

The Camel From Home

BY WILLIAM J. NEIDIG



RUBBED my eyes. I have never barraked two-humped Bactrians in Tibet nor one-humped Bisharins in Mesopotamia; neither have I ridden a tick-bitten hagheen through the Wady-el-Mek from Abu Goos to Khalifa in the western Sudan. But I know camels. A Nomanieh dromedary in the Sand Hills of Nebraska! I should not have been more surprised at meeting a Kilimanjaro giraffe.

But if I was surprised at seeing the aristocrat of Egypt on the north road out of Welton, Nebraska, U.S.A., I was distinctly startled when I looked at his rider. Perched upon the summit of the single dromedarian hump, his feet crossed in front of him over the front pommel of a white jujube saddle, was Sam Blaine, foreman of Brule's cattle-ranch on Cherry Creek. Sam, who rode a horse like a king, seemed to shrivel to zero under the questions in my eyes. I had known him for fifteen years in all kinds of moral weather, but never before had I seen him looking actually shame-stricken. It was as if I had caught him riding a rocking-horse.

"K-r-r-r-r-r, k-r-r-r-r-r!" said Sam.

This I knew was colloquial for the Arabian *nukh*, the command to kneel. Colloquial Arabian in the mouth of Nebraska Sam! However, the camel seemed to understand, and promptly barraked in the sand of the road, folding up first his front legs and then his hind ones in the best dromedarian manner; whereupon his rider sheepishly climbed down from his perch.

"Glad to see you," he lied, boldly.

"And I you," I said. "Who's your friend?"

"You mean this ostrich-headed mule?"

"I didn't ask you *what* it was, but *who*. *Esmuh, eh?*"

But Sam hadn't gone beyond Arabian camel talk, and I translated my question into the English, "What's its name?"

"Simon Brule calls him Sirdar. Devil would be nearer at that."

"But, great guns, Sam! Where did you get a camel? What's he doing out here? This is America. Who owns him? You?"

Sam seemed genuinely grieved. "Simon Brule owns him. He bought him—that's where he got him. I'm only riding him to town for Simon."

"Simon Brule wasted his money on a camel? The closest man in the Sand Hills?"

"He wasted it for a purpose," said Sam. "He's been trying to buy out Nick Simmons, on our north. He bought the camel to beat down the price."

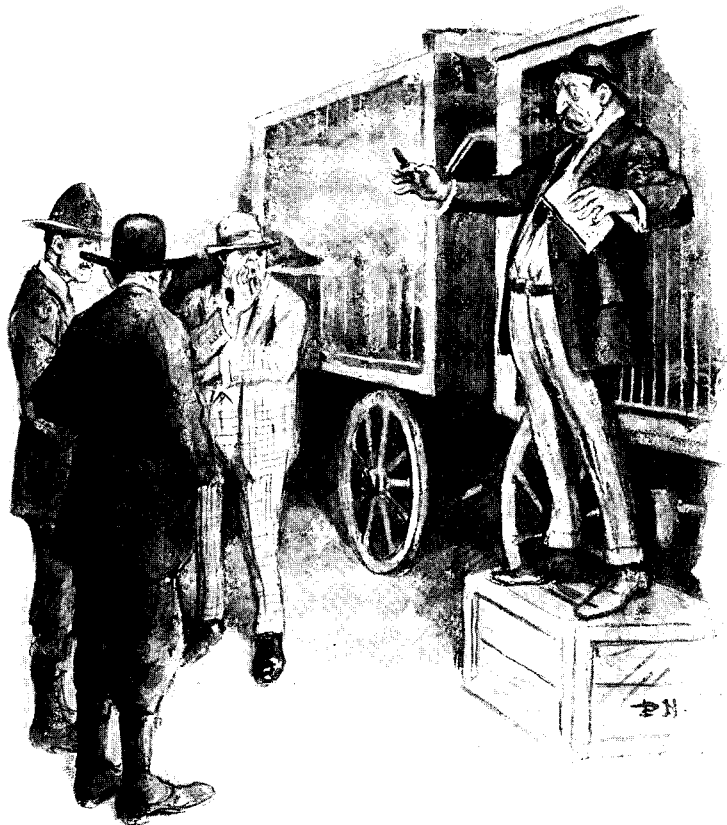
I didn't see the connection, and said so. The Sand Hills are sandy—yes. But what of it? They are not the Sahara Desert. Besides, the beast must have cost him six or seven hundred dollars.

"Tell me about it," I suggested.

We thereupon seated ourselves on the bank beside the road and he told me about the dromedary. I shall not attempt to follow his language.

The story begins in Omaha. Simon Brule had just sold a shipment of feeders for thirty-nine thousand dollars, and with his pockets stuffed with money was walking down Farnum Street. Sam spoke of him as in an open-minded mood. By this he did not mean that he was spending the money. Even in the city Simon is close with his money. Nor did he mean that he was looking for anything in particular. He was merely interested in the world as it runs. He was open-minded with respect to the sights and sounds of the city.

As the two men sauntered along they noticed a little gathering of idlers and small boys at the next corner, watching what might have been a caravan out of



"A DOLLAR! MAKE IT TWO. A DOLLAR! MAKE IT TWO!"

the desert, except that the animals were not loaded.

"What in thunder is that?" asked Simon.

There were four of the beasts—three Bactrians and a Nomanieh dromedary. Sam did not speak of the Bactrians by that name, but described them. Bactrians are camels with two humps and dromedaries camels with one. Bactrians are mere freighters. Dromedaries are swifter and finer grained.

"It's the snapper end of some circus," said Sam.

"What say we might have a look-in on this circus," observed Simon. "We can set in the quarter seats."

"Sure. We can trail along behind and find it. We got time."

