

**IN THE
VOLCANO'S
MOUTH**

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IN THE VOLCANO'S MOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

MADCAP MAX.

“All aboard!”

“All but passengers ashore.” The loud, stentorian voices of the officers of the magnificent palace steamer L’Orient, of the Peninsular and Oriental Line, sounded all along the Southampton docks, up the streets to the old gates, and even penetrated into some of the business houses of the quaint old English town.

The shout, so commonplace to the citizens of Southampton, was one of serious import to those gathered on the deck of the steamer.

Parting is never pleasant, and when the journey is a long one, and it is known the absence is for years, the last words are always tearful.

On the deck stood two men, alone.

Not one had come to bid them good-by or a godspeed on their journey.

And yet tears filled the eyes of both.

The elder was a bronzed veteran, his face as dark as that of any mulatto, his long, white mustache standing out in startling contrast to the color of his skin.

He was sixty years of age, but his strong body, his hard muscles, and firm walk, would rather betoken a man of forty.

By his side stood his son, a youth almost effeminate in appearance, but perhaps only because of the contrast to his father; there was a brightness in his eyes which betokens an active spirit, and although so effeminate-looking, when he clinched his hand one could see the strong muscle rising beneath the sleeve.

The elder man is Maximilian Gordon, of the mercantile firm of Gordon, Welter & Maxwell, of New York.

The son is Maximilian Gordon, also, but always called Max by those who are intimate with him, and "Madcap Max" by his closest companions.

Gordon, Welter & Maxwell were interested in Egyptian produce, and for many years Maximilian Gordon had been a resident of Alexandria.

His wife, sickly and delicate at all times, had been compelled to live in England, where young Max had been educated.

The elder man paid a yearly visit to his family, and had just completed arrangements for them to return to Egypt with him when cholera broke out, and he arrived home only just in time to close his wife's eyes in death and see her body committed to its eternal resting place.

Hence it was that, as father and son looked at the English coast, which was by this time fast receding, their eyes were filled with tears, for they were leaving a plot of earth hallowed and sacred, because it was a wife's and mother's grave.

Youth is ever buoyant, and before the steamer had left the English Channel, Max was the happy, light-hearted lad once again,

laughing, chatting and larking with everyone he came in contact with.

His father could not hide his grief so easily, but showed by his manner how nearly broken was his heart and ruined his life.

When the troubled waters of the Bay of Biscay were reached, Max had given plentiful evidence of his love of practical joking, and showed that he fully deserved his sobriquet of Madcap.

One of the passengers had on board an African monkey.

This little, frolicsome animal became very fond of Max, and was easily induced to adapt itself to the ways of the fun-loving youth.

One night Max took Jocko and dressed him in a lady's nightcap, which he had obtained from a stewardess, and told Jocko he must lie in a certain bed.

The stateroom was occupied by a snarling old bachelor, who declared that women and children were a nuisance.

When the old fellow entered his room he saw, to his utter astonishment, a head resting on his pillow.

Without staying to investigate, he rushed out of his room, shouting "Steward!" at the top of his voice.

"What is it, Mr. Lawrence?" asked the first officer, startled by the frantic shouting.

"Some one has placed a nigger baby in my bed."

"Nonsense, Mr. Lawrence!"

“I say they have, and I’ll report every officer of the vessel if the offender is not punished.”

“I will see that the matter is investigated,” said Officer Tunley.

“Of course—but when? Why, in a week’s time, when everyone will have easily forgotten—no, sir, come at once.”

“I will do so; but allow me to suggest, Mr. Lawrence, that it may have been the extra bottle of Bass’ ale——”

“Do you dare, officer, to insinuate——”

“Nothing, save that Welsh rarebit, highly seasoned, and three bottles of strong ale, are likely to disturb the vision.”

“I’ll report you, sir—mark me, I’ll report you. Come, now, to my room, and if there is not a nigger baby there I’ll eat my hat.”

“Very well, sir, I will come with you.”

By the time the stateroom was reached, Jocko had fled the room, and Max had stripped the cap from its head.

The monkey sat on the table in the saloon, grinning, as if it enjoyed the joke.

The officer and Mr. Lawrence entered the stateroom.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Lawrence, as he looked at his bed.

“I was afraid you were romancing, sir,” said the officer, with proud indignation. “Take care, sir, that it does not occur again.”

The passenger was speechless.

