

# The River Rats

NARRATIVE OF  
CAPTAIN ADAMS

"Detective-Diplomat"

By H. M. EGBERT

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It is not uncommon to hear the wish expressed, by persons of romantic temperament, that the days of the present were as fruitful in glamor of great deeds as those of past centuries. Such wishes are made in ignorance. I wonder how much of the secret history of the present century will ever come to light, whether future generations will ever know some of the events that really transpire in the capitals of the world today and remain hidden from the prying eyes of the most skillful investigators!

Well, I started out to moralize, but this reminds me of a story, one of the last of the man adventures that happened to me while I was employed as a courier of his majesty, King Edward VII., and sent by him upon important missions to various capitals of the world. I was living in my lodgings in Half Moon street, Piccadilly, with Talbot, my soldier servant, when Sir Francis Knowles (or Lord Knowles, rather—I am always forgetting that the old gentleman has won the reward of many years of faithful service as his majesty's secretary)—Lord Knowles sent for me to come to Buckingham Palace. On my arrival there I found him pacing the floor nervously.

"His majesty—" he began fustily. But just then the king entered and dismissed him. Then his majesty led me to a table and, opening a secret drawer, took out a folded yellow parchment which he opened out flat. I could see that it was written over in French and seemed to be a design or plan.

"Captain Adams," his majesty began, "of all the missions which you have ever undertaken on behalf of my government, this is one of the most important. You have heard that Louis Bonaparte has arrived in Paris?"

I had not. I was startled. That a plot for the restoration of the Bonapartes had been under way, I knew. I was aware also that the disestablishment of the French church had leagueed together all the clerical and reactionary elements. But that the claimant to the imperial throne, who was a general in the Russian army, had dared to enter France was news to me.

"And the Seine is rising. Half the lower districts of the capital are under water, and the city is completely isolated so far as telegraphic communication is concerned," his majesty continued, as though he read my thoughts. "Prince Louis has 5,000 malcontents under arms, all carefully drilled and ready in anticipation of revolt. The garrison is infected with sedition, and only a couple of companies, my ambassador writes me, can be relied on for the defense of the republic. And if the republic falls, goodbye to the Franco-British alliance."

The king paused and looked at me earnestly.

"He will strike tomorrow night, secret information reaches me," he continued.

"But—how can 5,000 men hide in Paris and defy the government?" I cried. "Where could they drill?"

"In the catacombs," his majesty answered.

I uttered an exclamation of surprise. He continued:

"You and I and many tourists have descended into these famous ancient and subterranean passages," he said. "But we have never gone very far from the entrance, for the fact is that nobody knows their exact extent or location, running as they do in all directions and intersecting the complicated sewerage system, which is further entangled with arched-over subterranean streams that constantly shift their course. In fact, one with a map of the subterranean portion of Paris might defy the entire nation to expel him. And that is what Prince Louis does."

"It appears that the first Napoleon possessed a map of this region. Two copies of this were known to exist. One was left to his son, Duc de Reichstadt, through whom it passed to Napoleon III. and thence to Prince Louis. He has already thrown his conspirators into the catacombs—by means of this secret, and, when the time comes, he can strike where he pleases, and none will know where the blow is going to fall, except the man who owns the second map."

"Where is it, sir?" I cried.

"Here!" said the king, placing the parchment in my hands. "Hasten to Paris tonight. Deliver this to President Fallieres in person. Wait!" He scribbled a few words of introduction upon one of the royal cards—a large pasteboard the size of a lady's. "This map was found in a volume presented to her majesty my mother by Emperor Napoleon III," he continued. "And now, goodbye. I have every confidence in you, Adam," he concluded, shaking me by the hand.

I hurried home and directed Talbot to pack my grip for an immediate journey. When he learned that I was going to Paris, nothing would satisfy him but that he should be permitted to accompany me.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "it do seem 'ard on me, after standing over your corpse among them bloody

Hafghans, and fighting all through North Hindia with you, not to go with you to Paris. Them frog-eaters is devils."

I should stand in need of a trusty assistant. I consented to Talbot's plea. I had a presentiment that the work in front of me was going to prove arduous—for, needless to say, I should not consider that I had accomplished my task until the plot had been frustrated. Proudly Talbot set off beside me and, the moment that we left the house, the old relations of master and servant were, by a traditional understanding, abrogated.

