

The Abd el-Kader Stage Project

By

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Commissioned by Kathy Garms for the Abdelkader Education
Project

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BOOKEND FRONT

Either in front of the curtain or against a bare stage, the HISTORIAN steps out. The HISTORIAN will be our guide through the vignettes, providing additional follow up details as needed.

HISTORIAN

It has been said that Abd el Kader was many things to many people. Today we are going to give you a small sample of some of those many people, telling their stories and, through them, telling his.

BLACKOUT

The following vignettes can be presented in whatever order you choose. They are each stand-alone stories, not dependent on each other. The scene entitled BOOKEND BACK should be presented last as a closer.

LALLA

*The Regency of Algiers, early 19th Century.
Two women, servants named NESRINE and IKRAM, are
sitting in a tent, sorting clothes and mending
robes.*

IKRAM

We must check thoroughly, Nesrine, ensure that each and every robe is in pristine condition.

NESRINE

I understand, Ikram. All must look their best for the celebration.

IKRAM

And what a joyous celebration it shall be. Zohra has blessed her husband with a beautiful son.

NESRINE

With a beautiful name. Abd el-Kader, named for the holy man and saint, Abd el-Kader al-Jilani. It is most fortuitous that Lalla Zorha is his mother.

IKRAM

Yes, and I tell you this in confidence, Nesrine, but Zohra is my favorite of Muhi al-Dini's three wives.

NESRINE

We call her Lalla for a reason. Her kindness and generosity is second only to her piety and knowledge of the Koran.

IKRAM

She is a great woman who will raise a great son.

NESRINE

For a great man. Let us not forget that the boy's father leads our tribe with honor.

IKRAM

Yes, of course, but we all know who rules the nursery.

They both share a quiet laugh.

NESRINE

Did you hear how she scolded Mohra for her superstitious ways?

IKRAM

Yes. It was odd. She'd never been bothered by Mohra's talk of spirits and demons before.

NESRINE

Yes, but now she has the duty of a mother to protect her son's beliefs. She herself will teach him to read the Koran.

IKRAM

It is remarkable that she learned to read, and now she shall teach it.

NESRINE

With his father's guidance and his mother's influence, this child shall become a great man.

IKRAM

He shall indeed.

BLACKOUT

A FATHER'S LESSONS

AEK's father MUHI AL-DINI stands in his tent speaking to a SERVANT who is assisting with the donning of his robes.

MUHI

Today my son will be thirteen years of age.

SERVANT

Yes, my bey, you must be very proud.

MUHI

Proud and inspired and, I must admit, more than a little wary of the future.

SERVANT

For what reason could you fear your son's future?

MUHI

My son, Abd el-Kader, is a wonderful student. He has absorbed all that he has been taught, with a voracious appetite for learning. He is already a taleb himself, instructing other on the Koran. Some members of our family have taken to calling him Si Kala. They think I haven't noticed but I have. It both amuses me and make my heart swell.

SERVANT

This is all good and well; it bodes no ill, so why concern for his future?

MUHI

It is not his future of which I am wary, but my own. A father's duty is to teach his son and my intention was to continue teaching him for many more years, but...

SERVANT

Yes, my bey?

MUHI

I am not certain how much more he will be able to learn from me. His own studies will soon surpass mine.

SERVANT

If I may, your duty as father and teacher is to ensure that he never stops learning, whether the teachings come from you or from others. Your duty is to not only instill the knowledge, but also to reinforce the teachings, let them not lay dormant in his mind.

MUHI

(smiles)

You are wise, my friend.

SERVANT

You are the wise one. My duty is but to serve. Sometimes, serving the wise requires that one remind them that their wisdom matters. What was it you taught young Abd about a Muslim's duty to others?

MUHI

That Muslims have a duty to pray for and contribute to the well-being of all people, not simply that of fellow Muslims.

SERVANT

Yes, and that final distinction, "not just fellow Muslims but all people," is what will make your son a great man and a great leader someday. That will be your legacy.

