harvey Wayne was going to Kurdistan to capture the world's last fine rug. It hung in the tomb of Imam Ayyub, a Moslem saint. It was the work of Maqsoud of Kashan, who wove as no man before or since had woven a rug. It was holy as the spot it decorated, but Wayne wanted it and he was going after it. That Uthman Khan would consider the mere mention of purchase as blasphemy never occurred to Wayne.

As he rode into Kurdistan, he said to himself, "Lucky the king's heart didn't cut up a week sooner, or I couldn't make this trip."

Wayne was, after all, thinking of his patient.

Hills finally cropped up out of the brazen haze, and blocked the advance. The mules filed in and out among the simmering boulders of a dry watercourse. Then the air became thinner, and the trail steeper.

Ahead, he could now see the Zagros Range, high and purple and white-capped; with gray granite bulwarks, and patches of green that blended into blue. The red earth of an old landside gashed the iron black shadows of a hill.

A puff of dust kicked up just in front of the lead mule, and a shrill whine told Wayne that someone was shooting at the caravan. A second, then a third; the muleteers howled, the beasts scattered as the drivers bolted for the rocks and scraggly brush. In this, they were a split second behind the Iraq soldiers, and only a little ahead of the thin, far-off *smack-smack-smack* of high-powered rifles.

Wayne had not quite committed himself to dismounting when he saw the stirring close at hand. Men were riding from rocks that could not possibly have hidden a goat; six men, loaded down with bandoliers of cartridges that gleamed in the setting sun.

They were taller than the doctor; he was an inch more than two yards high.

Their turbans were enormous, their jackets of more colors than he could count, and they wore an amazing collection of silver mounted daggers and revolvers.

WAYNE reached for his glasses, carefully polished them, set them into place to crown his jutting nose. The leader of the horsemen had gray eyes, like Wayne, and a nose just as commanding, except that it was beaked, with flaring nostrils. Wayne said, casually, "Good evening, gentlemen."

He spoke English and French and German, naturally enough; he had a smattering of Syrian Arabic, enough for bazaar trading. The Kurdish dialect was entirely beyond him, but Wayne was not perturbed because his interpreter was crouching behind a rock and praying.

The tall man with the enormous turban and mustaches answered, "*Bon soir, monsieur. I do not spik the Inglese, but I parle français; you comprehend him?*"

Wayne answered, "When that ass of an interpreter gets his wits and comes out, I'll tell him I won't need him. I'm Dr. Wayne—"

"Of course." The rock-faced man gravely bowed and touched a big and grimy hand successively to turban and eyes and heart. "My spies know all about you. I am Uthman Khan of the Hakkari Kurds, and you are the friend of the King of Iraq. In honor of his majesty's recovery, I won't take the guns away from his soldiers."

He dismounted, and Wayne followed suit. The Kurdish prince drew a dagger, dug into his saddle bags and produced two large cucumbers. He said, "Try one, doctor. My wife sent them from our garden."

They seated themselves on a hot rock and ate. Wayne called for cigarettes, and had his servant offer the *khan* a pack. "You came to meet me?"

"No. Just my routine border patrol. But you are welcome." Uthman Khan used his dagger point to pick a cucumber fragment from his teeth. "As a friend of my neighboring king, you are very welcome."

Wayne was quite at ease with royalty. He had seen too many kings and ex-kings in sick rooms to be impressed. A famous *hakim* was welcome where other strangers were not. There was no conceit about Wayne. He took himself for granted, and as he mounted up to ride at the *khan's* right, he reflected, "The king had precious little to do with this reception."

He was right; at all events, the king's soldiers were praising Allah and hurrying back to the sweltering plain.

By night, Uthman Khan and his guest camped in an upland meadow. They ate sour milk and leather-tough bread and onions; there was cheese, rock-hard and gray. Wayne liked this crude fare, and he rested well, with his sleeping bag spread out on granite outcroppings.

Each day's march brought him nearer the *khan's* mountain capital and the shrine of Imam Ayyub. It made him younger, fresher, just thinking of the holy carpet.