"Hot work on hand, old man?" said my erstwhile servant, cheerfully.

"Pretty warm, Talbot," I answered, my hand stealing toward the automatic Colt that I always carried in my belt-holster. Talbot saw the action and grinned. I knew that grin. I had seen Talbot grin that way over a dead Afghan, while parrying strokes from a mounted horseman preparatory to administering the "crowning mercy" with his own pistol. So I felt that if our plans miscarried somebody would be greatly to blame for it.

We arrived at Paris the following morning, the train steaming up to the outskirts of the city, whence an "omnibus" barge conveyed us through the streets on top of the flood. I learned that the Seine had risen to a height almost unknown; that the sewers were filling with water and an epidemic threatened. And still the rise continued. It was with some difficulty that I obtained an interview with President Fallieres, and it was necessary for me to display his majesty's card. The president was seated in a large room in the Elysee, and was haggard and pale—from having devoted all his time to the flood victims, a sympathetic attendant whispered. I smiled at this naive interpretation.

"Well, Monsieur, how can I assist you?" asked the president, brusquely.

"It is rather a question of how I can assist you," I answered. "With Napoleon master of subterranean Paris, how long do you expect to uphold the republic?"

He looked at me indignantly, then suddenly he sank down and groaned, burying his face between his hands.

"If we knew where he hides—" he muttered. "But we are helpless. And the troops are not to be relied on. And it would take days to bring loyalists from the frontier, for half of France is under water."

I placed the map in his hands.

"His majesty King Edward VII. sends you this, and bids you use it for the protection of the republic."

He looked at the map dumbly, as though not comprehending; then rose to his feet, his face flushed.

"It is a map—"

"Of the catacombs," I answered. "By the aid of this you will defeat his plans. But you must act at once tonight—"

"Yes," said the president. "I know. What shall I do? This and the flood—the responsibility—and nobody knows or dreams—"

"Let me see the map," I said, seeing that President Fallieres was no longer master of himself; and for half an hour I studied it. At the end of that time its meaning was clear to me.

There were three main entrances to the catacombs within the walls of Paris. One of these three was in the Quartier Latin; a second close beside the north wall; a third within a street not five minutes' walk from the Elysee. And it was here, obviously, that the revolutionaries would emerge.

"Do you know what these entrances are?" I asked the president.

"It was easy to find out, for in the room was a flood map showing the sewerage system. The entrance under the north wall had evidently become sealed since the map was made, for it was now under the flooring of some large railroad yards. That in the Quartier Latin was apparently connected with the cellar of a baker's shop—such establishments being marked red on this map. The third was not to be found."

"I have it!" cried the president. "That street exists no longer. It is now a city park. And I remember; there is an iron grating under which a drain was believed to run."

"Send a company of sappers to block up the basement of the baker's shop with masonry, ostensibly as a flood precaution," I said. "Now we have stopped all the fox's earths but one. How many companies of loyal troops can you reckon on?"

"Two," replied the president. "They are Alsatians."

"Let them be marshaled under cover of darkness at the entrance to the catacombs in the city park. Let them have a cannon commanding it." I had formed my plan. Looking along the chart I had discovered that in a certain spot the catacombs opened out into a vast subterranean area. It was doubtless here that the conspirators were encamped. I communicated my intentions to the president.

"I shall enter under the guise of a messenger," I said. "I am an Alsatian. I tell Prince Louis the garrison has revolted and asks to see him acclaim him emperor. He follows me—understand? He will never suspect

that any enemy could have found the entrance. Then we make him prisoner and capture the rest as they emerge."

"You have saved France!" cried the president, wringing my hand.

"One thing I beg of you, Monsieur President," I said. "Do not, under any circumstances, fall to your loyal companies on guard. Tell them they wait for marauders and plunderers of the flooded homes."

"I will—rely on me," the president cried. Nevertheless I left him with a certain trepidation. Versed in the arts of the forum the old gentleman was painfully unfit to cope with such a crisis. In fact, I knew that, unless I could, single-handed, make the redoubtable prince a prisoner, the revolution would have every opportunity of succeeding.

