

**FRENCH  
HARRY  
WILLARD**

THE LANCE OF KANANA: A  
STORY OF ARABIA

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*The Lance of Kanana: A Story of Arabia:*

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# Harry W. French

## The Lance of Kanana:

### A Story of Arabia

Encircled by the fiery, trackless sand,  
A fainting Arab halted at a well  
Held in the hollow of the desert's hand.  
Empty! Hope vanished, and he gasped and fell.  
At night the West Wind wafted o'er the land  
The welcome dew, a promise to foretell:  
Hers this result, for which she bade him stand.

# I

## THE COWARD OF THE BENI SADS

Kanana was an Arab – a Bedouin boy of many years ago, born upon the desert, of the seed of Ishmael, of the tribe of Beni Sad.

It seems well-nigh impossible that the Bedouin boy could have lived who was not accustomed to the use of the sword and lance, long before he reached the dignity of manhood.

The peculiar thing about Kanana was that he never held a lance in his hand but once; yet many a celebrated sheik and powerful chieftain of his day lies dead, buried, and forgotten long ago, while the name of Kanana is still a magic battle-cry among the sons of Ishmael, and his lance is one of the most precious relics of Arabia.

The old mothers and the white-haired veterans love to tell the story of the lance of Kanana; their black eyes flash like coals of fire when they say of it that it rescued Arabia.

The Beni Sads were a powerful tribe of roving Bedouins. Kanana was the youngest son of the venerable chief; the sheik who in the days of his strength was known from the Euphrates to the sea as the "Terror of the Desert."

By a custom older than the boyhood of King David it fell to the lot of the youngest son to tend his father's sheep. The occupation was not considered dignified. It was not to Kanana's liking and

it need not have lasted long; for the Terror of the Desert thought more of making warriors than shepherds of his sons, but greatly to his father's disgust Kanana refused to exchange his shepherd's staff for a warrior's lance. It was not that he loved the staff, but that he objected to the lance.

The tribe called Kanana effeminate because he was thoughtful and quiet, where other boys were turbulent, and as he grew older and the boyish fancy became a decided conviction against the combats constantly going on between the different tribes, they even called him a coward and said that he did not dare to fight.

There is but one name more bitter than "coward" to the Arab. That name is "traitor," and after being called a coward almost all his life, the very last words which Kanana heard from the lips of his countrymen came in frantic yells, calling him a traitor.

To-day, however, it is always with throbbing hearts and flashing eyes that they repeat the story of the Lance of Kanana that rescued Arabia.

Until he was five years old, Kanana rolled about in the sand and sunshine, like the other children, with nothing on him but a twisted leather cord, tied round his waist.

Then, for five years, according to the custom of his people, he helped the women of his father's tent; shaking the goat-skin filled with cream till it turned into butter; watching the kedder upon the fire, drying the buttermilk to be ground into flour, and digging kemma, which grow like truffles, under the sand.

After he was ten, for three years he watched the sheep

and goats and the she-camels. That was the regular course of education through which all Bedouin boys must pass.

When he reached the age at which Ishmael was sent away with Hagar by Abraham, he was supposed to drop all menial labor and take his place among men; making a position for himself according to the fighting qualities which he possessed.

Kanana's fighting qualities, however, were only exhibited in the warfare which now began between him and his father.

There were at that time very few occupations open to the Bedouin boy. The tribe was celebrated for its men of learning and boasted the most skillful physicians in all Arabia; but they had all won their first laurels with the lance, and none of them wanted Kanana.

Three times his father came to him with the question: "Are you ready to be a man?" and three times Kanana replied, "My father, I can not lift a lance to take a life, unless it be for Allah and Arabia."

How he came by a notion so curious no Arab could tell. The lad well knew the old decree that the hand of the Ishmaelite should be against every man, and every man's hand against him. He knew that every Arab of the desert lived by a warfare that was simply murder and robbery. Was he not an Arab, and an Ishmaelite?

Alone, among the sheep and camels, he had thought out his own theory. Kanana said to himself, "I am taught that Allah created these animals and cares for them, and that I cannot please

him if I allow them to suffer; it must be surely that men are more precious to Allah than animals. Why should we kill one another, even if we are Arabs and Ishmaelites?"

The menial tasks still allotted to Kanana grew more and more irksome. His punishment was far more keen than the tribe supposed; no one dreamed of the sharp cringe of pain with which he heard even the children call him a coward.