The muddled descriptions of it danced into color behind his eyelids before he awoke of a morning. Four hundred years ago, Maqsoud of Kashan had woven it. There was nothing like it in the whole world. It was fitting that Dr. Wayne should have this holy fabric. There were too many saints, most of them imposters.

At last, one evening, he saw the rim-rock that hemmed in green meadows, where black-fleeced sheep grazed on the gentle slopes of a bowl-shaped valley. The sun dipped down and reddened the gray crags, and put rose and gilt on the masonry and dried mud brick of the town that perched on the further ridge.

"That is my capital." Uthman Khan gestured. "No man has entered or left without the permission of my family for eighteen hundred years."

"Saladin's ancestors lived here," Wayne observed, with hardly enough inflection to make it a question.

"Yes. Salah-ad-Din Yusuf the son of Ayyub the son of Shirkuh, was a Kurd from Kurdistan."

Wayne scanned the rocky horizon before purple shadows blotted out all detail.

Somewhat aside from the walled city, and in the level spot between crags, he saw a small white cupola; it was like half a golf ball set up on a child's block. An ugly little building, whitewashed rock or mud bricks. He gestured. "A guardhouse?"

Uthman Khan touched his forehead, his lips, his heart. "No. That is the tomb of Imam Ayyub, may Allah be well pleased with him. He will intercede for us on the Day of Fate, and beg Allah's pardon for us."

IN THE morning, Wayne stood on the lowest of the terraced roofs of the *khan's* bleak fortress. Walls two feet thick. The windows were small slits cut through masonry, and unglazed.

The floors were rammed earth, grease-stained; smoke-smudge rafters supported withes which in their turn supported the clay of roof and ceiling.

Wayne was still shivering from the winds that had whistled through his room all night. He washed in an earthen bowl. A grimy servant wearing baggy pantaloons, three daggers, and a flintlock pistol, brought him a tray of apricots and nectarines and bread like a strip of raw-hide. As he ate, Wayne looked down at the tall women who hurried to the well sunk in the public square.

They were shapely and unveiled. Velvet caps hid their heavy hair, and golden coins festooned their headgear. Some were barefooted, but all went swaying along, quite unaware of the rocks, the pools of mud, the loud-smelling offal of the narrow street.

Dogs snarled and fought for bones and rubbish housewives dumped from their windows. Flies, no longer paralyzed from the night chill, began to buzz. Horses and camels, coming from the *serai* where traders lodged with their bales, added to the scent of the town.

Wayne adjusted his glasses. His nostrils crinkled. He was thinking, "Look at the surface drainage that must leak through the coping of that well. Sacred cat, why aren't they all dead of cholera or typhoid!"

Vultures soared overhead. They were the street cleaning department. Below, blind men were begging. Children toddled, clinging to their mothers' gaudy skirts. Infants, riding pick-a-back, had eyelids blackened with flies. "No wonder, filth and glare, they've got ophthalmia! Need sewers and a good doctor up here."

Later, Uthman Khan came to greet him. A servant followed with a tea service. There were small cups of Persian blue, well flyspecked. In this they were like lumps of crude sugar, which were shattered into shape with a little hammer. But a collector cannot be too fastidious.

The *khan's* son had come. He looked like his father, but he stood well apart. Despite his black beard and fierce mustaches, and twenty-odd years, he would not presume to sit in his father's presence or even draw near without permission.

Uthman Khan's voice was alive with pride when he pointed and said to his guest, "My son, Shirkuh. He has led ten raids, without losing a man. He keeps our flocks well built up."

"Er . . . talented young fellow," Wayne said, bowing to acknowledge Shirkuh's presence. "Might get hurt, though."

Uthman Khan missed the irony entirely. He said, "I have six other sons, though some are too young for raiding. So they tend sheep and hunt wolves."

Shirkuh's glance was almost as unblinking and wild as that of the falcon balanced on Uthman Khan's wrist, just as grave and reserved. The bird's talons sank deep into the leather wrist guard as he eyed the stranger.

Finally, after exchanging inquiries about health and the night's sleep—Wayne learned rapidly—he said, "I would like to pay my respects to the keeper of Ayyub's tomb."