MUHI

Yes, but, if--

SERVANT

A teacher must not only teach the lesson but also ensure that the lesson is not forgotten. As the student gains more and more knowledge, he must also be reminded of the foundation upon which that knowledge is housed.

MUHI

Thank you for your words of kindness and guidance. Now, it is time to see to Abd el-Kader's lesson today, before we begin his birthday celebrations. And I promise you, I will continue to teach him, even if the lesson is simply that a man is always learning.

BLACKOUT

PRISONER EXCHANGE

GENERAL BUGEAUD sits at his desk, pen in hand, composing a speech to inspire the French troops.

BUGEAUD

"A restrained occupation is a fantasy, and a dangerous one. One does not make war with charity but with..." with... with unflinching determination? Yes, that is it. "Unflinching determination. Our enemy is..." No. "We face an enemy..." That sounds better that will inspire them. "We face an enemy without Christian compassion, a merciless adversary who is little more than a savage beast." Truly that will fire up the troops. "And savage beasts are meant to be killed and--"

BISHOP DUPUCH knocks on the door to BUGEAUD's office.

DUPUCH

General Bugeaud? If I may have a moment of your time?

BUGEAUD

Bishop Dupuch, yes, of course. Come in, Your Excellency, come in, come in. I was just composing a speech to inspire the troops in our quest to crush and defeat the Muslim savage, the so-called Emir, AbdelKader.

DUPUCH

(uncertain)

Yes... regarding that...

BUGEAUD

(wary)

Yes..?

DUPUCH

You see, General, I was approached by a woman, a young mother and wife, who explained to me that her husband was a French soldier who had the misfortune of being captured by the Algerian resistance, the Muslim rebels. Understandably, she was concerned for his continued survival and fearful that she would never see him again. She pleaded with me to do all I could to secure his release, his freedom. She wished nothing more than for him to be reunited with his family, his newly born child. But what could I, a humble servant of God, hope to do? I have no experience in the ways of war.

BUGEAUD

Indeed. Well, Bishop Dupuch, you can assure this young woman that when we defeat these Muslims and crush their rebellious spirits, in the name of God and for the glory of France, we will do our utmost to safeguard her captured husband and return him to her embrace. However, many of our brave soldiers have been captured. Who can say what the hell the poor souls are suffering at the hands of these savages?

DUPUCH

Pardonne moi, General, I had not yet reached the point of my tale. Although I have no experience in the ways of war, as a servant of our Lord I have great experience in the ways of compassion. And so I wrote the Emir, sent a letter, appealing to **his** compassion to see the release of this soldier, to take small action to reunite a family.

BUGEAUD

Did you, now? How did the Emir respond? If I may be so bold, Your Excellency, your presence in Algiers is tolerated but not entirely welcome. Many, myself reluctantly included, feel that you overstep your holy Christian mission, interfering in matters that are beyond your concern. This... letter of yours serves as a clear justification of such feelings. I will tell you now, Bishop, if your meddling has put our brave French troops at risk--

DUPUCH

Quite the opposite, General. Quite the opposite. In fact, the Emir responded immediately, sending his reply with great haste. In his response, to my shame, he chided me as a man of God for seeking salvation only for a single prisoner. He proposed the release of three hundred brave Christian soldiers in exchange for the similar release of three hundred Muslim soldiers held here in French prisons.

BUGEAUD

He what? Bishop Dupuch, you simply do not have the authority to--

DUPUCH

I am aware of that, General, which is why I have come to you. Now that this bridge has been made, however inadvertently by my own rash act of compassion, it falls to you to continue with negotiations for this unprecedented prisoner exchange.

BUGEAUD

I am... uncertain. This sort of humanitarian offer is most unexpected from a savage.

DUPUCH

From a savage, yes. But Islam also teaches compassion, it seems.

BUGEAUD

Indeed.

BLACKOUT

OUR TOWN

SCENE: Three men are sitting at a table, survey maps and various papers scattered about. Three short glasses sit ignored on the table. The men are TIMOTHY DAVIS, JOHN THOMPSON, and CHESTER SAGE.

