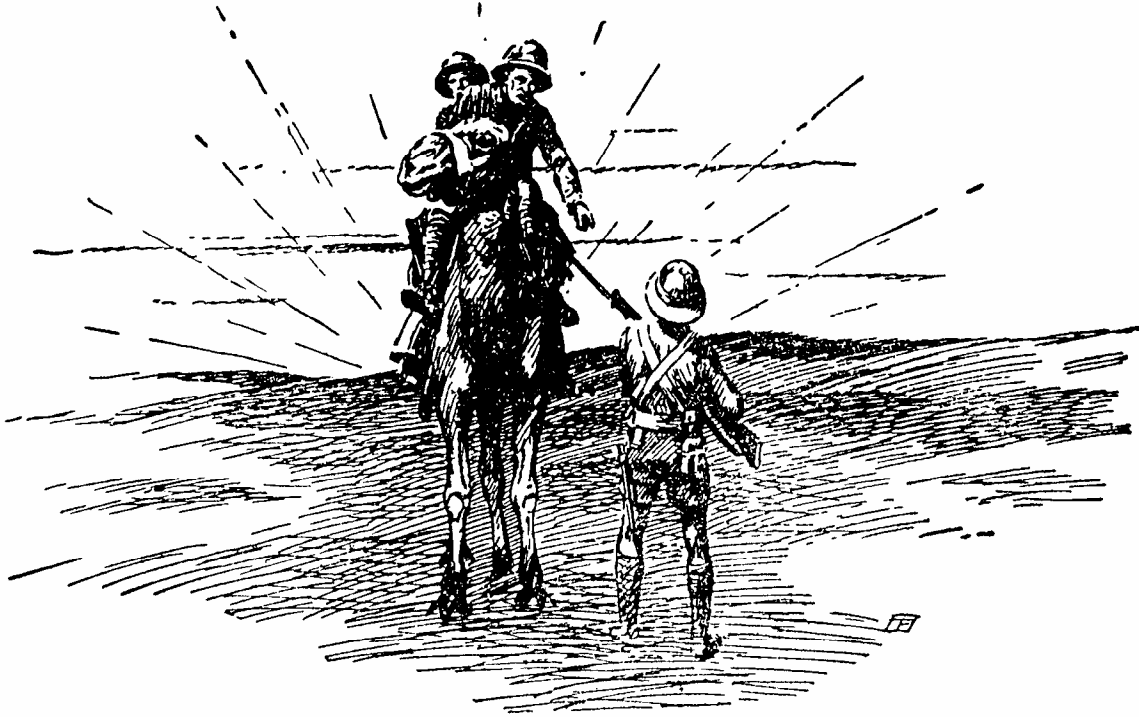


Turkish Delight

By A. de Herries Smith



A pair of Anzacs, mounted on a cranky camel, invade a minaret and engage the “terrible Turk”

CRANK that camel!”

The order came low toned but urgent from Private “Frostbite” Foran. He stared about him in the clammy Egyptian darkness, striving to locate the groaning beast of burden and his soldier comrade.

“Crank him yerself!” Private “Tubby” Hay’s acid voice responded. “How the blazes can I find his tail in the dark?”

“Where’s your ambition?” the taller man retorted. “Going to be a buck private all your life, eh? I makes you second in command of this expedition, because you allows you savvies camels, and by crickey, you can’t even locate his tail to give it a twist. If we’re caught here we’ll be in the clink for the duration. Go on—”

“Whoa! Whoa!”

All at once the soldiers’ voices changed from

harsh comments to pleas. Instead of urging the unwilling camel up, they were endeavoring to soothe it. For half an hour they had been vainly attempting to induce the ship of the desert to get to his feet; now all their efforts were concentrated on keeping the camel squatted.

Foran groaned as he followed the direction of Tubby’s forefinger, dimly visible in the quickly lifting tropical dawn. Against the edge of a windblown sand ridge a score of helmets were faintly silhouetted, swaying backward and forward in time to the jog of riding camels. Also, there were the abrupt shapes of Lee-Enfield rifles at the carry, held by straight-backed figures, erect despite their mounts’ ungainly motion.