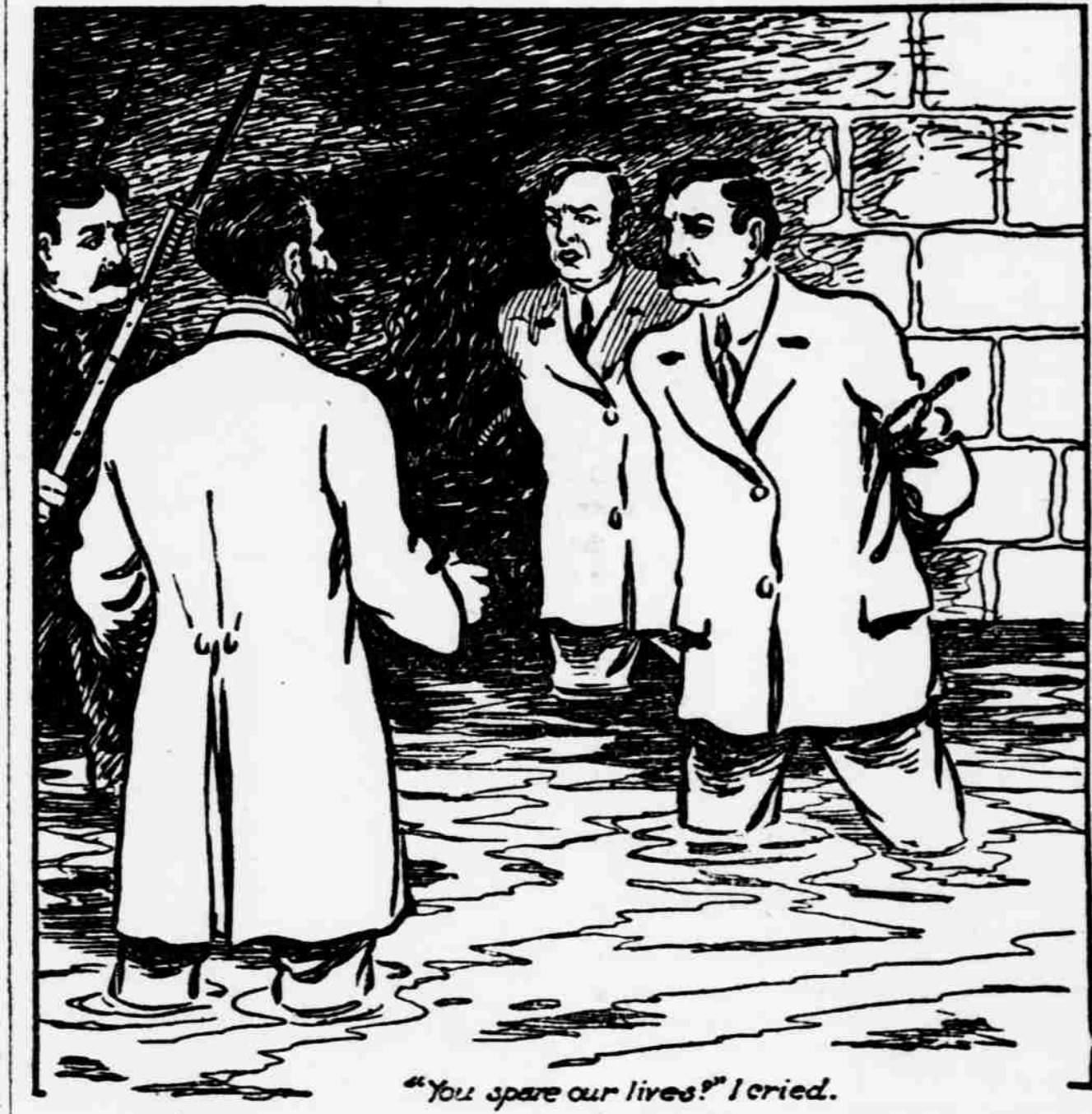
I found Talbot, whom I had left outside the Elysee, pacing the pavement in painful uncertainty as to my fate. When he learned, however, that we were to descend into the catacombs he grew almost hilariously excited. As for me, I was strangely affected. It seemed impossible that, underneath that sunny street, conspirators could be actually drilling for the overthrow of the republic.