Another day, when the steamer *L'Orient* was being tossed about in the most fantastic manner, sometimes taking a swift pitch forward, then curving and twisting in a way which would bring joy to the heart of a baseball pitcher, Madcap Max thought the time had come for a pleasant diversion.

A drove of pigs, with other animals, was on board, to enable the company to provide fresh meat for the passengers.

Max quietly released the pigs from their quarters, and saw them, with one accord, make for the saloon.

That was just what he wanted.

A lady was tossed off her bed to the floor, but to her horror she fell on the back of a pig, who set up such a squeaking and squealing that, although the passengers were feeling sick, they were compelled to laugh.

After a voyage of fourteen days the city of Alexandria was sighted.

“Thank goodness!” exclaimed an old Indian nabob. “I am glad I have to stay at Alexandria, for *L'Orient* is the worst disciplined ship I was ever in.”

The verdict was concurred in by nearly everyone on board.

And yet it was not the officers' fault, for nine-tenths of the trouble was caused by the pranks of Madcap Max.

“Do we land here?” asked Max.

“Yes, Max. We shall finish our journey overland.”

“Our journey?” repeated Max, opening his bright eyes still wider with astonishment.

“Yes, Max. We go to Cairo before we settle down at Alexandria.”

“I am so glad.”

Several scores of boats surrounded *L'Orient*, manned by swarthy and not too-much dressed Arabs; a dozen or so seized upon Max and his father and literally dragged them to a boat.

On the way from the steamer to the landing dock, Mr. Gordon whispered to Max:

“No jokes with these fellows, or your life is not your own.”

“All right, dad; I'll be as sober as a judge and as full of fun as an undertaker.”

“For your own sake be careful.”

“I will, dad. That is, as careful as I can be.”

CHAPTER II.

EMIN BEY'S ESCAPE.

When the passengers landed, a rabble of donkey drivers met them.

No more clever, impudent little gossoons exist on the face of the earth than these same Arab donkey boys.

They hit upon the nationality of the stranger almost intuitively.

An American who had never been in Egypt before, was looking at the surging, struggling lot of donkey drivers with wonder, when one of them pushed forward and addressed him as follows:

“I’se looking for you, sah. Here he is; my donkey is the one Pasha Grant rode on; him called ‘Yankee Doodle.’”

“Get away with yer. Can’t yer see the bey will only ride on Hail Columbia?”

Seated on a donkey, Max entered the city founded by Alexander three hundred and thirty-three years before the birth of Christ.

Before a strange-looking, square, flat-topped house the donkeys halted, and Mr. Gordon bade Max dismount.

“This is home.”

“Do you live here, dad?”

“Yes, Max. We will rest here to-night, and go on our journey to-morrow.”

Max was delighted, and late in the day wandered alone to that wonderful monolith of granite called “Pompey’s Pillar.”

He sat down to think.

He had always been fond of books on Egypt, and now he was actually looking on one of the wonders of that old country.

Suddenly he heard a cry.

It was like a girl’s voice.

Max was up in an instant and trying to locate the sound.

He had no difficulty in so doing, for a girl—her face half covered with a white veil—rushed past him, shrieking and crying.

“Allah! Allah!” she shouted.

Two men were in pursuit.

Max never stopped to think.

He leaped forward, and without knowing why he did so, or whether it would be wise to interfere, he struck one of the Arabs to the earth, and threw himself against the other, who was a strong, powerful fellow, with muscles like iron.

That did not worry Max, for he was lithe and strong, but he was unaccustomed to foul play.

When, therefore, he found that the man he had knocked down had risen and drawn a long, sharp dagger, with which he threatened his life, Max saw the unwisdom of his defense of the Arab girl.

A muscular Arab in front of him, and another at his back brandishing a dagger, was enough to frighten an older man than Max.

The Arabs jabbered away in a gibberish which Max did not understand.

He struck at the man in front of him and made him stagger back, then with a quick movement, he stooped as he turned and caught the armed Arab round the legs, throwing him over his shoulder.

He had not disabled his opponents, so he thought discretion better than valor. Using his legs as well as he could he ran away, only to be stopped by the girl he had—as he thought—rescued.

She flung her arms round his neck, and talking rapidly—though in an unknown tongue to Max—held him fast until his pursuers were close upon him.

With a wild shout they seized him, and would have speedily rendered him insensible had not a deliverer appeared.