There were some faculties which Kanana possessed that made the warriors all envy him. He had a remarkable power over animals. No other Beni Sad could ride a camel or a horse so fast as Kanana. The most refractory creature would obey Kanana. Then, too, Kanana was foremost in the games and races. No other shepherd's eye was nearly so quick as Kanana's to detect an enemy approaching the flocks at night. No other young Bedouin, watching the ripening grain, could throw a stone from his sling so far and so accurately at the robber birds.

These accomplishments, however, only made his father the more angry that Kanana would not turn his gifts to some more profitable end.

Every year for three months – from planting to harvest-time – the Beni Sads encamped upon a river bank, on the outskirts of the Great Desert.

The encampment numbered nearly five hundred tents set in four rows as straight as an arrow flies.

These tents, of black goats'-hair cloth, were seven feet high in the center and five feet high on the sides. Some of them were

twenty feet broad, and each was divided by a beautiful hanging white Damascus carpet. The men occupied one side, and the women and children the other. The favorite mare and the most valuable of the camels always slept by the tent, and the master's lance stood thrust into the ground at the entrance.

Far as the eye could reach, up and down the sluggish river, a field of ripening grain filled the narrow space between the yellow water and the silver-gray of the desert sand.

Here and there, through the grain-field, rose curious perches – platforms, constructed upon poles driven into the ground. Upon these platforms watchers were stationed when the grain began to head, and there they remained, night and day, till it was harvested, frightening the birds away.

Once a day the women brought them food, consisting of buttermilk, dried and ground and mixed with melted butter and dates; these same women renewed the supply of stones to throw at the birds.

The watchers were old men, women who were not needed in the tents, and little children; but all alone, this year, upon the most distant perch, sat Kanana.

There was not one of the tribe but felt that he richly deserved this disgrace; and Kanana could see no way to earn their respect, no way to prove himself a brave fellow. He was glad that they had given him the most distant perch, for there he could bear his hard lot, away from jests and jeers.

The women who brought the food stopped for a long time

at some of the perches, reporting all the news, but they never troubled themselves to relieve Kanana's solitude. The perches were too far apart for conversation. Kanana had always time enough to think, and as the grain grew yellow this year, he came to two positive conclusions. He firmly resolved that before the reapers entered that field he would do something to convince his people that he was not a coward; failing that, he would hang his head in shame, acknowledge that they were right, and fly forever from their taunts.

## II

# THE OLD SHEIK'S PROMISE

The sun was beating fiercely down upon Kanana's perch, but he had not noticed it. The stones piled beside him for his sling were almost hot enough to burn his hand, but he did not realize it, for he had not touched them for a long time. The wooden dish of paste and dates stood in the shadow of the perch. He had not tasted them.

The pile of stones grew hotter and hotter. The hungry birds ate and quarreled and ate with no one to disturb them. The Bedouin boy sat cross-legged on his perch, heedless of everything, twisting and untwisting the leather cords of his sling, struggling to look into the mists that covered up his destiny.

"Hi, there! you slothful son of a brave father! Look at the birds about you! Are you dead, or only sleeping?" sounded the distant but shrill and painfully distinct voice of an old woman who, with two children much younger than Kanana, occupied the next perch.

Kanana roused himself and sent the stones flying from his sling till there was not a bird in sight. Then he sank into deep thought once more; with his head resting upon his hands he became oblivious to everything.

Suddenly he was roused by the sound of horses' hoofs upon

the sandy soil, a sharp rustling in the drying grain. He looked up, as thoroughly startled as though he had been sleeping, to see approaching him the one person than whom he would rather that any or all of the tribe of Beni Sad should find him negligent at his post of duty.

It was his father.

"Oh, Kanana! oh, Kanana!" cried the old man, angrily. "Thou son of my old age, why didst thou come into the world to curse me? When thou shakest the cream, the butter is spoiled. When thou tendest the sheep, they are stolen! When thou watchest the grain, it is eaten before thy face! What shall a father do with a son who will neither lift his hand among men nor bear a part with women? And now, when all the miseries of life have taken hold upon me and the floods cover me, thou sittest at thine ease to mock me!"

Kanana sprang down from his perch. Kneeling, he touched his forehead to the ground.

"My father, slay me and I will take it as a mercy from thy hand. Or, as I am fit for nothing here, bid me go, and among strangers I will beg. But thou shalt not, my father, speak of me as ungrateful, unfilial. I know of no flood of sorrow that has come down upon thee."

"Thou knowest not what they all know?" exclaimed the old man fiercely.