“Suffering scorpions! The Camel Corps!” Foran whispered. “If those bozos get one slant at us sneakin’ out, we’ll be shot as deserters. Hold

him, Tubby, hold him! Whoa, Isaac, whoa there!”

But there was no holding Isaac now. The camel had seen and smelled his compatriots, and he had every intention of investigating. With a grunting snarl, the brute got to his feet. The two soldiers made a dive for the saddle, clinging there as best they could when the camel broke into a lope and slid, splayfooted across the sand.

“Steer him away! Sheer off! Sheer off! Hey, pull on that head line, or we’ll—Ow!”

Tubby’s urging was suddenly drowned by a babble of groans and snarls when the speeding camel topped the ridge crest and slithered down into the ranks of the Camel Corps.

Foran felt the little man’s hands clutching his ribs as he ducked, just in time to avoid a sword blade that whistled over his head. All in a moment he was aware of rifle bolts clicking, the clatter of riding rods on the camels’ necks, and harsh orders barked in Arabic.

IN reply to some command, Isaac subsided suddenly, and both Foran and Tubby rolled over his swinging neck and found themselves lying in the sand, staring up into the muzzles of half a dozen Lee-Enfields.

“What the devil is coming off here?” a thin, nasal voice inquired. Foran glanced over to see one camel kneeling and the officer in charge of the party sliding over his neck. The officer came forward, sword in hand. Foran shivered. As in a horrid dream, he saw himself once more an inmate of the red-hot prison tent.

“Sir,” Foran gasped as he came to his feet, tendered the officer a slashing salute and rapidly thought up a suitable excuse, “we was sent with this blinkin’ curio down to the veterinary section! Somethin’ wrong with his feet. Couldn’t steer him nohow. Then he hears your camels, sir, an’ breezes over.”

Tubby’s gasp of amazement at the originality of this excuse was halted when Foran stepped backward quickly and planted a heavy ammunition boot fairly on the little man’s instep.

“Queer time of day to be taking sick camels to the Blue Cross. Don’t you fools know that if you wander outside the lines, the Arabs or the Turks will chop you up?” the officer asked, still holding his sword as though nothing would please him more than to test its edge on the infantrymen.

“Heaven only knows this would be a queer war if it wasn’t for the cavalry and the Camel Corps. Well, I stopped him for you. One of you stay here and watch the brute while the other goes back to the camp for a man who understands camels—if the infantry possesses such a thing.”

The captain stared at the two soldiers for a long moment, his mind still suspicious. An attack on the Turkish outposts was timed for some time during the morning, and it was strange that these two should have been detailed for veterinary work at such a time. Oh, well, they were only infantry anyhow; no brains! He swung about on the grinning camel men, climbed his mount and barked a curt order.

The Camel Corps detail wheeled into formation and, with shoulders shaking in silent mirth, disappeared over the ridge.

“So far, so good,” Foran said to his associate with a sigh of relief as he dusted off his uniform. “No use tryin’ to get through here though. Those birds’ll likely be back again. We gotta mosey for No. 3 post an’ try to beat it past that weasel-faced Shoop. Only chance to get out. First call will be blowin’ in a minnit, an’ then we’ll be in the soup up to our delicate ears. Come on, crank that—”

Tubby’s marvelous flow of Australian bush language cut in on the other man’s words, while his boots thudded on the camel’s ribs. Nothing resulted but a new species of snort from the squatted animal; and in a moment the little man ceased.

Foran made a dive for the camel’s short tail, twisting it vigorously but without result. Then he, too, relieved his feelings by strange words acquired while nighthawking more than one remuda on the cattle ranges of distant California.

ALL at once the camel appeared to bubble over. With windy grunts and snorts, the brute commenced to arise, but before it had got to its knees both Foran and Tubby had leaped for the animal’s back. They were securely in the saddle and smiling their satisfaction when the camel finally took an upright position.