The *khan* nodded and rose.

A SHORT ride brought Wayne and his host to the tomb. Near it was a brush leanto, with one side walled up with mud and rocks to check some of the winds that whistled by night. A spring bubbled

from a clump of shrubbery. The guardian of the shrine was drawing water. He straightened creaky knees, and stood there, staring the callers full in the eye.

He seemed amazed. His white beard twitched, but his toothless gums for a moment failed to bite off any words. During that moment, Wayne got his glimpse of the holy carpet.

The dirt floor of the shrine was swept clean. The saint was buried under a slab of uncarved stone. The rug hung on the wall, filling most of the further end of the cubicle. It might have been five feet by nine, perhaps less. Dust coated its nape, for it was too holy to be touched.

Wane stood there, as rigid as the ragged old guardian.

The *khan* was saying, "Take off your shoes, and you may go closer." But Wayne did not hear this. He had but one sense left. A miracle blossomed from that dirt wall. Only the dyemaster who had dipped the wool could explain that cream hue like a leopard's flanks, that solemn green, that red which was both dark and bright, that transparent sapphire, that peach blossom, and that color of time-aged golden coins.

Then a voice startled Wayne. "Ah—of course—my shoes," he began to say, before realizing that it was not Uthman Khan who spoke.

The guardian was screeching, "O thou unbelieving dog, thou father and lover of pigs!"

He reached out a skinny hand, picked up the earthen jar and hurled it. Wayne and the *khan* recoiled. The vessel splattered to bits. The old man seized dried cakes of dung he collected for his cooking fire. He threw them at infidel and prince alike. He cursed the *khan*, saying, "Thou lover of infidels! Allah curse thee, Allah curse thy grandfather, Allah curse whoever curses not thy grandfather!"

When Mahmud was breathless and out of ammunition, the *khan* said, "He is old and pious. You must forgive him."

Wayne suddenly felt old and weary. His shoulders sagged as he went back toward the horses. This must indeed be a sacred

place. when Mahmud could revile a prince and not be reproved. Any other man would have been cut down.

That night, stuffed with mutton stew and wishing he had brought a more powerful bug powder, Wayne lay in his room and pondered, "This fellow loves guns. Maybe if I asked the King of Iraq for a jackass battery or some machine guns to give the *khan*, I could bring up the subject . . ."

This was Persian territory, as nearly as it was anyone's but Uthman Khan's. But that made no difference to Wayne. His sleep was full of phrases to tempt the blunt *khan's* fancies . . .

The *khan* said, on the following day, "*Hakim*, my people will revere your name if you give them medicine."

Wayne answered, "There isn't much I can do. I brought only a first-aid kit for my servants and mule drivers. But I'll try."

FOR the first time in years, he laid his hands on a patient. After all, he told himself he had to humor these savages.

When he gave Adela Khanoum a dose of salts and told her to keep off her feet for a few days, he got an ironic pleasure out of her thanks; she kissed his hand. Mrs. Vice President back home would have paid five thousand bucks, if her doctor had been crazy enough to ask him for a consultation. Patients never approached Doctor Wayne.

He had enough humor to relish it. He looked up from his field kit, and saw a cat nursing a litter of scrawny kittens as she lay on a bale of *jild-al-farass* "mare's hide." It was apricot pulp, pressed thin and dried and rolled up like a bolt of calico. With leathery bread, it often made a Kurdish breakfast.

He said to Uthman Khan, "Your Highness, tell your people not to let cats crawl all over the foodstuff. It's bad for the digestion, particularly when your cats prowl around in those alleys."

The *khan's* face lengthened, but a guest is a guest. "I shall mention it at once." He

drew his pistol and fired a slug past the cat's ears. She jumped, and her kittens followed her.

Uthman Khan holstered the Browning automatic and added, apologetically, "We like cats, so I would not kill her. Cats are clean. The Prophet—on whom be peace and Allah's mercy—he loved them."

When Wayne finally spoke of the surface drainage that leaked from stables and cesspools into the city well, Uthman Khan's politeness was strained. "Our fathers lived this way, *hakim*," he frigidly said.