The two men thereupon increased their pace slightly and followed the

camels down Thirteenth Street, "like ants down a cornstalk," as Sam put it.

But when they arrived at the roots they found that it was no circus, after all. It had been a circus, but the ticket-office had been drawn into a boycott against the income tax and now the creditors were in charge. The place was an old barn in a hollow "ten or fifteen miles out." Most of the caged animals were inside; the horses and elephants and performing bears stood around outside, and to these were added the four camels when they arrived.

"A funny-looking circus," Sam remarked.

"This ain't no circus," replied Simon; "this is an auction."

"We might ask the rajah there," said Sam, disappointed.

A florid man with a big cigar in his

mouth looked them over out of the corner of his eye. He may have had the city sense for the money in Simon's pockets. At any rate, he was not unfriendly.

"Animals?" he asked at last.

"A few," replied Simon, thinking of his cows and his five dogs.

"You'll never get a better chance," suggested the auctioneer.

"Anybody can show me anything," said Simon.

"Stick around and watch the prices."

The auctioneer pulled up a box in front of the cage of raccoons, glanced at his watch, and began the sale. Two raccoons. Two rare, tree-climbing raccoons. He looked at his list. They were worth eight dollars, easy, he said, putting his finger on the place, and what was he offered? Seven dollars? Did he hear seven dollars? He didn't hear anything like that. A fat man—Sam spoke of him as equipped with purplish wattles—offered him a dollar.

"A dollar! Make it two. A dollar! Make it two."

Simon nudged his foreman with his elbow—at the time Sam did not suspect him of entertaining delicate intentions beyond his words.

"They'd make good pets," he said, loudly. "I'm going to buy them."

The fat man shook his wattles with displeasure, but said nothing.

"Better find out first what they eat and whether Nick Simmons can haul it," objected Sam. "You don't know. Them raccoons may live on gulls' eggs or something."

"Two dollars," said Simon.

"Two dollars offered! Two dollars! Two dollars!"

"Three dollars!" called the purple wattles.

"Four dollars," said Simon.

"Five dollars!"

"Six dollars," said Simon.

"Seven dollars!"

"Seven dollars! Make it eight. Seven dollars! Make it eight."

But Simon didn't make it eight, and the wattles took the raccoons at seven dollars, nearly what they were worth new.

The next animal put up was a Russian wolf that was worth, according to the

auctioneer, twenty-five dollars just as he stood. Wattles bid two dollars for him.

"Two dollars, and he can growl in Russian! Two dollars! Two dollars!"

"Three dollars," said Simon.

"Four dollars!" called Wattles, a little ill-tempered.

They had it backward and forward again until the bid was eighteen dollars.

"I'd make it nineteen," said Simon, behind his hand, "only he looks like eighteen was his limit."

"For the love of Mike!" protested Sam, still blind to Simon's strategy. "What do we want of a Russian wolf?"

"Eighteen! Make it nineteen. Eighteen! Make it nineteen."

But Simon shook his head, and Wattles took the wolf at eighteen dollars—only seven dollars under list. He looked as if he wished Simon had raised him, at that.

"The next animals," began the auctioneer, moving his box to another cage deeper in the barn—"the next animals—"

But Simon had seized his foreman's arm and walked him across the barn to where the late purchaser was standing in front of his Russian wolf.

"Look here, brother," he began. "You and me is cutting each other's throats. That's no way to do at an auction. You and me has got to get together. I'll tell you what animals I want and you tell me what animals you want. Then where we don't agree we'll toss a nickel for it. That way we'll buy in our animals at fair prices, without having our bids raised by each other. How about it?"

Wattles looked at him a moment, considering. "What animals you bidding on?" he asked, finally.

"I just come," said Simon. "Let me and my head man run down the line and look."

The other assented, and the two cowmen proceeded down the row of cages and then on outside. The auctioneer had to stop because no one else was bidding.

"Well?"

"Me, I'll pick that big, one-humped camel," announced Simon.

"That dromedary? What else?"

"Just the dromedary. I've got all the

elephants and tigers and snakes I need, already."

"All right," said Wattles. "The dromedary is yours."

"What do we want of a dromedary?" asked Sam.

But Simon only grunted, and Sam had to wait until later for an explanation.

Simon's agreement in restraint of trade resulted in keeping down the prices during the remainder of the sale. The creditors made no great attempt to protect themselves. Armadillos, worth six dollars apiece, sold for fifty cents. Three rhesu monkeys, worth fifteen dollars apiece wild, went for two. A python snake twenty-two feet long and worth five hundred dollars brought only thirty-five. A seven-year-old African lion snared in a pit north of Doornfontein sold for fifty dollars instead of eight hundred—what he was worth. So with the rest of the animals. A black bear brought ten dollars, a jaguar twenty-five dollars, a pair of storks eight dollars apiece; and when it came to the dromedary, worth from five to eight hundred dollars, f.o.b. Omaha, Simon's

bid of thirty dollars took beast and saddle.