“My colonial oath!” Tubby puffed, awe in his voice. “Danged if he weren’t fooled by that Yank cussin’. Sap thinks it’s Arabic! Keep them slogans in yer nut, Frosty; we’ll need ‘em. All we gotta do now is welt the devil outa him. Get up outa that!”

With two short, steel-tipped entrenching tool handles thudding on his ribs, the camel was forced into a jog trot, and headed directly for No. 3 post—the gateway to freedom and unlimited smokes.

The sentry on No. 3 tilted the wide-leafed felt hat down over his eyes and stared out across the Egyptian desert, already reddened by the promise of another blistering day. Dawn had broken suddenly, and the soldier felt his lips parching with thoughts of the heat to come. He swung his eyes about in a circle, picking up the silvery ribbon of the Suez Canal and, closer to him, the rows of khaki tents that marked the Australian force protecting the water road to India.

“Blow me!” Shoop muttered, dry lipped. “One blasted camel an’ two blokes ridin’ it. Couple of bucks makin’ a sneak for Port Said. I’ll stop that!”

He rubbed one hand across a face gritty with flying sand, then stared again. No, it was not one of the usual desert mirages. The riders were two privates of the Third Australian Infantry—his own unit. The first call had not blown yet, and they had no business going through the lines. He’d make a finish with those tricks.

The camel approached at the usual slide with its evil face grinning and its long neck swinging from side to side as its riders urged the brute on with the entrenching-tool handles. The sentry clicked the bolt of his Lee-Enfield, and the morning sun glinted on a bayonet as he brought the weapon to the ready.

“Halt! Advance one, and give the countersign!”

“Advance one nothing! Me an’ Tubby don’t separate. Takes us a half hour to climb this doggone thing. If we gets down, we don’t get back. You stand outa the road, ‘Digger,’ or we rides you down!”

By way of reply the sentry smacked the camel on its nose with the rifle butt, then reversed the weapon smartly, the point of the bayonet touching the groaning brute’s stomach.

THEREAFTER for a breathing space, the three men regarded one another in grim silence. They were dressed in the usual thin khaki trousers and shirts, quite free and loose fitting for coolness, puttees and felt hats. The two on the camel had

rifles tied to the saddle, and the sentry could see they had a bag of Mills bombs as well.

“Listen here, Shoop,” Foran addressed the man on the ground from the camel’s front seat. “If I gets off this freak, I’ll kick your ribs in. But I’m a peaceable guy. You lets us go through, and we divvies fifty-fifty. How about that for a proposition, Tubby?”

The little man vented his usual grunt, then resumed the mastication of his last plug of chewing tobacco.

By reason of an Australian theory that every one who lived in the States had his habitat in a land of perpetual snow, the title of “Frostbite” had been conferred on Foran when he deserted his ship in Melbourne to join the Australian Expeditionary Force. He was a tall, lean youngster, fair haired, with face, arms and knees burned black by the desert sun.

Foran’s eyes were fixed on the sentry’s bottle shoulders and flickering orbs. Shoop had the reputation of being a shifty customer, and he could certainly ruin things if he let on that Foran and Tubby had passed through. He would have to be bought off; no help for it.

“Split what?” Shoop asked, in time to the camel’s groan, as he let the bayonet fall away. The man’s tones were suspicious.

“Turkish Delight,” Foran replied, slapping his pockets until they jingled again with the coins they contained. “Tubby an’ me makes a clean-up at jungle golf, and we’s goin’ after smokes. You know there ain’t any tobacco in the camp, an’ the boys are all crazy for the weed. Plenty in Port Said, though. We’s goin’ there, load up with rich Turkish cigarettes an’ beat it back. You’ll get a full dozen boxes. How’s that?”

“Ain’t no stone walls around here what they can back a bloke up against,” Shoop said meaningly, “but there’s palm trees. You savvy what desertin’ in the face of the enemy means. Howsomever, that’s your bloody funeral. I’m takin’ you on, but looka here, Frosty”—the sentry took a menacing pace forward—“you divvies an’ you divvies fair. Else—” He finished the sentence with an arm sweep that encompassed the rows of tents set out on the sand wastes.