But he remembered the courtesy due a guest, even an infidel, and made show of having sand strewn about the well coping.

That night, Wayne thought it was time to do something about it all. He wiped the mutton grease from his lips and fingers, and drained his little cup of syrupy tea. "Your Highness," he boldly began, "I have not told you why I came to Kurdistan."

The *khan* shrugged and lighted an American cigarette. "That is as God please. You are welcome. We do not ask."

"I collect rugs," Wayne said. "Rare and old pieces."

"God does what he will do," Uthman Khan tactfully replied; he was thinking that infidels are crazy. Who for example, wants an old rug? This man was doubtless very rich, and could afford new ones. Then he said, "Since that pleases you, *hakim*, be so good as to take this old one we sit on. There are also others, even more ragged and worn."

To anyone but Dr. Wayne, the gift would have been magnificent. It had been woven in Bijar. Its broad border was of black sheep's fleece, undyed. The medallion in the center was Persian, the ground was Herati; and the scarlet was like a lily petal, not a flat shade but a rippling color that lived and danced before the eye. Nowhere except in Kurdistan do dyemasters know how to make scarlet.

Wayne thanked Uthman Khan, and then went on, "Your Highness, name any sum you can count, and I will pay it. If

you give me the carpet of the shrine of Imam Ayyub."

The *khan's* mustaches twitched. Finally he made his voice level. "*Hakim*, I see that you do not understand us. Mahmud, guardian of the shrine, cursed me for bringing you near it."

"Fifty thousand dollars," Wayne said. "If you do not like cash, I will buy machine guns. Cannons. Any weapons you wish."

"O man, you are a doctor. If you had served men well, you would be poor. You have served only the rich. Now that you have been our guest for three days, we will escort you to the border. Doubtless years will pass before we see you again, *hakim*."

Wayne rose. A servant followed, carrying the rug on which Wayne had sat. And in the morning, tall horsemen escorted him to the border.

THE doctor, some days later, was glad when he saw the simmering plain of Mesopotamia, the barren crag and the old fortress of Tekrit, the broad Tigris winding muddily through hell. He had played and he had lost and he was weary.

There had been firing, one night, to make the muleteers howl, pray, and hide themselves in caves. Horsemen had clattered past; horsemen of the Hakkari Kurds, circling the camp, then charging up a murderous slope.

"Another feud," Wayne told himself. "More sheep stealing."

He did not know that Uthman Khan's son, leading a raid, had sent his best riders out to be sure that the departing guest would not be harmed.

And now the mountaineers were returning. They filed into the firelight of Wayne's camp, tall and dusty and stern. The horses were spent, the men weary; two of the party were wounded, but they ignored this. As their leader addressed the interpreter, Wayne wondered why they had come out of the mountains after him.

Something was wrong. He could feel their wrath and their grief and their dis-

pair. Their speech was brief, yet it seemed endless. Finally the interpreter made things clear.

"The *khan's* son was wounded in a raid. Go back with us and cure him."

"I must return to Bagdad," Wayne answered. "What is more, your *khan* gave me safe conduct."

The leader snorted. "That ended last night. Now you are no longer our guest." He drew his pistol. "You are going with us, and Shirkuh's life is on your head."

"See here," Wayne contended, "I didn't wound Shirkuh."

"Tell the *khan*," was the answer.

"Where is Shirkuh?"

"They hurried him home, while some of us went after you."

This was once when a reputation was a dangerous thing. Wayne was soon beyond worrying about the unreasonable threat. His captors were taking shortcuts, and riding like madmen. When weariness finally made Wayne reel in the saddle, they tied him; and they left him tied, except when a horse fell and could not rise again.

There were no spare mounts left when the party crossed the trail that cut through the rimrock of the bowl-shaped valley. The haggard riders hustled Wayne to the drafty castle where Uthman Khan waited. Servants stood by with flaring torches.

"Hurry!" the *khan* said, and gestured toward the pallet of straw and sheepskins.