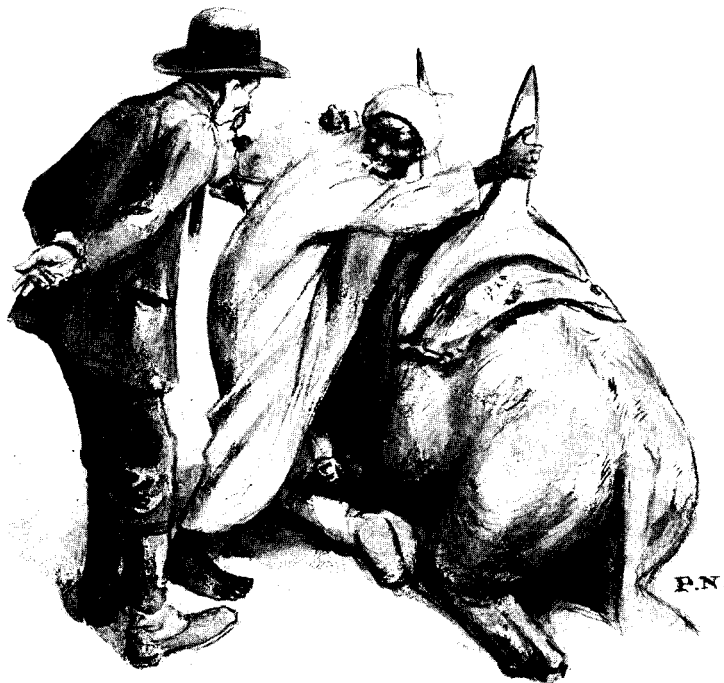
"You can ride him home and save on the freight," Simon suggested, pleasantly.

"That's the worst guess you've made to-day. I ain't no camel man."

"You're foreman of my ranch, and nachully my foreman has to know how to handle my animals."

"Not your camels. Not this foreman."

Nor would he yield an inch. As Simon was equally stubborn, and, besides, determined to get the camel to his ranch as cheaply as possible, he shipped Sam home by train and himself remained behind and took lessons in camel management from a greasy Arab. The Arab showed Simon how to barrak the camel by saying "K-r-r-r-r"; how to make the pedal mount by setting one foot on his neck and vaulting; how to make him rise by slackening the rope and nudging him on the shoulders with his toe—"and every little thing." Simon stayed in Omaha for a week, and when he had learned all he could from the



THE ARAB SHOWED SIMON HOW TO MAKE THE PEDAL MOUNT

Arab he put his knowledge into practice by riding the camel to the ranch.

He began by naming his new camel Sirdar.

All camels are ugly. The Sirdar was seven feet three inches high, measured to the top of his hump. His front feet were twice as large as his hind ones. He was a Nomanieh; he held his nose in the air at a different angle from that of a vulgar bagheen. And he never forgot his pose. It was as though he carried a carpenter's level inside his brain, somehow, and when he vulgarly tipped his head the bubble of air pressed on his social center.

Like other camels, the Sirdar spent most of his time in chewing his cud. He had never cared much for American table manners, but would grind with his lower jaw from left to right and then grind backward from right to left, Arabian fashion, and keep up the movement all day.

"He got on my nerves," said Sam—"his gum-chewing, and that thing of a straight-up-and-down neck with an elbow in it below. Simon says he can reach himself easier built that way. But I've watched him. Once in a while he does use his lower front teeth on himself, but not much. He's either a cud fiend or else he don't mind fleas as much as me. I'll say this: if I had a dog that didn't have gumption enough to dig for a flea I'd shoot him. That's how I feel about fleas."

Simon rode the dromedary from Omaha to his ranch in the Sand Hills, sticking to the main roads mostly, but with his hat pulled down over his eyes so that nobody would know him. He started sixteen runaways that he counted. Sam gravely informed me that horses hate camels. I got even by telling him of the defeat of Cræsus at Sardis by Cyrus, 557 B.C., when the appearance of a Persian camel corps created such a panic among the horses of the Lydian cavalry that they became uncontrollable.

The morning after his arrival Simon had his men ride down the creek a few miles with him and the Sirdar to harden the ranch horses to the camel. The creek road followed the north fence for

two miles, then crossed Nick Simmons's claim where it jutted south in a peninsula, then again followed the north fence. A widow named Lillie owned the land north of the fence.

Now Mrs. Lillie, a few months back, had purchased a very fine Arabian horse which she called Abdullah. She kept him in her south lot. Abdullah was far and away the swiftest, the hand-somest, the toughest, the most intelligent and the most spirited horse in the Sand Hills. None of Simon's cowponies could touch him, any distance. Simon, who loved horses, had tried to buy Abdullah, but Mrs. Lillie's price was too high. He was a close buyer. He intended to own the horse, but preferred to wait and try and make a good trade.

They were down past Nick's place, and the broncos were beginning to be reconciled to their strange brother of the saddle. The road at this point was not far from the fence. To the north lay Mrs. Lillie's south lot.

Sam said that he saw Abdullah while he was yet off in the hills, a full half-mile from the fence.

"That horse has good sense," he called to Simon. "He's curious to see the camel."

But it was less curiosity than it was something else. Abdullah approached on a dead run. When he drew closer he slowed up, stopped, sniffed, and whinnied. Then he trotted up to the fence and whinnied again. Then he began running back and forth along the fence opposite the camel as if he wanted to be nearer.

"Looks as if the horse was glad to see a high-class dromedary," said Simon.

But the camel wasn't glad to see a high-class horse. He paid no more attention to the horse than if he had been a paper of hair-pins.

"I thought horses hated camels," remarked one of the men.

Sam noticed that Simon had a look in his face "such as you see in a man sometimes when kids are around"—far-off, tender, and wistful. He went on to explain about Abdullah.

"It's this way," he said. "Horses do hate camels. They hate 'em just like I hate coyotes. But if I was living off in

London and saw a coyote in a Wild West show I'd be so tickled I'd want to buy him a quarter of mutton. When you're off in a strange town you'll talk to people you wouldn't sniff at back home. Horses is just the same."

"What's that got to do with camels?"

"Why, Abdullah is an Arabian horse and brought up with camels. Don't you see? At home he would despise a camel, because he is a horse. But here he is in Nebraska, U.S.A., and hasn't seen a camel for years, and along comes a dromedary. He's plain tickled to death to see him. It's seeing somebody from home. That horse is homesick."

As he spoke he looked down at the Sirdar with contempt, as if he despised him because he was not as tickled to see a horse from home as the horse was to see him. But if the Sirdar had been tickled he wouldn't have been a camel.