A man, bronzed and weather-beaten, though only in the prime of life, slowly and with deliberation took hold of one of the Arabs and flung him on one side.

Presenting a revolver at the head of the other, he commanded him and the girl to go, and that quickly.

“You have saved my life, sir,” said Max.

“Have I? Is it worth saving?”

“Perhaps not, but all the same I do not want to lose it.”

“Take care of it, then, and don’t go wandering about Alexandria without weapons.”

“What did they want with me?”

“They would have captured you, and held you until ransomed.”

“But——”

“You are not rich, you would say. What does that matter? A ten-dollar gold piece would seem a fortune to them. The girl practices that scream on hundreds of unsuspecting foreigners.”

“You speak of American money; are you from the States?”

“From them? Yes; but I am a citizen of the world, a cosmopolitan.”

“Might I ask your name?” inquired Max.

“You might; but it does not signify. If I have saved your life, prove that your life is of some value.”

The stranger left Max in one of the most frequented streets of that city where Cleopatra often rode, attracting the admiration of all to the savage beauty of that

“Queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold, black eyes;
Brow-bound with burning gold.”

Max wondered whether the stranger spoke truly, and almost was inclined to doubt, for he was at that age when the laughing black eyes of a girl fascinate and lure, sometimes to ruin.

Anyway, he was thankful for having been saved from the Arabs.

He saw that night how much his father was respected, but he saw that which made his heart sad. His father was bowed down with grief.

And no wonder. He had loved his wife with a passion as strong as his love of life.

When they had left New York with Max, a boy of only eight summers of life, all had seemed roseate.

Leaving Max at a school in England, Mrs. Gordon accompanied her husband to Egypt; but at the end of three years the malarious climate had rendered it impossible for her to live there, and she returned to England to be near Max.

For seven years the husband had only been able to spend three months in the year with the wife he so loved.

Then came the time when once more the mother of Max was ready to brave the treacherous climate of Egypt.

How the husband had looked forward to that time, and with what pleasure had he refurnished his house. Everything to please her was obtained.

Alas! her earthly eyes never saw them, and it was no wonder that Mr. Gordon should feel most wretched when he returned to his Oriental home, and knew that she would never grace it with her presence.

His only tie to life now was Max, but even with him there was anxiety, for the stern business man—the successful merchant had only seen the frivolous side of his son's life.

To him he was the madcap.

To him the boy was the practical joker, the mischievous lad, whose thoughts were of fun and amusement.

Early next morning they took train to Cairo.

How strange it seems to the Biblical student, to think of traveling by a railroad in that country, so famous in Bible stories!

The comic rhyme of one who indulged in the ludicrous fancy of traveling by means of steam through Egypt and Palestine:

“Stop her. Now, then, for Joppa!

Ease her. Anyone for Gizeh?”

has come to be literally true, for Max heard the conductor shout out: “Gizeh—all out for Gizeh,” on the route between Alexandria and Cairo.

At the citadel of the narrow-streeted city, Mr. Gordon roused up, and told Max of the slaughter of the Mamelukes—that wonderful body of men who, from being slaves, became the rulers of Egypt.

“It was here,” said Mr. Gordon, “that when Mohammed Ali, in 1811, was organizing his expedition against the Wahhabees, he heard that the Mamelukes designed to rebel in his absence. He therefore invited their chief to be present at the investiture of his son with the command of the army.

“Above four hundred accepted the invitation. After receiving a most flattering welcome they were invited to parade in the courtyard of the citadel.”

“What for?” asked Max. “Did Mohammed want to impress them with his generosity?”

“No,” answered Mr. Gordon. “The Mamelukes defiled within its lofty walls; the portcullis fell behind the last of their glittering array; too late they perceived that their host had caught them in a trap, and they turned to effect a retreat.

“In vain.

“Wherever they looked their eyes rested on the barred windows and blank, pitiless walls.

“But they saw more.

“A thousand muskets were pointed at them, and from those muskets incessant volleys were poured.

“This sudden and terrible death was met with a courage worthy of the past history of the Mamelukes.

“Some folded their arms across their mailed bosoms, and stood waiting for death.”

“How brave!” ejaculated Max, in a low voice.

“Others bent their turbaned heads in prayer. But some, with angry brows, drew their swords and charged upon the gunners.

“It was of no avail. They were shot down, and the withering fire did its deadly work.”

“Did all perish?” asked Max, excitedly.

“Only one escaped.”

“How did he manage it?”

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