The torchbearers shifted, and Wayne saw his patient. What was left of Shirkuh dismayed him. Aside from bandages of turban shawls, they had done nothing for the wounded man; not when there was a world-famed *hakim* within reach. "Get the first-aid kit from my saddle bags," Wayne said, "and heat some water. Have someone find opium."

He had ridden so long that the floor seemed to gallop under his feet. But he managed to kneel and strip off Shirkuh's blood-drenched velvet jacket. All Wayne could do was to shake his head. There were bullets to extract, sword cuts to stitch; bits of leather and cloth and dirt contaminated each wound.

"He's as good as dead!" Wayne's voice cracked. "It's a wonder he's still alive. Get out, all of you! I'll see what I can do."

But Uthman Khan did not leave. He came closer and drew his pistol. "I will watch you. Do not make any mistakes. If he does not recover, I fire. You brushed Death's hand from a king; do as much for my son."

Wayne had scarcely more than the simplest instruments and his skill. This was a hospital case, but the *khan* did not understand these things. Wayne wiped the sweat away from his forehead. "You're crazy! How can I cure him?"

"You cured a king."

"I—I—see here, you can't shoot me—"

"That is the law. You cursed my son, who had never before lost so many men in a raid. You were angry because I refused to sell the holy carpet. So you must cure him."

WAYNE knelt beside the muttering man. There was a moment of dizziness. For an insane moment, he wanted to laugh. Then he controlled himself, washed his hands, and set to work. For the first time in years, a patient had a personal meaning.

Hours passed. There was nothing to do but watch the wounded Shirkuh. Armed men came and went. They brought grilled mutton and bread and fruit, but Uthman Khan gestured, and they went away. He did not eat. He did not drink. He squatted there, rigid; his pistol must have wavered, during the hours that dragged on, but Wayne thought not.

The sun rose. The town was silent. If women went to the well, they did not chatter. Wayne's eyes glazed. Sometimes he took brandy, sometimes strong tea as he sat there, watching, nodding while death and the days mocked him.

But Shirkuh lived. Kurdish vitality, and not any man's skill, had saved the doctor's life. Wayne said to Uthman Khan, "Do you mean that you would have killed me?"

"Of course. That is our law."

"Killing a doctor who fails?"

"You don't understand. Our own doctors, no. But you are a foreigner. If you cause the loss of a life in this tribe, why then someone in your tribe must die. You are the only one of your people among us."

"But a native doctor, he'd have done as much damage."

Uthman Khan was patient, for he was happy and grateful; so he went on with the explanation: "It would not have been punishment, don't you see? But merely to reduce the strength of your tribe, in the way the strength of ours had been reduced. Now, if we killed a native doctor, for letting my son die, then we would only hurt ourselves, for we would be two weaker, instead of just one."

Wayne, however, saw a new chance of success. He sent a messenger to Mosul, with a radiogram saying that the doctor's return to New York would be indefinitely postponed. There was another message, this one to Bagdad. Wayne said to Uthman Khan, "I am asking the King of Iraq to send me something which will be a gift to you and your people."

"Guns?" The *khan's* deep-set eyes gleamed.

"No. Better than that. Wait and see."

During the intervening days, Wayne managed to make his peace with Muhmud. Barefooted, he was permitted to go within a yard of the arched entrance of Iman Ayyub's tomb. Old Mahmud may have misunderstood the awe in Wayne's face, and the wonder in his eyes. His seamed face became almost amiable, and he invited Wayne into the little leanto of brush and rock and turf.

There Wayne drank tea, ate bread and dried apricots and cheese. Mahmud said, finally, "I am sorry that Allah will cast you into hell to roast forever, with all the other infidels."

Uthman Khan translated this, though Wayne was beginning to pick up enough of the harsh Kurdish dialect to catch the drift.

Mahmud would not have long to live.

No one knew how old he was, but his trembling hand and bleared eyes told their story. Wayne wondered who would follow as guardian of the tomb, sweeping its floor, whitewashing its walls, chanting verses of the Koran in its duskiness.

Wayne began riding again. He mounted the *khan's* best horses, and grooms respectfully followed him, lest on some long jaunt, a prowling member of an enemy tribe snipe the *hakim*. They took him down tortuous ravines, over deadly passes where only a mountain horse could go.