The little park was almost deserted. The sight of two well-dressed men pulling up the grating excited only a momentary curiosity. Then we were gone again and it had clanged to over our heads. Talbot and I descended the thin, rusty ladder, until our feet struck against the stone flooring of what appeared to be a disused drain. I lit the candle. It flickered uncertainly—then flared up. The air was breathable. We took three steps to the right, and the patch of sunlight over our heads vanished. I blew the candle out, placed it in my pocket, and we proceeded in utter darkness.

"Ow far do we go, sir—ole man, I mean?" whispered Talbot, after the steady ring of our feet on the flooring of stone had alone broken the unending silence.

"About a mile," I said, cheerfully. "When you bump your head, watch for an opening on your side of the wall."

It is strange how one loses all sense of time under such circumstances.



"You spare our lives!" I cried.

Whether an hour or five minutes had passed seemed equally uncertain, when Talbot gave a muttered cry.

"Getting low, sir!" he whispered.

A moment afterward my own head scraped against the roof. Cautiously I struck a match. It blew to the left. At the same instant I saw a glimmer of gray, indicating an opening in the wall which, however, was no more than a side passage. The main path ran straight before us. Talbot and I scrambled through into a smaller corridor. Far ahead of us was a luminous glow.

We crept on a little further and I perceived the glow become a hazy patch. It was the natural amphitheater. I think my restraining touch indicated to Talbot our perilous situation, for, without a word, he followed my example and kicked off his boots. Then we crept along softly, while the light, diffused around us, became clearer and clearer. And all at once we burst abruptly into a kind of huge, vaulted cave, wherein a hundred men were gathered, talking excitedly. Arms lay piled up in stacks upon the floor. We shrunk back into the wall. I saw a tall, bearded man stride out from behind a barricade of boxes. All talk ceased. It was Prince Louis. My heart beat wildly. If I could detach him, engage him in speech—

"Then I heard a voice that hissed in my ear fiercely:

"Throw up your hands or you are dead!"

I ducked and shot my fist upward. The sentry, who had come quietly upon me, fell like a log, his rifle clattering to the floor. Instantly cries burst from the assemblage. I saw them rush toward me, Prince Louis at their head, waving his sword. Then I was running in my stocking feet along the corridor by which I had come. As I ran I saw a black shadow sprinting before me—Talbot.

I heard a pistol discharged, and a bullet whizzed so close past me that it grazed my forehead. I turned for a moment and fired my automatic. I heard a cry, and a man falling. Then I ran onward like the wind. As if by a miracle I knew when I reached the

bend in the catacomb. I turned to my left and ran on, till, breathless and exhausted, I could travel no longer. I sank to the ground, my pistol in my hand, waiting. Far in the distance I heard the road of the pursuers; then their shouts died away into utter silence.

What had occurred? Where was Talbot? Had he preceded me? I muttered his name as loudly as I dared, then, picking myself up, groped the path painfully along the passage toward the entrance down which I had come. Doubtless Talbot would be there; and, since my attempt had failed, I must be content to let the two loyal companies and their cannon settle accounts with Louis when he burst out of his refuge. All at once I stumbled over some iron thing. I heard a murmur overhead. Everything being as dark as pitch, I struck a match. To my astonishment I was standing at the foot of the ladder which I had descended, and overhead—had it grown dark already? I could smell freshly-mixed mortar. Then I realized the truth.

The president had bungled. I had been walled in alive beneath the grating!

Move those blocks of masonry? I might as well have tried to shoulder the fortifications. I shouted wildly, shaking the grating with both hands. In vain. The faint sounds that I had at first heard had died away, and no noise could penetrate that ever-increasing thickness of blocks of stone.

I am ashamed to say I had not until then reflected upon Talbot's safety. Now the reason of the abandonment of the flight was borne in upon me. They had seen only one man; they had followed Talbot along that branch of the catacombs, and, doubtless, taken his life.

And, whether he lived or died, I must find some other exit from the catacombs or perish likewise.

I sat down and lit a match. I spread the map out hastily. No matter which way I turned, I must pass through the amphitheater to find an exit. And—why, the three exits were barred by masonry! I had shut myself into this trap with the conspirators.