Simon didn't say much on the way back, but after the camel was fed he gave orders to throw a three-wire fence around the corner forty beyond Nick's where they had seen Abdullah.

"That will be the camel lot," he said. "Do it first. Two sides is fenced already. And run an extra wire along the tops of the posts separating it from Mrs. Lillie's."

Simon was close with men, but he loved horses, and because he loved them he was going to give Abdullah a view of the camel from home as much as he could.

The fence took no time at all to set.

After that Abdullah would hang around that north fence, looking over the wires at the dromedary, or else grazing not far away, as if the camel were his best friend, and all the while the camel never even let on he knew he was there. People are like that sometimes. They fall in love with somebody or something not because of what the thing is, but because of what it means to them.



OLIE QUIT. HE DIDN'T INTEND
TO RISK DRIVING A CAMEL

The time was two weeks later. Simon had quit riding the Sirdar after the first day or two and no one else had paid much attention to the beast. He hadn't hinted to Sam even yet why he had bought him. Then one day he had the camel brought up and put in a stall in the barn and rubbed down.

"Sam," he said, "I want you to hire a camel-driver for that camel of yours."

"Of mine?"

"Ain't you foreman no more?"

"Not of wild animals I ain't."

"What do you mean, wild animals?"

"I mean wild camels special. This camel you're talking about maybe was tame when he was a baby, but he is sure vicious now. He killed Tanner last night."

Tanner was one of Simon's setters. He'd got a little excited over the new boarder, and the first thing he knew the boarder had him by the neck. A camel bites much like a bulldog or a Gila lizard. He takes hold and hangs on. He bites to kill. That's his way of fighting.

"You mean—killed a dog?"

"That's it."

"Why did he do that, now?"

"Ask him. We found the dog this morning."

Simon dropped the subject and went on to explain about training a driver for the Sirdar.

"That's what I bought him for—to ride. Camels is the finest travelers in the world for a sand country like this. Didn't you know that? A good dromedary can make from fifty to ninety miles a day from now till he dies."

"So can I," said Sam. "So can anybody—till he dies."

"He can go six days without water."

"What's the use in this country, with more lakes than you can drink?"

"He'll eat anything—brush or bread, or anything."

"I owned a mustang once that liked barbed wire," said Sam, "but he had such an appetite I had to sell him."

"Dromedaries is the best mail-carriers going."

Sam said he looked at Simon sharply. Nick Simmons was a mail-carrier. Simon had tried on several occasions to buy Nick's claim for ten cents and a peck of potatoes, but Nick was able to hold out for his price because his mail contract paid him a living. The claim projected into the ranch half a mile. Even if it had not done so it was worth more than Nick asked for it. Simon's remark about mail-carriers threw a great light on his purchase of the camel.

"The best going? Is that so? I thought Nick Simmons was."

"Was is right. I said *is*."

"How about bargain-drivers? Is dromedaries the keenest land-buyers going?"

Simon saw that Sam understood the Sirdar better now and laughed. "Wait and see, Sam."

Although it wasn't necessary, now that Sam understood, he went on to explain that he had put in a bid for carrying the Whitefield mail. The idea had come to him in Omaha. By using a dromedary he would save Nick's wagon and four mules. The Sirdar could make the forty-two miles each way in five or six hours and have all the rest of the twenty-four for recreation. He only cost thirty dollars. Nick's wagon and mules were worth six or seven hundred. The Sirdar could live on tar-weed and cat-

tails, where the mules would cost sixty dollars a month just for feed.

"Nick can't touch my price," he said, "and I'll make a good profit to boot. Maybe by this time next year he'll jump at my offer."

It looked as though he might. His land was chiefly good for growing hay, and a man can't live on hay.

The new camel-driver was a Swede named Olson. Olie had light hair, which was a help. It would have been like picking sand out of molasses to try and train a regular Nebraska cowman to lift his hat to an aristocratic Nomanieh dromedary. The Sirdar didn't mind the color of Olie's hair. Camels that have traveled as much as he had are used to white-heads.

Simon had to train Olie himself because no one else knew anything about camels. First he taught him how to make the Sirdar kneel by saying, "K-r-r-r-r-r, k-r-r-r-r-r!" Then he taught him how to mount.

"Halter-strap in the left hand, left foot on his neck, rear pommel in the right hand so, and rise and turn. After you're in the saddle cross your legs around the front pommel, right leg underneath."

He followed that lesson by giving Olie a talk about taking care of camels. He mustn't overfeed a camel while he's working or he'll get the megrims. He must be careful about watering. Camels won't drink in the morning until the sun is high enough to warm the water; they won't drink when the wind is blowing; and even when the water is warm and the wind isn't blowing they need from fifteen minutes to half an hour for drinking to let the water soak into their blood.

"Don't never try to pet a camel," he told him. "A camel is wrapped up in himself entirely. He never learns to like anybody at all. He's always bad-tempered. Getting angry is the only kind of emotion he knows. Once in a long while you'll find people that is that way, but all camels is that way. It's because a camel is a lower animal, like a spider or a hornet."

Olie was half scared before he had looked at the camel six times, and yet all that Simon had told him was true.



SIMON BEGAN YELLING AT THE CAMEL AND SNATCHING AT THE MAIL.

The dromedary proved to be a good mail-carrier. He was so fast through the sand that he didn't have to leave Byrne, the southern terminus, until the middle of the forenoon instead of at seven o'clock. And he didn't have to work in relays, but made the entire trip himself, so that it looked as if Simon Brule drove a good bargain when he bought a Nomanieh dromedary to carry the United States mail into the Sand Hills. The Sirdar did the work of four mules and a wagon, and his up-keep cost was less than that of a goat.