Men far older than Wayne could gallop day and night, wearing out one horse after another as they crossed Uthman Khan's territory from border to border. And Wayne, who had succeeded in everything he had tried, knew that he could finally do as well as any Kurdish rider. But it would take months before he could hope to snatch the holy carpet, and outrace the alarm.

ONE day the gift arrived from Bagdad. Camels and donkeys grunted under the weight of medicines and instruments, an operating table, sterilizers, everything needed for a small field hospital; between the King of Iraq and a Bagdad supply house, these things had been assembled.

Tall mountaineers, rifles slung over their shoulders, stalked solemnly through the town, pouring creosote into the corners and alleys which the women had cleaned up. Offal was burned or buried. The stables ceased breeding flies, and the butchers screened their stalls with netting, so that freshly cut meat would be red instead of black. And one section of a warehouse stuffed with hides and wool and grain became a dispensary and hospital.

"By Allah," Uthman Khan said, one morning, as women and children waited while Wayne set a shepherd's broken leg, "I was wrong when I said that you had become rich, serving the rich and neglecting the poor."

"Some day," Wayne answered, "I must go back to my own people. By then, a few of you will know how to take my

place. Just as I am learning to ride. From seeing and practice."

He had his own horses now, so that he could ride without getting an animal from the *khan's* stables. He had too many horses, in fact; they were gifts. And he began to wear the boots and baggy trousers, the vests embroidered by the wives of his patients; he became used to the conical cap and the massive turban of silken shawls.

The dogs now knew his scent, and ceased barking. No one thought twice, except to bless his name, when he rode by nights—sometimes with a midwife, to some far-off tribesman's hut. Half a dozen infant Kurds had been named "Wayne." They ceased calling him an infidel.

Thus, one night Wayne readily passed the sentries who crouched at the gate. The mountaineers were bundled in sheepskin coats. They looked up and saluted him. One muttered to his fellow, "By Allah, this man would be almost a saint, if he weren't an infidel . . ."

Ahead, Wayne saw the white cupola of the tomb. The moon had not yet risen, and his horse was dark chestnut. A wind whined as it polished the granite rimrock; it bit into the doctor's jacket, made his eyes water, and stung his face.

He had won a new color. Mountaineering had tightened his cheeks and bronzed them. He was young and supple again, and he flexed from the waist, easily, reins and weight helping his horse down the treacherous goat trail into the ravine.

Rocks clattered down into the gloom below, and splashed into the foaming stream that was little short of ice cold. Water broke against the horse's deep chest, foamed along his flanks; it drenched Wayne's red boots and went over the tops. But he no longer cared about wet feet.

Finally he dismounted and left his horse in a clump of junipers.

Soon he heard Mahmud. He did not like the sound of the old man's breathing. It was choked. There were vague rustlings as the guardian pitched and tossed on

his pallet of straw and sheepskin. He might wake up any moment.

Wayne did not want to harm the old man, but it would be hard to fight him off, if fanatic fury drove him. For all Wayne's new honor with the Hakkari Kurds, news of this attempt would cost him his life.

The far-off silvering of a high peak predicted moonrise. Already, there was a ghostly softening of the gloom, and the tomb was more than blank white. Wayne took another few paces. Inside, he could discern a vague shimmering, as if the holy carpet's nape caged and concentrated all that first moon glow.

A CRACKING twig made him whirl. There was Mahmud, white beard rippling; turban white and tunic white and ragged white pantaloons. Wayne could not speak. He stood there, hearing the guardian's choking breath. When would he start cursing and screeching?

Then Mahmud said, "Allah heard my prayers, O *hakim*! There were devils choking me, and my heart is not right. And lo, you came. There is no God but Allah, and—"

He crumpled. Wayne caught the skinny old fellow and carried him to the leanto. He fed the smoldering coals. He gave Mahmud brandy. Then he galloped crazily back to town for his kit.

Mahmud was unconscious when Wayne returned. At the gate, Wayne had said to the sentries, "O men! The guardian of the tomb is a dead man unless he remains quiet and undisturbed. Do not expect me in the morning, unless he is better."