"I know of nothing, my father. Since I came into the field, three weeks ago, no one has spoken to me but to chide me."

"Then know now," replied the sheik reproachfully, "that of thy two brave brothers who went with the last caravan, one has returned, wounded and helpless, and the other, for an old cause of blood between our tribes, has been made a prisoner by Raschid Airikat. The whole caravan, with the white camel at its head, Raschid has taken, and he has turned with it toward Damascus."

"Thy part of the caravan was very small, my father," said Kanana. "Only four of the camels were thine, and but for the white camel they were all very old. Their burdens, too, saving my brothers, were only honey and clay-dust, of little value."

This was the simple truth, and evinced at least a very practical side to Kanana's mind; but it was not the kind of sympathy which the sheik desired, and his anger burst out afresh against Kanana.

"Ay, thou tender of flocks, and sleeper!" he cried. "Wouldst thou teach me the value of camels and merchandise to comfort me? And hast thou fixed the price of ransom which Airikat will demand, or slay thy brother? And hast thou reckoned up the value of the white camel which could not be bought for gold, as it brought to thy father and thy father's father all their abundance of good? Answer me, if thou art so wise. Oh, that I had a son remaining who could lift a lance against this Airikat as bravely as he hurls his empty words at an old father!"

"My father," said Kanana earnestly, "give me a horse, a sack of grain, a skin of water, and I will follow after Raschid Airikat. I will not slay him, but, by the help of Allah, I will bring back to thee thy white camel with my brother seated upon his back."

The old sheik made a gesture of derision: "Thou wisp of flax before a fire! Thou reed before a whirlwind! Get thee back to thy perch and thy birds, and see if thou canst keep awake till sundown. Harvesting will begin with the daylight to-morrow. See that thou workest then."

Kanana rose to his feet. Looking calmly into the old sheik's angry face, he replied:

"My father, I will watch the birds till sundown. Then let others do the reaping. Kanana, whom thou scornest, will be far away upon the desert, to seek and find his brother."

"Did I not say I would not trust a horse to thee?" exclaimed the old man, looking at him in astonishment.

"These feet of mine can do my bidding well enough," replied Kanana. "And by the beard of the Prophet they shall do it till they have returned to thee thy son and thy white camel. I would do something, oh, my father, that I, too, might have thy blessing and not thy curse. It is the voice of Allah bids me go. Now say to me that if I bring them back then thou wilt bless me, too, ay, even though still I will not lift a lance, unless it be for Allah and Arabia."

The aged warrior looked down in a sort of scornful pity upon his boy, standing among the stalks of grain; half in jest, half in charity, he muttered, "Yes, *then* I will bless thee," and rode away.

The harvesting began, as the old sheik had said, with the next daylight, but Kanana was not among the reapers.

Few so much as missed him, even, and those who did,

supposed that he had hidden himself to avoid their jests.

Only the sullen sheik, bowed under his affliction, thought often of Kanana as he rode up and down the line. He remembered his looks, his words. He wondered if he could have been mistaken in the boy. He wished he had given him the horse and that he had blessed him before he went away.

### III

## AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT HOR

The moment the sun sank into the billows of sand Kanana had left his perch.

From the loaded stalks about him he gathered a goat's-hair sack of grain and fastened it upon his back. There was no one to whom he need say farewell, and, armed only with his shepherd's staff, he started away upon the desert, setting his course to the north and west.

Before he had gone far he passed a lad of about his own age who had come from the encampment to hunt for desert-rats. Had Kanana seen him he would have made a wide détour, but the boy lay so still upon the sand that the first Kanana knew of his presence was when a low sarcastic voice uttered his name.

"Kanana!" it exclaimed. "Thou here! Dost thou not fear that some rat may bite thee? Whither darest thou to go, thus, all alone, and after dark, upon the sand?"

Fire flashed from Kanana's eyes. His hand clutched his shepherd's staff and involuntarily he lifted it; but the better counsel of his curious notions checked the blow. It was so dark that the boy upon the sand did not notice the effect of his taunts and knew nothing of his narrow escape. He only heard the quiet voice of Kanana as presently it meekly replied to his question:

"I go to Mount Hor."

It was an answer so absurd that the boy gave it no second thought and by the time that the footsteps of Kanana had died away the rat-hunter had as utterly forgotten him as though he had never existed.

To Mount Hor?

Kanana had only the most imperfect information to guide him. He knew that the Beni Sad caravan had been for some days upon the road southward, to Mecca, when it was captured by Raschid Airikat and turned at an angle, northward, toward Damascus.