“Sure, I knows,” Foran agreed, in time to Tubby’s professional exhortation. “If we don’t come through with your whack, you’ll blow the

gaff on us, an' we'll be shot. Good gamble. We're taking it. Give this grunter a poke in the slats with your toad stabber an' we's off."

SHOOP pricked the camel as requested. There came a rumbling snort in reply, and the brute commenced shuffling forward again. Once more the bland-faced Tubby expectorated—in dangerous proximity to the sentry's person.

"Dunno but what I should blow the gaff on 'em when the relief comes," Shoop said to himself, watching the camel sliding across the desert. "Turks'll shoot 'em, an' if they don't, they get nabbed by the camel patrol anyhow."

Other thoughts came to the sentry as well. It was quite true that the battalion was in a bad way for smokes. It might be that he'd stand to make a pot of coin out of this. Supposing he made Foran and Tubby fork up all the cigarettes? They couldn't say a word either; afraid of a court-martial. Seven hundred men crazy for smokes and he the only bloke in the battalion who had them to sell! That was worth thinking about!

"Ship me somewheres east of Suez,
Where the best is like the worst;
Where there ain't no Ten Commandments,
An' a man can raise a—"

Foran ceased a singsong repetition of Kipling's famous poem to swing about on the camel and gaze behind. Now the Australian camp was shut off from view, and the two were in enemy territory: which fact caused them no alarm whatever. The Suez Canal itself had disappeared also, but the ships traversing it appeared to be sailing along sedately through the orange desert. A black-sided liner was just dipping her flag to a gunboat tied up to the bank.

Another sand roll was crested, the ships disappeared; and the two adventurers were alone in the desert.

"I guess this circus freak knows the road?" Foran said an hour later, twisting about in the saddle to stare into Tubby's sleepy eyes.

"Search me," the other replied easily. "He should. Every bloke what beats it outa camp heads for Port Said. Say, what the heck is that thing?"

Foran's eyes followed the pointing finger. He tilted the broad-leafed felt hat down over his eyes to shut out the glare of sun on sand and stared hard

and long. What he saw was a crumbling erection of sun-baked bricks topping another of the interminable sand rolls. The head of a scraggly palm tree appeared above the walls.

"Castle!" Foran muttered, half to himself. "That's queer. Never hears any of the boys blather about seein' no castle on the road to Port Said. Turks uses them stone huts for outposts. We'll try another street, Tubby. Wow!"

WITH the exclamation both soldiers brought their entrenching-tool handles into violent play, while Foran wrenched on the camel's head line, endeavoring to turn the brute about. As though conjured up by a magic wand, a small combat plane had suddenly soared up into the blue from behind the castle and headed directly for the two soldiers.

"Haw, Isaac! Haw, you leather-mouthed hippopotamus!" Foran yelled at the camel, vainly endeavoring to wheel the brute about. "German plane!" he called over his shoulder to Tubby. "Turks has a few Kraut flyin' bats attached to 'em. I'll keep this goat circlin' whilst you takes a whang at 'em with the rifle. What the hell you starin' at? Go on. Shoot!"

Crack! Crack!

Tubby's Lee-Enfield spoke twice before a deafening detonation shook the desert. There was a flash of orange light, followed immediately by a miniature sand storm, above which the roaring of the plane's engine sounded distinctly.

Foran wiped the sand out of his eyes, to see a raw-rimmed shell hole fracturing the desert's smoothness and the airplane just in the act of side-slipping in preparation for a turn. The camel had stopped dead and had started groaning as usual.

"Here, change places"! You're a rotten shot!" Foran ordered. "Any fool could belt that sky pig down—flyin' just over us. What you think this is—a college prom or a camel's back, eh? Gosh, what feet!"

Tubby ignored the sarcasm and managed to slide past his comrade into the front seat. Again the plane zoomed down, another shattering boom filled the air, and once more the two riders were covered with sand. Foran fired, with no better result than his comrade.