The HISTORIAN steps out to address the audience.

HISTORIAN

1846, a home on the banks of the Turkey River. Timothy Davis, a lawyer recently moved from Dubuque meets with John Thomson and Chester Sage to finalize plans for the platting of a new town in Clayton County.

DAVIS

So with Main Street running parallel to the river for a designated distance, that should allow for relatively even division of parcels of land on either side of the river.

THOMPSON

(pointing at a map)

With a general store there, the saw mill there, and the gristmill further along there, we should have no trouble attracting residents to our town.

SAGE

I have already had an inquiry from a blacksmith back east looking for a place to settle in the new frontier.

THOMPSON

All we need is a name for our little town and you can fill the registration papers and maps, Davis.

SAGE

Any thoughts on that?

DAVIS

Thoughts on a name for the town?

THOMPSON

Yes, should we consider naming it for one of us?

SAGE

Davisville? Thompsonston?

THOMPSON

As much as I appreciate the idea of Thompsonston, it does seem a bit... unwieldy to the tongue. What about Sageberg?

SAGE

Hmmmm.

DAVIS

Gentlemen, as flattering as those ideas are, I have a suggestion that involves another, possibly more worthy and inspiring gentleman.

THOMPSON

Do tell.

SAGE

Is it Mr. McGregor? I understand he is platting a town of his own east of here. Naming our town after him would seem redundant.

DAVIS

(chuckles)

No, Sage, it is not Mr. McGregor of whom I speak. Nor is it Mr. Guttenberg. As inspiring as both of their family histories may be.

THOMPSON

Then who, Davis? Who do you have in mind?

DAVIS

I assume you have been aware, however distantly, of events and activity in Algeria, these past fifteen or so years? The French colonization and the fierce resistance by the locals?

SAGE

I understand the French stance has been fierce at times as well.

DAVIS

Through it all, one man has led his people in defying the occupation. But his contentious defiance was tempered with gentle humanity. His name is Abd el Kader and he is, by all accounts, a wholly unique man. Although the circumstance here are vastly different that what he has faced, I put to you that the spirit of his intent matches the spirit of settlers in this great land. I propose, gentlemen, that we could inspire and motivate the frontier spirit by naming our town in honor of Mr. Abd el Kader.

SAGE

You're suggesting we name the town Abd el Kader?

THOMPSON

As town names go, that's an even more daunting collection of syllables than Thompsonston.

DAVIS

Then we shorten it. Abdel? No.

SAGE

Kader?

THOMPSON

No.

DAVIS

Elkader?

THOMPSON

Elkader. Yes.

SAGE

I agree.

DAVIS

It is settled, then. I shall file the papers in the morning. Gentlemen, a toast.

All three raise their glasses.

DAVIS

To Abd el Kader the man and Elkader the village.

THOMSON AND SAGE

(together)

To Abd el Kader and Elkader.

BLACKOUT

AN UNCLE'S JOURNAL

HUBERT, a young man, twentyish, is sitting at a table, reading a worn, leatherbound book. GUILLAUME, his friend, enters. HUBERT looks up to greet him.

HUBERT

Guillaume, you've arrived. Good to see you, mon ami.

GUILLAUME

Your note intrigued me, Hubert. How could I refuse?

HUBERT

Ah, oui, my note. It may have been trop dramatique but I, too, was intrigued and fascinated by what I'd found and wished to share the insight.

GUILLAUME

Delay the revelation no longer. Tell what you have found.

HUBERT

(gesturing with the book)

This book. It is a journal that my uncle kept during his time in Algiers. He was an officer under General Bugeaud and he was present for the General's meeting with Abd el-Kader.

GUILLAUME

The emir?

HUBERT

Oui. As a student of history I knew you would want to know of this.

GUILLAUME

Bien sûr. Now, this meeting you mentioned, was it, in fact, the negotiation of the Treaty of Tafna.

HUBERT

The very same.

GUILLAUME

Through my studies I know much of the events of that day, but I admit I am eager to hear the perspicacité of one who was actually present.