However, Olie had his troubles. One of them was the gates. On the road between Whitefield and Byrne there is a fence every mile or two. Every time he came to a gate he had to barrak the camel so that he could climb down and open it; then he had to make him rise so as to get him through; then he had to barrak him again on the other side so that he could be mounted. Call it only thirty gates—that made sixty times the Sirdar had to kneel and sixty times he had to rise, load and all. Gates are very hard on a camel's temper.

Then there were the horses. Every time the dromedary trotted into Whitefield six horses would make a break for the open. The town horses soon learned that his camel smell wouldn't hurt them any and after a while paid no more attention to him than if he had been a four-cylinder three-by-thirty. But the country horses were as nervous as blue cranes. You couldn't make them believe he burned regular gasoline. Olie had to be ready to duck the camel into an alley any minute.

The Swede stood it for a month. Then one noon, while he was taking a nap, the Sirdar got to a sack of corn-meal and overate and the moment he reached the ranch went loco with the megrims.

Simon brought the beast around, but Olie quit right there. Nothing would move him. He didn't intend to risk his Scandinavian heritage again driving a dromedary camel, not for just wages. He went back to the bunk-house and gathered his goods into a roll and started for Yardley. Sam invited him to stay for supper and he stayed, but the minute he ate his pie he was off.

"You've got the megrims yourself," Sam told him.

"I tank so, maybe. I tank ve all got tham."

Simon liked to ride through the camel lot in the morning and chum for a moment with Mrs. Lillie's Arabian horse. Abdullah would come over to the fence to be near the camel from home, and Simon would feed him sugar. Sometimes a horse strikes a man that way. On his side, Simon was a man horses liked, so they became good friends. If Simon had ever seen one of Mrs. Lillie's men abusing that horse he would have knocked him down on the spot.

But he never so much as spoke to the Sirdar. Since the camel killed his dog Tanner he had had no use for him.

Simon did the only thing left for him to do after Olie quit. It had turned freezing cold. His horses were all saddle-horses; he had no light wagon; none of his men could ride a dromedary fifteen feet; he had given his bond to carry the mail. Besides, he didn't wish to be laughed at. That dromedary mail service was his own idea. The next morning he strapped on the saddle-bags and himself started out on the camel route. Simon was no shirk. But before leaving he arranged to have Sam follow him upon a horse, ostensibly to look for another camel-driver in Whitefield.

He told him that night that he had had no trouble of any kind and had made the same time that Olie made.

"Mrs. Lillie and her man Connors is here," he continued.

"Is that so?" said Sam.

"I passed them at the Billings place. That horse of hers was as happy as a small boy to see the camel. I took him out some sugar from the supper-table."

Sam was in a sarcastic mood. He hated the camel, hated Simon for using him against Nick Simmons, hated his present errand of looking for a rider. "Is that so?"

"Camels is faster, but they ain't horses. If I could buy Abdullah, I'd buy him in a minute."

"You mean at your price?"

"Sure; at a bargain."

"Why don't you trade the Sirdar for him?" suggested Sam, still sarcastic.

"Because I can't is why."

"Show him off before Mrs. Lillie. Brag him up. Make her want him. Anybody can own a horse, but a dromedary is different. Women like to own things that other people haven't. Ask her. You never can tell."

Sam didn't know he was right about women, but he knew that Simon didn't know, either.

Simon, who was sometimes literal-minded, took the suggestion seriously. The next morning he gave a stable-hand half a dollar to shine the Sirdar's shoes and rub down his overcoat. And he started off his foreman an hour earlier than usual.

"Maybe Mrs. Lillie and Connors will pick you up," he said. "Don't ride too fast. See what you can do. Then I'll try and overtake you out in the south hills somewhere."

What he was intending was that Sam should join Mrs. Lillie as if by accident and praise up the camel to her.

The outcome for a time promised to be most happy. Mrs. Lillie and her man Connors overtook Sam about fifteen miles out, and Simon on his dromedary overtook the three of them about twenty miles farther.

"Sam Blaine has been telling us about your camel," began Mrs. Lillie.

"He's a racing camel," said Simon, bragging a little. "A full-blooded Nomanieh, if you was to ask an Arab. The Nomaniehs is the most aristocratic camels there is. They correspond to the Hohenzollerns in people. I don't know of another Nomanieh outside of Egypt. I went to a good deal of trouble to get him."

All of which was true—in a sense.

"I can see by the way he holds his head he's aristocratic," said Mrs. Lillie. "Besides, my horse whinnied at him, and Abdullah is a thoroughbred animal."

"He's very fast. As for sandy roads, he eats them up. Sand don't hold him back none at all. Nick Simmons used to start in his stage from Whitefield at seven o'clock. I didn't start to-day until half past ten, and I'll get into Byrne an hour earlier than Nick ever did."

He meant that he would if nothing happened.

"I didn't know you ever rode him yourself."

"I rode him to the ranch from Omaha."

"I meant to Whitefield."

"I don't often, but to-day I had some shopping to do."

It sounded well to put it so—but he had bought a quarter's worth of am-

other signal he rose to his feet again—first his hind feet, then his front, with Simon balancing gracefully in the jujube saddle.

"A woman wouldn't have no trouble at all," he told her.

"But a woman's skirts—"

"Camels ain't like horses. Camels don't mind skirts at all. In Egypt,



HE TRIED TO PERSUADE THE FORMER CARRIER TO BE REASONABLE

monia at the drug-store to take the smell out of some clothes that had been worn too near a skunk. Shopping to do!

"You must feel very queer, riding away up there."

"Want to try it?"

"Could a woman ride one?"

"More women ride camels than ride horses."

"It's like sleeping in an upper berth in a Pullman—you need a ladder and a porter."