The sentries gaped. One made as if to touch Wayne's sleeve. The other caught his hand, and both backed away a pace. One said, "By Allah, O *hakim*, thou knowest all things. We did not hear the old man cry out."

"Neither did I," Wayne brusquely said, riding on.

The men misunderstood this. They said to each other, "*Wallah*, he is a holy man, in his sleep Allah speaks to him."

Before midnight, Mahmud was out of danger. Perhaps Wayne had given him ten more years, perhaps twenty; perhaps a week—no man could say. Wayne was ceasing to take all the credit . . .

He laid out medicine, and said, "Take these as I explain, and do each day the things I tell you tonight. And Allah give you many years."

"You will be here early in the morning, *hakim*?"

"I may stay and watch all night. Now rest easy, Mahmud."

The old man was contented, and he went to sleep. Wayne sat there, frowning, until there was no doubt in his mind that Mahmud would survive.

He went to the door of the tomb. For a moment he heard the restive pawing of his horse, and the tinkle of curb chain. He stood there, drinking the rug with his eyes. For the first time, a man with shoes went into the shrine. Wayne's fingers tingled from the smoothness of the rug.

Then he withdrew his hand and shook his head. He muttered as he stumbled out, "Rats! Sending a patient a stiff bill is one thing. Looting him is another. Why'd he have to have that heart attack!"

When he went back to the guardian's leanto Wayne was thinking that once he got Mahmud well on his feet, it would be different. Then he'd be no patient . . .

BEFORE Mahmud had entirely lost his status as patient, the Hakkari Kurds decided that the time for vengeance was at hand. Too many men had died in Shirkuh's raid. Though no one held it against the *khan's* heir, he had to redeem himself.

Wayne watched the riders leave. With tribal warfare threatening, he could not take the rug.

Uthman knew that his son's succession to the title depended on the esteem of the tribe, so he let the full responsibility of war weight Shirkuh's broad shoulders. Yet Uthman fretted, in private.

"You are in a way of speaking an infidel, O *hakim*," he said, "but you are not

as other men. You live to serve. You heal our bodies and our minds."

"That is by the grace of Allah," Wayne gravely replied. "What is on your mind?"

"My son, Shirkuh. You saved him once. But he goes into greater danger. A danger that a man must face."

"That you have faced," Wayne cut in. "And he can endure it."

The *khan* smiled. "You have no son."

This reminded Wayne of his old self-sufficiency, and his fame suddenly seemed futile. He said, "Shirkuh may be wounded, and there will be no *hakim* to attend him?"

"No man can change what Allah wills, but foresight and wisdom can make a man fit better into that which is written."

Before he could check his tongue, Wayne's new heart spoke. "I will go, Uthman," he said, and called for his horse. "I know the way he went."

With the heart of a thief, he had scouted all those trails. But as he left, that afternoon, he was telling himself, "This will keep it from being thievery. This will make the rug a fair fee."

Along the trail, outposts told him which way to go. And often, along the disputed ground, one added, "But while you rest, there is a bullet you could dig from such a one. We met the dogs, and they ran, but a wild shot found a mark."

These things broke his rest. Wayne's shoulders began to sag, and his eyes glazed; he clung to the high pommel of his saddle. The holy carpet danced before his eyes as he scaled goat trails. He had to move slowly. Stealthy raiders might lurk. He became too tired to be afraid.

Then the silence of high peaks began to whisper. Over the space of four centuries, Maqsoud of Kashan spoke to him, told him how the dyes of that great rug were made, how the patterns had been born, how the wool had been selected. Bit by bit, the forgotten wisdom gathered about Wayne.

HE NEVER knew when the shooting began. He did not know how he had returned the fire. He was wounded, and

for the first time in his life, he had killed a man.

"I'm a Kurd," he said aloud. "I've become one of them. But I'm a doctor."

It was a scratch, no more, that drew blood from his ribs. Then there was a slug that had flattened against the hilt of his knife, knocking the breath out of him. He halted to confirm his suspicions. He heard men riding away. He had routed some of Shirkuh's enemies.