HUBERT

My uncle does briefly review the happenings of that day, but mainly he notes his impression of the people involved.

GUILLAUME

It was a very significant day. A meeting time had been set but the emir kept the general and his troops waiting for over five hours, before sending emissaries to lead the general from the planned meeting to to another locale where the emir waited.

HUBERT

A bold and unusual maneuver.

GUILLAUME

Oui, and a brave response from the general in agreeing to follow the guide to an unknown location. More so, as a majority of his accompanying soldiers were sent back to the camp for a night's rest as it was so late in the day by this point. Only a handful of officers remained with the general.

HUBERT

But to what purpose? It was not an ambush or surprise attack.

GUILLAUME

It was simply a move on the emir's part to allow time to gather all the tribes of the area so that they could witness the meeting.

HUBERT

I see.

GUILLAUME

Abd el-Kader was a leader but did not wish to be an absolute ruler. He wanted the tribes to know for themselves that we, the French, had sent a man of considerable rank and stature to negotiate the treaty. It was not enough that they simply be told such things, they had to see it for themselves.

HUBERT

Fascinating.

GUILLAUME

Oui, en effect. Now tell me, mon ami, what did your uncle have to say about the day?

HUBERT

(leafing through the book, then reading)
Let me see. He wrote of the delay and the further journey to where the emir waited. And then suddenly, the emir and his entourage appeared. The entourage numbered one hundred and fifty tribal chiefs, each with their own followers behind.

GUILLAUME

Bear in mind, at this point, General Bugeaud's party was a mere twenty officers.

HUBERT

The emir rode forward to greet the general as drums and flutes played a deafening fanfare. He introduced himself as he led his charger through the capriole, the pesade, and the levade.

(pause)

I do not know what those are.

GUILLAUME

They are, from what I understand, very difficult displays of horsemanship. They involve the horse dancing on its hind legs, boxing with its forelegs, and leaping upwards in place, all four hooves leaving the ground.

HUBERT

Sounds impressive.

GUILLAUME

I'm sure that was the intent. What else does he say?

HUBERT

(reading)

He says, "Abd el-Kader, his chieftains gathered around him in a semi-circle, his cavalry numbering in the thousands spread along the crest of the hills, the sight made us breathless. Our lives were in his hands. It would have been folly to have tried to defend ourselves. The emir did not abuse his position and his behavior was as noble as his conversation. He treated the general as an equal."

GUILLAUME

Quoi d'autre?

HUBERT

(scanning pages)

They stood on ceremony for a bit and then both men dismounts, sat on the ground and talked for nearly an hour.

GUILLAUME

I recall reading elsewhere how that began. General Bugeaud spoke of his confidence that the emir would honor their peace, using it to improve conditions in the Arab nation and to build commercial relations with France.

HUBERT

That is correct. Through his translator, Abd el-Kader replied, "I thank you for your good intentions toward me. If God wills, I will help make the Arabs prosper and if the peace is broken it will not be my fault." He went on to say, "We have a religion that obliges us to keep our word. I have never broken mine."

GUILLAUME

And he never did. Although, to our shame, France did.

HUBERT

It would seem so, oui.

GUILLAUME

In the journal, does your uncle describe the emir himself?

HUBERT

(flipping through pages, stopping and reading)

Afterward, he and the general, along with the other officers, were discussing the emir. General Bugeaud had the clearest impression of him, having sat directly with him for a significant time.

GUILLAUME

What did he say?

HUBERT

The general, apparently, had this to say of the emir. "His clothes were no different than the most common Arab. He is pale and resembles portraits one sees of Jesus Christ. His eyes are dark, his forehead prominent, and he has a large mouth with crooked, white teeth. His entire physiognomy is that of a monk. Except at first greeting, he keeps his eyes lowered. His clothes are dirty and worn. It is clear that he affects a rigorous simplicity."

GUILLAUME

Formidable. Thank you for sharing this find with me.

HUBERT

Mon plaisir.