Again the plane circled, and this time the bomb came closer to the two crouched figures on

the camel. But Foran made no attempt to fire. He waited, head down to protect his eyes from the flying sand, but as soon as the plane roared past and banked for another circle, he came erect, the rifle at his shoulder.

The Lee-Enfield's stabbing bark and Tubby's shout came together. Tubby drove a fat elbow back into Foran's ribs, with an expression of delight, as the plane wobbled and then slid earthward in a sharp glide.

"They're down! Prisoners!" Foran yelled exultantly, changing the rifle to his left hand and pulling out the entrenching tool from where he had stuck it inside his waistband. They flailed the grunting camel in the plane's direction, just as two figures clambered out of the machine and commenced running toward the castle.

Foran was conscious of the plane's crumpled wings as the camel lumbered past. He caught a momentary glimpse of the two German airmen staggering in under a crumbling gateway; then the loosely built walls reared up overhead, shutting out the stabbing sunshine.

Tubby, Foran and the camel passed in under the gateway. All at once a yell burst from Tubby as he vainly wrenched on the camel's head rope. Ahead of them was a sandy quadrangle flecked by a few palm trees. There were, also, figures running back and forth; and suddenly a bugle blared.

A single glance told Foran that the troops forming were Turkish infantry. He knew those ill-fitting khaki uniforms and the beehive-like helmets. The two airmen had readied the troops and were gesticulating at an erect figure staring at the two camel riders. It came to the American on wings of light that this was a Turkish advance post, officered by Germans.

FORAN punched Tubby in the back and slid to earth, followed a second later by his comrade. Rifles in hand they dodged to the left and flung themselves into the nearest doorway. The camel, voicing loud grunts of satisfaction jogged ahead to where the brute could see a number of his own kind squatted behind the Turks.

Blinded by the gloom, after the brilliant sunshine they had just left, both men fell down a short flight of steps and, getting to their feet again, blundered through a cool-smelling room apparently filled with boxes and barrels,

"Well, we got a private war of our own, anyhow," Foran panted. "You don't get me goin' on no more of these vacations until I learns to steer those blasted camels. But for that bellyachin' brute we'd be in Port Said now, smokin'—"

"Whist!" Tubby's hand reached out and gripped the other man's wrist.

Something was moving in the murk across the stone-walled room. No it was more than one. Then all at once the two things broke into action. Almost together two *wishes* sounded, There came twin flashes of light as the long, curved Arab knives flashed through the gloom, clashed against the wall and tinkled to the stone slabs forming the floor.

With a yelp of anger, Foran flung himself across the room, barking his shins on several of the boxes. The rifle clattered out of his fingers just as he reached the far wall. Involuntarily he stretched out both his hands. They met in the voluminous folds of an Arab's burnoose, just as he went down in a tangle of cloth. In a moment he was on his feet again, in time to see two pairs of sandals disappearing up a twisting flight of stone steps.

"A bit of luck at last," the American muttered, peering at the stuff in his hands. "By cripes, two of 'em, Tubby! Two of them Arab nightshirt things. We'll put 'em on. Maybe that'll help us to get away."

"Huh," Tubby grunted. "Say, what's all this dope? Looka here." He pried off the lid of a neatly fitting little box and exhibited its contents. Foran peered down at the smooth, pink, gelatinous substance it contained and emitted a low whistle.

"Whew! Turkish Delight!" the American exulted, rubbing his finger over the box's smooth contents. "By cripes, Tubby, we're in the middle of the Turks' supply column. Bet a dollar there's rare old wine here, too. We've got to fight for this layout to the last man."

"Say, you a mind reader or what?" Tubby shrilled, his excited voice pitched almost to a scream. He came upright from where he was delving into a large case, each fist filled with short, thick Turkish cigarettes. "That's what them Arabs was after—see? Busted the case an' was lootin' the smo—Hey!"

Foran answered the warning with two quick shots that stabbed the room's murk with vicious

flashes and filled it with booming reverberations. A groan and a resounding crash at the doorway replied.