Match after match went out as I scanned the parchment. This way

they drew off and leveled their rifles.

"One," cried Louis, and they looked along the muzzles.

"Two," The rifles quivered and grew firm. And suddenly I cried, with all my force:

"How are you going to escape after we're dead, when we have the key to the catacombs?"

The men's heads did not move, but the word "three" failed to arrive. There was an instant of sickening suspense. Then the prince said slowly:

"Put down your rifles!"

As he uttered these words I became conscious that I was standing in water.

I looked down. There was no doubt of it. By the diffused glow of the torches around the area I could see that a steady stream was pouring along the catacombs. Even as I watched I saw it catch a piece of newspaper and float it away into the darkness. I heard a shout of fear:

"The Seine! The Seine!"

And a sudden inspiration came upon me.

"Prince Louis," I shouted, "I have the only knowledge of escape for you. Kill me, and you die like water rats." The tall man came forward. He was nearly knee deep in water, and now, no longer a stream, it was swirling through the catacombs like a torrent growing more and more swift momentarily.

"You spare our lives?" I cried. He nodded. Men were running to and fro wildly. A few, more courageous than the rest, stood near to wait for their commands. At a signal we were released.

"Your map of the catacombs was made," I said, "before there were any sewers in Paris worth speaking of. I and I alone possess the true map, made 50 years later by Napoleon III. Five hundred yards away the main sewer runs through a vault. Bring pickaxes and break a patch into it. It is never full, even in flood times. There is room enough between the

### LIFE WITHIN A BEE HIVE

Three Classes of Individuals in Each Colony, Each Having Its Special Duties to Perform.

In the honey bee we find so many and such remarkable instincts that it seems to me impossible that they could have been acquired by the process of evolution.

Three kinds of individuals exist in a colony of bees—the queen, whose sole work is to lay eggs; the drones, or males, whose only function is to fertilize the queen, and the workers, which are females undeveloped sexually.

Only one queen is permitted to live in the colony at the same time, there being a mortal antipathy between the queens. The queen is continually guarded by a number of workers and her wants are carefully supplied. If two queens are in the same colony they enter combat, being urged by the workers, and fight till one stings the other to death.

When a young queen is ready to leave the cell in which she has been reared, she is not permitted to do so, but she is guarded by the workers until the old queen has abandoned the hive with a swarm, and then she is permitted to leave the cell. When the queen has fully matured in her cell the workers cut away the wax from the end of the cell till it is an exceedingly thin film.

If the colony is deprived of its queen, the workers, after searching in vain for her, set to work to rear a new queen. For this purpose they select a larva that would develop into a worker, remove some of the neighboring cells and construct for it a large vertical cell. By feeding this larva on royal jelly it becomes a queen.

If two queens during combat acquire a position in which they might destroy each other, thus leaving the hive without a queen, they refrain from giving each other the mortal stroke.

When the swarming season is over the old queen is permitted by the workers to sting to death all the queens that are in the cells.

If the queen loses both her antennae she is unable properly to deposit her eggs, and the workers permit her to perish.

At the close of the swarming season all of the drones are killed by the workers. They are no longer needed, for the old queen has already been fertilized, and new drones can be reared in the following spring. Thus food is saved for the use of those bees alone that will be of future use to the colony.

If they lose the queen when swarming they return to the hive they have left—seeming to realize that their efforts would be fruitless without a queen. If the hive has no queen the drones are permitted to live through the winter.

When the drones are destroyed the larvae and pupa which would produce drones are also destroyed. If pressed for food, a colony will attack a weaker colony or a hive without a queen, and, if the attack is successful, the vanquished colony joins the conquerors, thus strengthening the hive.—*Alfred Fairhurst, A.M., in "Organic Evolution Considered."*

### Admiration for Nerve.

"You admired that man because of his speech?"

"Yes," replied Farmer Cornetossel.

"But you didn't agree with his opinions."

"Not as a rule. But it struck me that a man that could get up before a crowd of people and talk such a lot of junk at the top of his voice had real grit."

surface of the water and the roof to float on the current into the Seine, which is but a few hundred yards away. Let those who cannot swim be supported by companions."

"But if we break through, the current will flood the catacombs."