BLACKOUT

ELECTION

HISTORIAN

1849, Bordeaux, France. The results of the French parliamentary elections are being tallied. It is a long, tiresome process.

Two men, PIERRE and FRANCOIS, are sitting at a table. A large wooden box with an open hinged lid is on the table. FRANCOIS has a notebook as well as a pen and inkwell. PIERRE is removing election ballots from the box. PIERRE reads off the candidate. FRANCOIS names the party and records the vote.

PIERRE

DelaCroix.

FRANÇOIS

Party of Order.

PIERRE

DelaCroix.

FRANÇOIS

Party of Order.

PIERRE

Boudreau.

FRANÇOIS

The Mountain.

PIERRE

Lamoroeaux.

FRANÇOIS

Independent.

PIERRE

Abd el Kader.

FRANÇOIS

Inde-- What was that one?

PIERRE

Abd el Kader?

FRANÇOIS

He's not on the list. He's not a candidate for election.

PIERRE

He's a write-in vote. Lucky him. One vote. Bon chance, Mssr. Kader, whoever you are.

FRANÇOIS

Whoever? You don't know who Abd el Kader is? The imprisoned emir?

PIERRE

Imprisoned? Here in France?

FRANÇOIS

Oui.

PIERRE

Is he the Algerian? The one who finally surrendered to the Duke of Aumale, Henri d'Orléans? I read about him.

FRANÇOIS

Oui. He is a prisoner. And he has received a write-in vote? I don't understand this modern world.

PIERRE

I like the modern world. The occasional revolution is good for France. Mssr. Bonapart has been elected President. We are having elections for the Parliament. These are exciting times. The people of France are excited.

FRANÇOIS

So excited that they are writing the name of a prisoner on their ballots?

PIERRE

Be calm, François, it is just one vote.
(takes another ballot from the box)
Ah. Two votes. Here's another one.

FRANÇOIS

What?

PIERRE

Another write-in vote for Abd el Kader.

FRANÇOIS

What would the Duke of Aumale think of the enemy he captured getting two votes in free elections in France?

PIERRE

Three. Found another.

FRANÇOIS
Mon Dieu.

PIERRE
And your Duke of Aumale fled to England during the revolution. What he thinks no longer matters. Who he calls an enemy no longer matters.

FRANÇOIS
It is still unusual.

PIERRE
Oui, it is unusual but c'est la vie. The old rulers are gone and with them, their enemies. France is embracing the old enemies as new friends.

FRANÇOIS
I suppose.

PIERRE
And-- Oh, look. Another write-in vote for Abd el Kader.

The HISTORIAN steps out.

HISTORIAN
Abd el Kader received many more write-in votes during that election. Despite being a prisoner at the time, his history had captured the imaginations of the French people as they fought against their own past. It has been noted with some degree of amazement that someone whose name was detested by the French would gain their admiration during his exile to that country.

BLACKOUT

A GUARD'S REQUEST

HISTORIAN

Tuileries Palace in Paris France, 1853. Private Escoffier, a military guard, submits an unusual request to his superiors.

A French CAPTAIN sits at a desk, reviewing paperwork. ESCOFFIER enters, salutes and stands at attention, waiting to be acknowledged. Eventually the CAPTAIN looks up from his paperwork and returns the salute.

ESCOFFIER

You sent for me, mon Capitaine?

CAPTAIN

Oui, Private, I did.

(shuffles papers till he finds the one he's looking for, holds it up)

You submitted a request for transfer.

ESCOFFIER

Oui, sir.

CAPTAIN

A very specific transfer.

ESCOFFIER

Oui, sir.

CAPTAIN

Are you unhappy here, Private?

ESCOFFIER

Non, mon Capitaine. Quite the opposite. This is an admirable and comfortable posting. My fellow guards respect and support me, as I respect and support them. I have very much enjoyed my assignment here, sir.

CAPTAIN

Your performance record is admirable and, as you say, you are respected among the staff and the military. And yet you have requested a transfer to another assignment entirely.

ESCOFFIER

Oui, sir.