Seen from a great distance, over the sea of sand, the solitary peak of old Mount Hor, where Aaron, the great high priest of Israel, was buried, forms a startling beacon. By day or night, it rises clear and sharp against the sky, guiding the caravans northward, from Arabia to Jerusalem and Damascus, and southward from Syria to Medina and Mecca; while the fertile oasis about it is the universal resting-place.

Kanana was not at all sure that the caravan would not have passed Mount Hor long before he could reach it; but if so, it must in time return that way, and, in any case, of all Arabia Mount Hor was the one spot where he could be sure to gather further information from passing caravans.

He knew his path upon that shifting sand as well as an Indian knew his way through the trackless forests of New England. With the sun and stars above him, any Arab would have scorned the idea of being lost in Arabia, and through the long night with

strong and steady strides Kanana pressed onward toward Mount Hor.

As the harvest moon rose above the desert, behind him, the Bedouin boy was softly chanting from the second *sura* of Al Koran:

"God, there is no God but him;  
The Living! The Eternal.  
Slumber doth not overtake him,  
Neither Sleep.  
And upholding all things,  
To him is no burden.  
He is the Lofty and the Great."

His long, black shadow fell over the silver sand, and, watching it, he chanted the Koran again:

"God is God. Whatever of good betideth thee cometh from him.  
"Whatever of evil is thine own doing."

Suddenly a speck appeared upon the distant horizon. None but the keen eye of a shepherd would have seen it, in the night, but Kanana watched it as it quivered and wavered, disappearing as it sank into a valley in the rolling sand, appearing again, like a dory on the ocean, each time a little nearer than before.

Kanana noted the direction the speck was taking, and he made

a wide path for it; he crouched among the sand-shrubs when it came too near.

First a small party of horsemen passed him, the advance guard of a moving tribe. Then came the main body of men upon camels and horses; but the only sounds were made by the feet of the animals and the clanking of the weapons. The she-camels with their young followed; then the sheep and goats driven by a few men on foot; next, the camels laden with the tents and furniture; last of all the women and children of the tribe accompanied by another armed escort.

From all that company there was not a sound but of the sand and the trappings. There was nothing but shadows, swinging, swaying shadows, moving like phantoms over the white sand, as the trailing train went gliding on, in that mysterious land of shadows and silhouettes.

There was nothing in it that was weird to Kanana, however. He hid himself simply as a precaution. He had often been a part of such a caravan, and he knew from experience, that if a solitary Arab were found upon the desert, he would very quickly be forced to help drive the sheep and goats, and kept at it until he could make his escape. Any Arab boy would have hidden himself.

Long before Kanana's next halt the sun was pouring down his furious heat. To his great good fortune he came upon a bowlder rising out of the sand; there he quickly made a place for himself where the sun could not reach him and lying down slept until

night.

Only one who has walked upon a desert, hour after hour, parched with thirst and utterly exhausted in the fierce glare and heat can properly appreciate the Bible picture of "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Had he not found this rock Kanana would simply have dug a hole in the sand and forced himself into it.

Here and there as he pressed on, Kanana saw grim skeletons of men and animals as they lay whitening among the sand-shrubs, but he paid them little attention. Before the sun had set, upon the second day, he beheld the distant summit of Mount Hor cutting sharply into the blue sky.

The sight renewed his strength. Hour after hour he pressed onward, with his eyes fixed upon the tomb of Aaron, a white monument upon the summit of the mountain, flashing like snow as the moon rose in the clear, blue-black sky.

Kanana did not pause again until he fell upon his knees beside the stream which rises in a spring upon Mount Hor, to die in the sand, not far from its base. He plunged into the water; then, dressing himself again, he lay down upon the bank to sleep. He awoke with the first gray lighting in the east, when the air of a desert is almost cold enough to freeze.

He had now nothing more to do till he could obtain some information from passing caravans. It would soon be sunrise, the hour for morning prayer, and, to warm himself while he waited, he walked along the banks of the stream. They were blue as the

very sky, with masses of forget-me-nots.

Suddenly Kanana paused. He started back. His eyes dilated, and his hand trembled till the shepherd's staff fell, unheeded, to the ground. The next moment he dropped to the ground to examine the place more carefully.

What was it? Only some marks upon the grass where a caravan had camped. The herbage was matted here and there where the camels lay, and cropped short in little circles about each spot where they had eaten it as far as they could reach.