"Not at all. Watch me."

He stopped the dromedary by pulling on his head rope, and then said, "K-r-r-r-r, k-r-r-r-r!" The Sirdar groaned and barraked on his celluloid knees in the cold sand, as obedient as a cow-driver after higher pay. Then at an-

where they raise camels, the men Arabs all wear skirts."

"I'd rather like to own one. Where do you buy your camels?"

"I don't know of another camel for sale anywhere," said Simon. "I did know of two or three common Bactrians, but they was snapped up almost the minute they was offered. I really don't know of a one."

"If you hear of one—"

"If I hear of one—I'll let you know."

"But what a funny sound you have to make!" said Mrs. Lillie. "K-r-r-r-r, camel! K-r-r-r-r!"

Mrs. Lillie intended no mischief—at least not that first time. She was merely imitating an interesting sound to see how near she could come to it. But

camels are not good mind-readers, nor, in spite of their domestic history, do they understand women. Small minds are always literal minds. The camel heard what he understood to be a command and groaned out of force of habit and sank down on his knees. Simon couldn't stop him. He doubled up his huge front feet underneath his chest, and then his hind feet; and there he was in the road again, as legless as a sack of oats.

"How perfectly ridiculous!"

She laughed until the tears stood in her eyes. Even a White House picket might have laughed to see a groaning Nomanieh dromedary fold himself up like that on the open road and no reason.

Simon took the thing in good part. "He has high ideas about ladies," he said. "He obeys them just the same as if they was men."

"Now make him rise."

Simon gave him the rising signal. The Sirdar groaned and again began untangling his legs—first his hind legs and then his front. But aside from his groans he showed no sign of irritation. How was Simon to know that he was losing his temper? Camels are like that—they never do make any signs until they act.

Mrs. Lillie was feeling prankish and wished to see what would happen if she continued talking. The camel had no more than got himself on his legs that second time when she repeated her Arab command.

"K-r-r-r-r-r, k-r-r-r-r-r!" she said.

And because camels know no other way but just to barrak when they hear the barrak signal the Sirdar kneeled the third time. And because Simon had no other thought than to show him off to Mrs. Lillie he gave him the rising sign, and for the third time he lurched to his feet.

Mrs. Lillie was not through with the camel even now. "K-r-r-r-r-r, k-r-r-r-r-r!" she commanded; and he kneeled, groaning, for the fourth time.

"That's all, camel," she said then. "You're a well-trained camel. If I had a lump of sugar I'd give it to you."

Fortunately for her she didn't have, for the Sirdar might have bitten her arm off. To his way of thinking the joke

was all on him. But he made no sign and when Simon, who had already arranged several trades in his mind, gave him the signal, he lurched for the fourth time to his feet, ready for further insults. A few minutes later Simon started off up the road, "balancing himself gracefully, like a cat on a cow's head," as Sam described it. He knew Mrs. Lillie was watching him from behind. But he didn't know how he looked, and in another minute or two he was out of sight behind a hill.

Up to this time the water along the road had not bothered the Sirdar much, for he had been following Mrs. Lillie's party of horsemen, who had broken the ice for him; but even so he had been obliged to wade knee-deep through several shallow ponds. Camels hate cold water. On top of that he had had to barrak twice at every gate, and then four times more just for a joke when he overtook Mrs. Lillie.

But worse was to come. There was now no one ahead of them to break the ice on the ponds. Simon and the Sirdar had hardly gone a half-mile when they came to a pond across the road the ice upon which had not been broken. Simon managed to get the camel half-way through; but the beast didn't know how to handle his leg stems, and the edges of the ice hurt his crazy-bone.

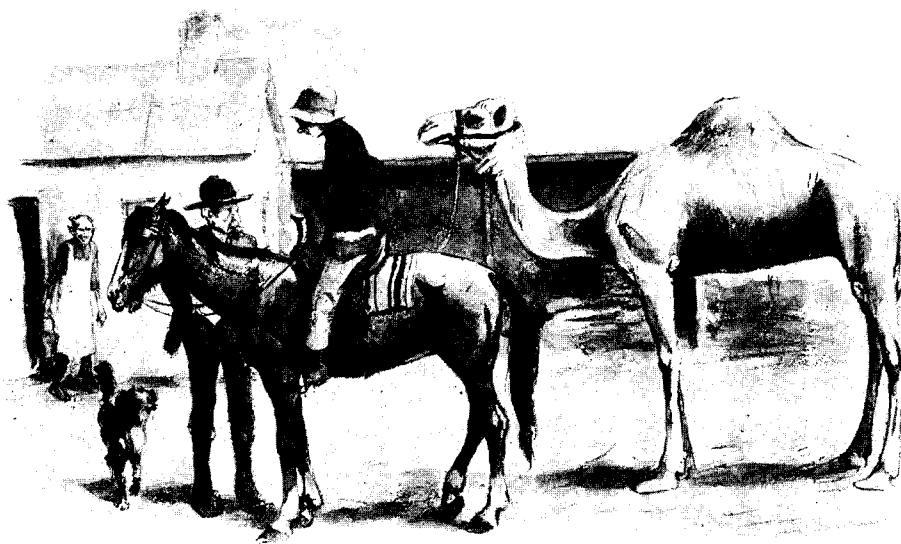
That was the final injury. When he reached the middle where the water was deepest he stopped, and not another step would he go.

Mrs. Lillie's party found them so—Simon upon his island peak, and the Sirdar planted immovably in the midst of the flood as if carved out of everlasting granite.

"Oh, hello!" said Mrs. Lillie.

At that point Simon made his greatest mistake. He did not know camels very well; and, besides, he was thinking more about Mrs. Lillie's prejudices than about the camel's. All Arabs know that sometimes when you whip a camel he will become sulky and balk. No matter where he is, he will kneel down right there.