"No matter. You must abandon your encampment. You must relinquish your baggage and your arms, to be the sport of the floods. Prince Louis, you will go out into the world like a drowned rat, to suffer with the flood victims along the wharves; or you will never go at all. You must renounce your dreams!"

The floods were swirling round us thigh deep. Heaven knows whence they came; I believe now that, through a thousand interstices in the brick roofs, the river had come pouring in, to flood all subterranean Paris.

The prince bowed his head.

"So be it," he said. "It is not for myself I care, but for my gallant hundred."

"A hundred?" I exclaimed. "Is that your entire force?"

"Why, yes, Monsieur. How many did you think I had?"

It seems to me now that the jest was not altogether at the expense of Louis, when with a paltry hundred men he had terrified the chancelleries of the two mighty western nations. But these thoughts came afterward. In a few minutes we were hard at work with our pickaxes, breaking through the masonry. The floods were swirling round our waists before we had achieved our purpose. Then we flung ourselves upon the mercy of the stream that now roared around us. It seemed an eternity of anguish, those few minutes of suspense, while we shot past the great buttresses upon the flood, under a vaulted roof that almost grazed our heads, borne riverward. Then—there was the fresh wind on our faces, and overhead the light of the stars, and round us Paris—that city for which one man more in history had shaken dice with fate and met with failure.

### HOW ROBBERS MET DEATH

End of Tchakirdjali and His Companions Strictly According to Bandit Tradition.

Tchakirdjali, the terror of the near east, the most notorious and bloodthirsty of modern brigands, is no more. He died as he lived—in all the glamour of sanguinary melodrama. Dwellers in Asia Minor can now draw an easier breath than they have been able to for years. Wealthy merchants of Smyrna, who trembled for their boards, may sleep in peace. Travelers over the lonely roads in the neighborhood of the Anatolin mountains need not urge on their steeds so apprehensively—Tchakirdjali and his band lurk no more in their old strongholds.

Their deeds will figure conspicuously in the tales that white-bearded Arabs tell night after night to circles of cafe auditors. Like the Black Douglas, the name of Tchakirdjali will always quiet the fretful Turkish child in its cradle. Some women will perhaps heave a sigh of sentiment for one who, ferocious outlaw that he was, treated them with extraordinary gallantry. They, at least, knew themselves to be safe from his hands.

For them, Tchakirdjali was not the brigand but the squire of dames, a man to be counted on to revenge their wrongs, as many a local Lothario had reason to know. Nay, more than that. Frequently he was their good genius. Many a maid owes her dowry to Tchakirdjali's generosity with his ill-gotten gains.

It is a pity that Edmond About is not alive to do justice to Tchakirdjali's memory. The author of "The King of the Mountains" would have understood him. His able pen could have immortalized him like no other. Tchakirdjali was Hagdi Stavros to the life. Only the background was different. Both were "Kings," and both had their "Mountains." It was in the mountains of Anatolia (look up your geography) that the great Tchakirdjali met his end. It was a heroic end.

Nobody need say that romance doesn't exist in our prosaic day. A detachment of Turkish soldiers was sent out against Tchakirdjali. A desperate struggle ensued. It was four hundred well-equipped men against four. The Fra Diavolo saw what the end must be. Now, if it is a matter of principle with Turkish brigands, they must not, if possible, be taken alive.

Tchakirdjali, when the last shot was fired, called on his boon companion, Mehmed, to save him from that disgrace. Fealty demanded obedience, and Mehmed was equal to the occasion. With his good Damascus blade he hewed off his leader's head.

Then, having wrought the worthy deed, he did what was only left him to do, he plucked a dagger from his belt and buried it in his own heart. So the hand of Tchakirdjali fell, wattering in their own blood.

### No Wonder We're Proud of It.

Efficiency and snap have always characterized American sea service. It punished the Barbary pirates when England and Spain preferred to pay tribute to them. It won about all the glory on the American side in 1812-1814, amazing the British by beating them on even terms. In the civil war it did what the old world called impossible in blockading a long line of coast with many harbors. Its proof of preparedness in the brief Spanish war contributed to European prophets a third surprise. Today, though it is usually classed second in power, and by some critics third, our navy has probably no superior in morale, discipline and equipment.