But he was a doctor. He heard a man groaning, very clearly now. The fellow was cursing, calling his companions sons of dogs for leaving him.

Perhaps he was cursing a doctor who rode on, ignoring suffering. For once, Wayne was not thinking of a fee. He was thinking of an oath he had taken, twenty years before. An oath he had forgotten.

Now that the first shock of the bullets wore off, Wayne felt the stab, the heat of blood trickling down his sheepskin coat. He wheeled his horse, and listened for a moment to the rocks that clattered down into the gaping blackness of a ravine. The wounded man was saying, "*La'nat 'ullah 'alaihim!*"

God's curse on the comrades who had abandoned him in their panic. There must be cowardly Kurds. None among the *Hakkiari*, but among the others. Wayne remembered what the blind singer had droned by the fire, when mutton smoked and made savory smells in the *khan's* castle.

*My eyes were turned toward the
solitude and the road,
And I rose and went to desert places.*

That fellow in the darkness above was an enemy, but he had done what tradition demanded. And he would rise and go to a desert place if Wayne delayed.

So he retraced his difficult course. He was too tired to speak the guttural language clearly, and maybe the man would not understand the dialect; but the doctor called, "Wait, I'll be with you, O man!"

Then he saw the turban's white blotch

in the gloom. He dismounted, unslung his kit. His legs were tricking him, and he stumbled once. He caught at the gnarled roots of a tree, then knelt slowly and bent over the groaning man.

A pistol blazed. Wayne saw the flame of it, but did not hear the sound, and did not choke from the fumes of sulphur that the black powder threw into his nostrils. He crumpled and a man laughed.

"O thou dog, thou thief with the heart of a thief!" At the sound of the shot, others came running. One caught the horse of the man they thought had come back to loot a fallen enemy. "The fool came to steal. What Hakkari is not a fool?"

No Hakkari would have fallen into that trap, unless he were young and reckless. Wayne did not know that his bullets had done no damage. The blaze of that muzzle-loading pistol spread; its color changed, and wove itself into patterns, the splendor of Maqsoud's last work.

Wayne did not feel hard hands strip off his embroidered vest, his sheepskin jacket, his red boots; the conical cap, the silken shawl wound in many turns. They left him naked on the cold rock, and later at their guard fire, they divided the loot.

"*Wallah*," they said, "We have trapped a kinsman of Uthman Khan! Look at this dagger. Look at this pistol."

In the morning, Shirkuh's patrols found Wayne before the scavengers had settled. They did not bury him under a cairn of rocks, as is the custom.

"God, by God, by the One True God!" the *khan's* son swore, "this was a holy man. He came to treat our wounds, and they killed him. We will take him to Imam Ayyub's tomb. We will bury him beside the Imam. *Wallah*, we will then have two saints to intercede with us."

This was done, and Wayne shared the holy carpet with a Moslem saint.

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Little Victory

There was a rough-house in the bazaar; three troop horses hamstringed and eight troopers hurt

Take a country like India, where snakes go to sleep in your shoe and bath salts turn up in the curry. Reform comes in small doses, with plenty of soda; but what you get tastes good

By JOHN KENT

WHEN Dale Hampton came to India she felt an immediate urge to reform that country the moment she landed. This is entirely natural in most newcomers who are worth their salt (and Dale was worth all the salt in the Atlantic Ocean which she had so recently crossed): because there is always room for improvement anywhere; but there is more than ample scope in Hindustan.

That she failed, is hardly to be wondered at. She failed in good company: Clive, John Nicholson, Lord Roberts and Gandhi had each failed before her. Yet

each had contributed something in the course of his efforts at reformation; and it stands to Dale's credit that her contribution was the making of a man from the raw material which was Larry Garnett of the Indian Police.

And if this success was entirely incidental and unpremeditated, this in no way detracts from her achievement.

Dale had married Major Tim Hampton when that officer was visiting friends in New York. He was a squadron commander in the Fiftieth Deccani Lancers and that gave him a certain glamor. So Dale decided to exchange the East Fifties for the East Indies.