Simon began whipping the Sirdar to get him out of that pond. The next moment the owner of the only camel in the Sand Hills found himself sitting on



BROUGHT BACK THE NEXT DAY AT A COST OF FIVE DOLLARS

a high but wave-washed saddle, surrounded by floating saddle-bags and broken pieces of ice.

"I didn't tell him to do that," said Mrs. Lillie.

Simon began yelling at the camel and snatching at the mail. According to Sam, both he and Connors lashed their horses into the water, trying to help him, but without success. The horses couldn't be made to approach within fifteen feet of the camel—not even Sam's horse, which was supposed to be camel-broke. Perhaps they knew more about camels than their riders did.

"Such riding!" cried Mrs. Lillie, when she saw their failure. "If I couldn't ride a horse into three feet of water I'd try dry farming!"

With that she headed Abdullah into the pond; and because Abdullah was sentimental about the Sirdar, and was used to seeing camels at home, he waded right up beside him.

"Give me the mail," said Mrs. Lillie.

"Look out for your horse!" cried Simon, coming to his senses.

But she didn't understand, and held out her hand for the mail-sacks.

The thing happened more quickly than can be described. Abdullah had

waded out beside the camel, Mrs. Lillie had asked for the mail-sacks, Simon had warned her off. The Sirdar was lying barraked in the water, his nose in the air. Abdullah, under his rider's guidance, then drew forward a foot or two in order to permit Simon to throw the mail-sacks over his back behind the saddle. The next moment the camel had struck out, snake-fashion, with his head and seized the horse by the neck.

Abdullah gave one surprised scream and tried to break loose. But a bear-trap would not have held him tighter. The Sirdar hung on like a snapping-turtle. Then he began grinding with his teeth like a dog at a bone.

It took Simon perhaps five seconds to fling himself from the saddle and rush to the rescue, and the other two men were there almost as soon. But there was no easing the grip of the brute. Simon would have broken the bones of his jaw with a hammer if he had possessed one; or, if he had carried a pistol, he would have shot him.

"Hold the horse!" cried Connors. "Hold him still!"

Simon, who was nearest, sprang to Abdullah's head and began soothing him. "There, there!" he said to the

horse. Then, when he saw his agony, "Hasn't anybody a pistol or a knife?" He began feeling in his pockets with his left hand as one will do, even when he knows that he does not possess the article required. Then he felt the bottle from the drug-store. "I have it!" he cried. "Easy, now! I don't know what he'll do after he lets go. Get back out of his reach!"

"What you going to do?" asked Connors.

"Ammonia!" he said.

He uncorked the bottle and poured its contents upon his handkerchief until it was dripping wet, all the time soothing the horse with affectionate words. Then he held the reeking handkerchief against the Sirdar's nose.

Camels are well trained in Egypt, but no teacher knows everything. One of the things they do not learn is how to act when they are surprised with ammonia fumes breathed up their nose.

The Sirdar let go as if his jaw had been melted off. He instantly lost all interest in Abdullah. Bullies are apt to experience a change of heart like that when their bluff is called. Then he began coughing and spitting as if he would choke. His conscience was perhaps hurting him. Or perhaps he had learned to love his enemies. At any rate, he sneezed and roared and grunted and groaned and thrashed his hot nose around as if it had been a pennant and he a football patriot. He ended by plunging his muzzle down under an ice cake in front of him as if he loved cold ice-water better than any other kind, and only drank warm water in the summertime. And in between bubbles he was wishing he could go for six days without breathing, like a whale.

Simon paid no further attention to him, but led Abdullah on through the pond, stroking his nose with his hand and soothing him with gentle words. The horse made no disturbance; all he did was to snuzzle Simon with his nose. He acted as if he were taking all the blame to himself. He had been brought up with camels and should have known better.

"Never mind, old man," said Simon. "Come around to my house and I'll give you a barrel of sugar."

The horse didn't know how much sugar was in a barrel; all he knew was that Simon was his friend. He let him examine the wound almost with the faith of a child. The bite proved to be neither deep nor torn. A camel is something like a cow in that his teeth are mostly in the lower jaw. The Sirdar had attacked Abdullah from the wrong side and his ugly lower teeth had bitten into the horse's mane. That is doubtless what manes were originally for; they were useful in camel countries.

The strike was broken right there. Simon waded back into the water and ordered the Sirdar to rise; and when the beast was slow in responding he drew his handkerchief from his pocket and made as if to apply it. The Sirdar thereupon changed his mind about the filibuster and hastily rose. And he gave no further trouble.

That night, tired as he was, Simon rode over to Nick Simmons's place—on a horse—and made him a proposition with respect to the mail contract. If Nick would relieve him of his contract he would pay him the difference between the Government price and that which Nick would have had if Simon had not underbid him. He was there until after eleven, trying to persuade the former carrier to be reasonable. But Nick was nobody's fool. He knew that Simon was not offering him that contract out of love. The bonus that he finally consented to accept was the amount suggested plus two hundred dollars cash and the purchase of his claim at the price he had previously asked.

"The best bargain I ever made," Simon told Sam that night. "I wouldn't have rode that camel to town again if I had had to forfeit my bond."

Simon used his spare time all winter selling camels. He sold a camel to every mail route in the Sand Hills. He sold a camel to all of the big cattlemen. Then he tried the cities. He sold a camel to Lincoln Park and Bronx Park and Vilas Park. When he was through and had sold all the camels he could, he still had one camel left. So he tried to get the town of Whitefield to buy the Sirdar and start a zoo with him.

But by this time all the people in

Whitefield had seen the camel for nothing. Why should they buy him after they had seen him? Besides, Whitefield had no one to keep a zoo. If the town bought a camel the mayor would have to house it in his garage and board it himself. He had all he could do taking care of his new furnace.