"Here! Up this way!" the American shouted, as he wheeled about and ran for the stairway. He paused at the entrance and sent another shot back into the Turks at the far doorway, then waited until Tubby had squeezed past him. Foran then leaped upward, four steps at a time.

THE stairway up which they sped appeared to be without end. They circled up and up, hemmed in by circular stone walls, that allowed only one man to essay the passage at a time. Finally a little shaft of light stabbed the darkness, and Foran halted by it to find Tubby squatted on the steps, lungs roaring, and vainly endeavoring to light a cigarette.

"Holy gophers!" Foran ejaculated, staring out of the window into the courtyard beneath. "Danged if that isn't old Isaac over there, chewing his cud right in the middle of the Arab camels. Got his nerve, ain't he?"

Tubby peered down and laughed. Isaac was in plain view, legs curled up under him, head swinging from side to side in time to the other brutes' motions. But except for the camels, the square was deserted; none of the Turks were in sight.

"Fasten this nightshirt thing around you." Foran ordered the other man, as he commenced tying on the other burnoose. "This is an O. K. disguise, and mebbe we can make a get-away with it yet."

"We'll need everythin' the laws allows," Tubby replied. "Those two bozos are up the stairs above us, an' I think I heard voices below. What the heck kind of a layout is this dump, anyhow?"

"Minaret," Foran mumbled, alert eyes, on the turn of the stairs underneath. "You seen 'em in Port Said. Muezzin goes up and yells '*Allah il Allah!*' an' all the Turk boys flops down. Kind of a religion, I expects. Ah!"

The American's rifle barked in time to the exclamation. For a moment the two men's eyes and nostrils stung with the explosive, and a face below was suddenly blotted out by a red smear before it disappeared.

"Good shootin'!" Tubby applauded. "We can hold 'em here until the cows come home. You take

the hombres comin' up, an' I'll take 'em comin' down. It'll be as easy as fallin' off a log."

Silence descended upon the minaret, and for a good five minutes the two Australian soldiers sat motionless, alternately staring up and down the twisting stairs and out of the window.

Suddenly Foran jerked himself erect again, and another shot crashed, to be answered again by yet another thud and high-pitched voices from below.

"Not so good!" Tubby's voice came all at once.

"How come!"

The little man pointed a thick finger at the square below, and glancing down, Foran whistled dismally through his teeth. A squad of Turks was dragging a small field gun out through a ragged doorway. Their intention was plain. They were going to bombard the minaret.

"Tough on the poor guys up topside—" Tubby commenced.

"We've got to get out of this," Foran growled, breaking in on him. "It's not more than thirty feet to the ground. Look, Tubby, there's an Arab two-by-four stickin' out of the masonry down there. We'll drop to that peg and then flop to the ground. Watch me."

WITHOUT further words the American slid his long body through the window and let go. He caught the protruding stick, hung for a moment and then dropped to the sand, the burnoose flying out about him like a parachute. After much panting and cursing, Tubby finally squeezed himself through the window, hung by his hands for a moment and let go. The next thing he knew was that he was swinging in the air, ten feet above the ground, firmly held to the protruding pole by his burnoose.

A deafening boom sounded as the field gun went into action, and in reply to it a shower of stones fell from the top of the minaret on the two Australian soldiers.

"Get off it! Get off it!" Foran urged, dancing about below and making fruitless efforts to reach his comrade's flourishing legs. Tubby curbed volubly, while making valiant efforts to free himself. All at once the little man's face went chalky white. He gesticulated wildly with one hand as he spun about over Foran's head.

The American whirled about, dropped to the ground, jerking his rifle ahead of him as he did so. Five little rat-faced men were scrambling out of the doorway Foran and Tubby had previously entered. The Turks flattened themselves down in the sand, and immediately soft-nosed bullets began to spatter the walls behind Foran. Tubby vented a mournful bleat, letting go with his rifle, as he spun slowly round, like a captive balloon.

"Quit it! Quit it!" Foran called, without looking up. "You're firing in the wrong direction!" Tubby nodded dolefully and again made vain efforts to cut himself loose with the bayoneted rifle.

Whik!