Caravans were continually resting for the day under the shadow of Mount Hor. There was nothing remarkable in the fact that a caravan had camped there, and had gone. They always move at night; not so much because it is cooler as because a camel will not eat at night, no matter how hungry he may be, and must be given the daylight or he will deliberately starve.

A moment later Kanana was upon his feet again with a triumph in his eyes which clearly indicated his satisfaction.

The grass about the spot was unevenly cropped; there were straggling spears of green left standing in the center of each mouthful which the camel had taken. Upon one side the bees were clustering on the matted grass. A multitude of ants appeared upon the other side. The imprint left by the forefoot of the camel showed that it had been extended in front of him, instead of being bent at the knee and folded beneath him.

All this meant to the young Arab that the camel was old, that it was lame in the left knee, that it had lost a front tooth, that its

burden on one side was honey, on the other the dust of river clay, to be used in the manufacture of stucco.

Had one of his father's camels stood before him Kanana could not have been more sure. Nothing more was needed to assure him that Raschid Airikat, with the stolen camels, had left Mount Hor the night before, upon the trail leading southward into Arabia.

His eyes flashed with excitement. "My brother and the white camel are not ten hours from here, and they are on the road to Mecca or Medina," he exclaimed as his fingers tightened about the staff.

His white teeth glistened in a smile, as he added, "They are mine, or I am a coward!"

He stood there, motionless, for a moment, his dark eyes instinctively turning southward. The magnitude of his task lay vividly before him. He recalled his father's words: "Thou wisp of flax before a fire! Thou reed before a whirlwind!" They served to strengthen him.

The first step which lay before him was enough to test the courage of a brave man, and yet it was only a step toward a grand destiny.

Suddenly starting from his revery, Kanana exclaimed:

"I will do it! or I will consent to be known forever as the coward of the Beni Sads!" and turning he ran up the rocky sides of old Mount Hor, toward the white tomb of Aaron, whence he knew he could see far away over the great ocean of sand.

It might be there would yet appear a speck upon the distant

horizon, to guide him toward the retreating caravan.

## IV

# THE PROMISE

Up the steep sides of Mount Hor, Kanana climbed, without waiting to look for a path. He saw nothing, heard nothing. He was all eagerness to reach the summit, in the faint hope that it might not be too late to see the departing caravan of Raschid Airikat.

Unless a camel is fresh, unusually large and strong, or constantly urged, it rarely makes more than two miles an hour. It was not over ten hours since the robber sheik had left the oasis, and some of the camels were very old and exhausted. It was a foolish hope, no doubt, and yet Kanana hoped that anything so large as a great caravan might still be distinguishable.

Up, up, up he climbed – as fast as hands and feet could carry him. He no longer felt the cool air of early morning. He no longer looked about him to see the new sights of a strange oasis.

He did not even pause to look away over the desert as he climbed. The highest point was none too high. He did not care how far he could see until he had gained the white tomb of Aaron, upon the very crest.

Had he not been too thoroughly occupied with what was above him to notice what transpired about him and down below, he would have seen five Arab horsemen reach the stream by which he slept, almost as he began to climb.

They were Mohammedan soldiers, thoroughly armed for war, and had evidently come from the northern borders of Arabia, where the victorious Mussulmans were triumphantly planting the banner of Islam.

They had been riding hard, and both men and horses were exhausted. They hurried to the water. The men hastily ate some food which they carried, and tethered their horses in Arab fashion, by a chain, one end of which is fastened about the forefoot of the animal and the other end about the master, to prevent their being stolen while the master sleeps.

The moment this was accomplished, the five men rolled themselves in their mantles, covering their faces, as well as their bodies, and lay down upon the grass to sleep.

They were skilled in the art of making long journeys in the shortest possible time, and were evidently upon important business; for an Arab is never in haste unless his mission is very important.

Before Kanana reached the temple the men were soundly sleeping, and the horses, lying down to rest themselves, were still eating the grass about them, as a camel eats.

Panting for breath, and trembling in his eager haste, Kanana reached the tomb of Aaron: an open porch, with white pillars supporting a roof of white, like a crown of eternal snow upon the summit of Mount Hor.

Between the snowy pillars Kanana paused. One quick glance at the sky gave him the points of the compass, and shading his

eyes from the glowing east, he looked anxiously to the south and west.

Sand, sand, sand, in billows like great waves of an ocean, lay about him in every direction. Far away there were low hills, and a semblance of green which, to his practiced eye, meant a grove of date palms upon the banks of a stream. But nowhere, search as he would, was there the faintest speck to indicate the caravan.