"Try some other town," said the mayor's wife.

When Simon couldn't sell the Sirdar, he tried to lose him. He sent a man with him down into the Cedar Creek country one night and turned him loose. One of Dave Entler's boys brought him back the next day at a cost of five dollars. Then he himself rode him over into the heart of the Cherry County dunes, sixty or seventy miles west, with a led horse, and returned alone in a roundabout way. Two weeks later he received a bill for damages for forty dollars. "I know he's your camel," wrote the Kincaider, "because of the way he holds his head when he thinks."

"When he thinks!" groaned Simon. "When he thinks!"

But he paid the bill and sent for the camel. According to Sam, the Kincaider had once been a newspaper reporter and knew every camel in the Sand Hills. Even a close man like Simon will pay a bill for damages when he is cornered. I expressed satisfaction at the thought that Simon had been made to pay for his meanness. But I hadn't heard the rest of it.

It seems that the Kincaider had written an article about the Sirdar for an Omaha Sunday paper. On the Friday following Simon received a letter from a man named King, who said he owned a circus. He'd read in the papers about Simon's dromedary, and was writing to inquire. Was the dromedary a Normanich? Did he have a high-domed forehead? Were his eyes clear and prominent? Was his back short, soft, solid, strong, free from wounds? Was his hump erect, or did it incline to one

side? Did his feet splay either inward or out? Did he have any firing marks on his throat or anywhere except perhaps a cross on his shoulders in front that the Arabs put there to make him trot smoothly? And was he for sale?

He added that he was willing to pay what he was worth for the *djemel* if he answered to the points specified. He didn't know whether Simon would care to send his dromedary down, but the circus would be in Welton on Tuesday.

"Take that letter out to the *djemel* lot, quick," said Simon, who had learned the word from his Arab teacher in Omaha, "and fix up the Sirdar so that he will answer to them points. And I give you till Tuesday to learn to ride him well enough to get him to Welton."

"And here I am," said Sam. "Simon is following by stage in order to do the selling himself."

Sam mounted his camel after a little and rode on. I didn't get to see Simon Brule when the stage arrived. That evening, however, I made a point of visiting the circus. Sure enough, the Sirdar had been acquired. There was no mistaking his sin-scarred face.

A little later I ran across Sam.

"Yes," he said, "Simon sold his dromedary all right."

"Did he get his price?" I asked.

He looked at me and grinned. "Happen to notice the man in the wagon when you bought your ticket?"

"A fat man? I saw him."

"He's the man with the purple wattles," said Sam. "He's the man Simon dickered with at the auction in Omaha. He's the owner. He knew what that camel cost."

"How much did Simon get?"

Sam laughed outright at the recollection. "Twenty-five dollars for camel and saddle. Wattles charged off five dollars for depreciation."

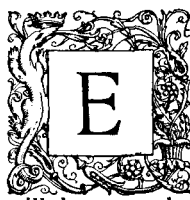
So that Simon got his deserts, after all.

Portugal's Object-Lesson to the United States

HOW A SMALL COUNTRY RAISED A POWERFUL ARMY IN ONE YEAR

BY A FRENCH DIPLOMAT

[This article is by a French diplomat who was in Portugal at the time of which he writes, who observed on the spot the recruiting and training of the Portuguese army now at the French front, and who heard daily the comments of the Franco-English Commission which reported favorably concerning that army.—EDITOR.]

ARLY in the summer of 1916 the Portuguese representatives at Paris and London took simultaneously, on the Quai d'Orsay and in Downing Street, a step which will be regarded as marking a historic date in the annals of Portugal. They proposed to M. Briand and to Mr. Asquith the actual participation of the Portuguese army in the war against Germany. They asked that an expeditionary force should be sent from Lisbon not only to East Africa—where a Portuguese brigade was already co-operating with the South-African army and the Belgian army—but to France.

The Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office received the suggestion with gratitude, but did not at once reply to it. At first they saw in this proffer simply one of those manifestations of sympathy to which Portugal had accustomed them ever since the outbreak of the war. Bound to England by an alliance centuries old, and to France by a political friendship which has impelled her to adopt the laws and the very formulæ of the French Constitution, Portugal found every year some way of binding her cause more closely to that of the Allies. In August, 1914, first among the neutral countries, she had protested against the invasion of Belgium. In December, 1914, she turned over to the Belgian army—a touching example of brotherhood among small nations—a hundred or more entirely new 75-mm. guns, made at Creusot, which consti-

tuted two-thirds of her field artillery. In 1915, in order to free herself altogether from German influence, she did not shrink from the prospect of revolution. This revolution, which was more bloody than the one that overthrew the monarchy, placed the supreme power in the hands of a democratic party, whose first care was to declare war on Germany, to drive across the border into Spain the numerous Germans who were trying to revive the royalist party in Lisbon, and to seize the sixty-two German vessels in Portuguese harbors. The offer of Portuguese contingents at the very moment when Germany was about to resume at Verdun her irruption into France, was a fresh proof, and the greatest of all, of her desire to serve the cause of the Allies; but the Allies, because of its very importance, hesitated.

They hesitated because they had some doubt as to the usefulness of the Portuguese army. They knew that the Portuguese soldier is highly valued as a soldier. He is brave—he proved his mettle in the old days under Wellington. He has great staying power, and he is the only European soldier who can go about bare-headed, at noonday, under the Equator. The Portuguese, whose resolute, sallow face one remarked now and then in the grand manœuvres of the French or German forces, is supposed to have inherited the penchant of his ancestors for adventures and danger. At Timor and in Angola, they had given proof of great energy.

But modern war demands not military qualities alone; it demands full