A bullet zipped through the crown of Foran's hat, and a second kicked up the sand in his face. *Bam! Bam!* One of the Turks got to his knees, flung his arms out and crumpled down softly in the sand. Another shot, and a second man's hands relaxed on his rifle. He kicked for a moment, then lay motionless.

Boom! Crash!

Foran was conscious of a short-range shell exploding against the minaret high overhead. Then came the thudding of loose stones. A moment later a large, flapping object flowed over him, and he felt Tubby's knees on his neck as the little man struggled to extricate himself from the engulfing burnoose. Foran laughed in spite of himself as he listened to Tubby's choking utterances. The American knew what had happened. One of the stones knocked out by the shell had crashed down on Tubby's wooden pin, had broken it away and freed him.

Foran wrenched back the Lee-Enfield's bolt and forced another shell into the magazine. But before he could fire, the now-infuriated Tubby had staggered to his feet and was charging down the narrow street, rifle at the ready, his burnoose flowing out behind like a banner.

THERE was nothing for the American to do but follow. He saw Tubby plunge his bayonet down and glimpsed two little Turkish conscripts fling away their rifles and leap for the sheltering walls across the street. Foran stepped, over the writhing thing on the ground and ducked into a dark doorway on Tubby's heels. They stood there,

panting, the whites of their eyes rolling in the gloom.

"First, off with this blasted nightshirt," Tubby gurgled, as he ran his bayonet through the tie strings. Foran nodded, followed suit and glanced out into the street, only to jump back quickly.

"Turks coming!" he informed the other man curtly. "Got to move!"

"That's easy," Tubby retorted. "We knows the way anyhow; back at the same place where we started."

"You're the limit!" Foran breathed. "Well, anyhow, we'll grab some more of them good smokes. Pity poor old Shoop ain't here, eh? Up the stairs again, son. We can fight 'em off from there."

Tubby made no reply but to lift one of the boxes out of the broken case and charge for the steps. There Foran bumped into his square back as the little man halted suddenly and fired two shots in rapid succession. Yells answered from above

The *clack-clack* of the Arabs' sandals sounded on the stone steps as the two soldiers leaped up, and both knew that the knife throwers were still a factor to be reckoned with.

The two Australian soldiers once more reached the little window and squatted there, panting, as they gazed down at the scene below.

"Cripes! There's old Isaac yet, chewin' away to beat two of a kind," Tubby wheezed, pointing down

Foran gazed out and glimpsed his former steed still calmly squatted among the other animals. But his eyes flashed away from the camels to where a number of Turks were pulling the field gun back to the end of the court where the grunting brutes lay so serenely. More of the little men in untidy khaki were feverishly piling sandbags in front of the gun, while the German officer roared commands, beating the toilers with the flat of his sabre.

"What the heck is comin' off here?" Foran asked his comrade, bronzed face puckered in mystification.

Instead of replying, Tubby cupped his hands to his mouth and brayed in imitation of a bugle:

"Officers' wives has puddin's an' pies,
Soldiers' wives has skilly.
The dirty old cook, he fell in the soup,
An' burned a big hole—"

THE brassy-throated blare of a real bugle cut off the insane words. Foran leaned out of the window as far as he was able and then let loose a howl that winged back from the tunnelloike street in wild echoes—sounding clearly above the noise of the Australian infantry attacking as per schedule!

“Hooraw for the ruddy Third Australians!” the American shouted, waving his rifle at the sweating figures below. “Don’t spoil the blinkin’ war, comrades. Let a man do it!” he added, thrusting Tubby’s face back as he jerked the Lee-Enfield through the window.

The officer in charge of the advance party held up his rifle as a signal to stop; he stared open mouthed at the figure in the minaret window; the hatless figure, with the cigarette between its lips.

“Me an’ Tubby wins the war!” Foran added by way of explanation. “Up goes Isaac!”

The American took careful and deliberate aim at the bag of Mills bombs hanging to Isaac’s saddle. Then came the rifle’s crack followed a split second later by a thunderous roar as the bombs exploded. The remnants of the amazed Turks could be seen under the smoke haze leaping over the fallen figures and scurrying away for the shelter of the ruined buildings.