He was still anxiously scanning those distant hills when the first rays of the rising sun shot from the eastern horizon, flashing a halo of glory upon the snow-white crown of old Mount Hor, before they touched the green oasis lying about its base.

Never, in all the ages, had the sun come up out of the Arabian desert to see such a tableau as his first bright beams illumined Aaron's tomb.

All absorbed in his eager search, Kanana stood upon the very edge of the white porch. One hand was extended, grasping his shepherd's staff, the other was lifted to shade his eyes.

In his eagerness to reach forward, one foot was far before the other, and the knee was bent, as though he were ready to leap down the steep declivity before him.

His turban, a large square piece of cloth, was bound about his head with a camel's-hair cord; one corner was thrown back over his forehead, and a corner fell over each shoulder, like a cloak. His coat was sheepskins stitched together. Summer and winter, rain and sunshine, the Bedouin shepherd wears that sheepskin coat, as the best protection against both sun and frost.

His bare feet rested firmly upon the white platform, and the arm that held the shepherd's staff was knotted with muscles which a strong man might have envied him.

His beardless face was dark, but not so dark as to hide the eager flush which heightened the color in his cheeks, and his chest rose and fell in deep, quick motions from his rapid climb.

His lips were parted. His dark eyes flashed, while the hand which shaded them stood out from his forehead as though trying to carry the sight a little farther, that it might pierce the defiles of those distant hills and the shadows of the date palm groves.

The sun rose higher, and its full light fell across the young Ishmaelite. It was the signal for the morning call to prayer, and from the minaret of every mosque in the realm of Islam was sounding *La Illaha il Allah Mahamoud rousol il Allah*. Kanana did not need to hear the call, however. He instantly forgot his mission, and, a humble and devout Mohammedan, laid aside his staff and reverently faced toward Mecca to repeat his morning prayer.

Standing erect, with his open hands beside his head, the palms turned forward, he solemnly began the *Nummee Allah voul-hamda*. With his hands crossed upon his breast he continued. Then he placed his hands upon his knees, then sat upon the floor. Then with his open hands upon the floor he touched his forehead to the platform as he repeated the closing words of the prayer.

In this position he remained for some time, whispering a petition of his own for strength and courage to carry out the task

which he had undertaken.

There was something so solemn and impressive in the death-like stillness of the early morning, upon that solitary peak, that it almost seemed to Kanana that, if he listened, he should hear the voice of Allah, answering his prayer.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sharp cry, and another and another in quick succession mingled with savage yells.

It was not the voice of Allah, for which he had been waiting, and Kanana sprang to his feet and looked anxiously about him.

The mountains of Arabia are not high. Among real mountains, Mount Hor would be but a rocky hill. Looking down, for the first time, Kanana saw the stream below him, in its border of blue forget-me-nots, and could clearly distinguish the five soldiers who had so quickly fallen asleep upon its banks.

It was a fearful sight which met his eyes. The five men were still lying there, but they were no longer sleeping. They were dead or dying; slain by three Bedouin robbers, who had crept upon them for the valuable prize of their horses, and who did not dare attempt to steal the animals while the masters were alive.

It was almost the first time that Kanana's eyes had rested upon a scene of blood, common as such scenes are among his countrymen, and he stood in the porch benumbed with horror, while the robbers tore from the bodies about them such garments as pleased them; then took their weapons, mounted three of the horses, and leading two rode quickly away to the north.

There was no assistance which Kanana could render the

unfortunate men. The caravan was already a night's march ahead of him and every moment that he lost must be redeemed by hurrying so much the faster under the burning sun, over the scorching sand, when, at the best, it was doubtful if flesh and blood could stand what must be required of it.

With a shudder he turned from the terrible scene and began to descend the mountain. Soon he was upon the banks of the stream and passing close to the spot where the five bodies were lying. He would not run, but he hurried on, with his eyes fixed upon the ground before him.

A faint sound caught his ear. He started, clutched his staff, and turned sharply about, thinking that the robbers had seen him and returned. It was only one of the unfortunate soldiers who had been left for dead. He had raised himself upon his elbow, and was trying to attract Kanana's attention.

"Water! water! In the name of Allah, give me water!" he gasped, and fell back unconscious.

For a moment Kanana was tempted to hurry on. He did not want to go there, any more than he wanted to delay his journey; but something whispered to him of the promises of the Koran to those who show mercy to the suffering; that Allah would reward even a cup of water given to the thirsty.

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