“Come down here!” Major Vaine roared at the two in the minaret, as he waved one hand to his sergeant in a gesture that plainly read: “Carry on!”

Foran pulled in his head and stared at his comrade, who nodded dolefully.

“This is the finish, old-timer,” the American mumbled. “Don’t matter a hoot if we did blow up the whole Turkish army. Who’d have thought our mob was goin’ to pull off an attack today, anyhow? We’re deserters, an’ we gotta take our medicine. That’s Major Vaine down there, an’ he’s no blue-eyed baby. Come on, son; we’ll kick off game, anyhow.”

Wild cheers welled out on the stifling air while the two conquerors clumped down the stairs and started to cross to the doorway where the still mystified Vaine stood awaiting them.

“Hey, blokes! Hey, blokes!” a thin voice came out of the dark. “I seen yer smokin’.” Private Shoop caught sight of Tubby’s bulk, and laid a detaining hand on his arm. “I’m a fair bloke,” the sentry of the morning went on. “Not sayin’ nothin’ ‘less you guys don’t kick through. You finds a

bunch of smokes, eh? How about ‘em?”

“That you, Shoop?” Foran queried. He drew back his fist, then thought better of it, adding “You’re a reg’lar snoot all right. There’s smokes in that big case an’ *beaucoup* Turkish Delight in them little boxes. Keep your trap shut though.”

“You betcha,” Shoop gurgled. “I’m takin’ my whack, then you gets what’s left. Heh-heh-heh! Got you blokes where I wants youse.”

FORAN said something vicious under his breath and passed on to where the officer stood. Vaine stared at them, then past their heads to where a light flickered for a moment, followed by the delicious aroma of a Turkish cigarette.

“Well?” the officer queried.

“Well, sir, we goes scoutin’,” Foran defended, striving to plumb his superior’s mask. “We captures this here storehouse—”

“I know that,” Vaine broke in curtly. “You went ahead of the column, but by whose orders I’d damn well like to know. You capture the dump and blow up the enemy as well. Heaven only knows, but you shot down that plane, too, I suppose? How did you manage it?”

“Oh, just a hunch, sir,” Foran replied modestly.

“Hah! What’s in there?”

“*Beaucoup* smokes belonging to the Turks an’ the Kraut officers,” the American replied, “as well as a few hundred packages of Turkish Delight.”

“Turkish Delight? What the—”

“Yes, sir; that’s what the boys calls it. It’s that gelignite high-explosive stuff, only it’s pinkish an’ looks like the candy dope the Arab kids sells you in Port Said.”

“My God!” the officer blurted out. He darted into the darkness to emerge a moment later propelling the astonished Shoop ahead of him. “Here, Sanders,” Vaine called to a corporal just coming up, “put this blasted idiot under arrest. Smoking in an ammunition dump! I’ll deal with him later on!”

Shoop waved his hands and endeavored to explain, but was jerked away before his words took shape. Tubby rolled his eyes, managing, however, to keep a straight face.

“Cigarettes, you say?” the captain asked again, licking his lips and waving toward the

ammunition room. "How did you know there were smokes here?"

"Tubby had a hunch there was some," Foran replied, indicating his bashful associate.

"Two of the hunchiest humans I ever met," Vaine admitted dryly. "I'll mention this to the colonel. Anything I can do for you?"

"Well, sir, the boys needs smokes pretty bad, an' we was figurin' on a trip to Port Said, only Isaac went west."

"Isaac? Who's he?" Vaine roared. Then he

noted the suddenly blank expressions on the two faces and gave it up. "You stay here and guard this dump until I make an examination of the fort, then I'll send you through to Port Said on the auto patrol. Anything *you* want?" he added, wheeling on Tubby.

"Naw," the little man replied thickly.

"Naw! Naw, what?" Tubby made a valiant effort to roll the three cigarettes he was chewing into one corner of his mouth, then sputtered: "Naw, sir."