CAPTAIN

More to the point, you have requested assignment to a particular prisoner, the Algerian. Abdel Kader.

ESCOFFIER

Oui. If that assignment is unavailable, I will gladly retain my post here, sir.

CAPTAIN

Why?

ESCOFFIER

Because, as I have said, I am quite happy here, sir.

CAPTAIN

Non, Private, I am asking why you wish to be assigned to guarding prisoner Abdel Kader. Surely, a guard with your experience...

ESCOFFIER

If I may speak freely, sir?

CAPTAIN

By all means, s'il vous plaît. Proceed.

ESCOFFIER

As I am sure you are aware, I served during the Algerian campaign. In fact, I was captured at Sidi Youssef and held as a prisoner of war. I was a prisoner of Abdel Kader. My treatment as a prisoner had a... shall we say, notable effect on me.

CAPTAIN

I see. And now that he is a prisoner of the French, you wish for the opportunity to present similar treatment to Abdel Kader himself.

ESCOFFIER

Oui, mon Capitaine.

CAPTAIN

Need I remind you, Private, that revenge is not a trait encouraged by the French. However poorly and deplorably you were treated, we have standards of treatment in France.

ESCOFFIER

I'm afraid you misunderstand. Revenge is not my intent. As you said, it is not a trait encouraged by the French. However, we do encourage returning a kindness. While a prisoner in Algeria I was treated humanely, with kindness and comfort and the utmost humanity. During my time there, I only saw one guard attempt to mistreat a prisoner. That guard received significant discipline for his transgression.

CAPTAIN

I see.

ESCOFFIER

And, if I may add, the emir performed a particular kindness for me directly.

CAPTAIN

Please go on, Private.

ESCOFFIER

You see, mon Capitaine, I was a trumpeter during my service in Algiers. My commanding officer lost his mount during the battle of Sidi Youssef. The poor beast was felled by a bullet. I surrendered my horse to my commander so that he could stay visible to his troops, leading from upon a steed. It was at this same battle that I was captured. General Bugeaud, upon learning I had given my mount to my commander saw fit to present me to me with the Legion of Honor in absentia. The general sent a letter to the emir along with the medal, asking him to see that I received it.

CAPTAIN

I assume the emir did so..?

ESCOFFIER

Much more than that, sir. The emir assembled his own troops in a formal ceremony, brought me before them, and read the general's letter aloud. He then personally pinned the medal on my uniform and praised me for my bravery.

CAPTAIN

A momentous and stately action, to be sure.

ESCOFFIER

Certainement. The performance of my duties here has been significantly influenced by my time as a prisoner in Algeria. My request for transfer is simply so that I can return the kindness and do my part to ensure that during his incarceration in France the emir receives the same level of humane treatment that he ensured for me. My sense of honor and fairness demands nothing less.

CAPTAIN

(considers ESCOFFIER for several moments)

Private, how could I deny such admirable intent?
Request approved.

ESCOFFIER

Merci, mon Capitaine.

ESCOFFIER salutes and turns to leave. The CAPTAIN holds up a hand to stop him.

CAPTAIN

And Private?

ESCOFFIER

Oui, mon Capitaine?

CAPTAIN

Please, pass along my thanks as well, to Mssr. Abdel Kader.

ESCOFFIER

Oui, mon Capitaine.

ESCOFFIER exits.

BLACKOUT

VILLAGE GOSSIP

HISTORIAN

While a prisoner-in-exile in France, Abdel Kader along with his family and entourage, was housed in the chateau at Pau, a small village in south west France. he soon became the subject of much gossip among the curious and intrigued population of Pau.

A random selection of villagers pass through the stage area one at a time, coming from different directions. They each pause to share bits of gossip with the audience. Some of them whisper conspiratorially while others boldly declare their "news," not caring who overhears.

VILLAGER 1

I heard that the emir is reading an Arabic translation of the Bible.

VILLAGER 2

They say that his exiled followers are staying in the chateau with him. They number so many that that they are sleeping in the stairwells.

VILLAGER 3

Apparently the emir's mother is suffering from severe arthritis.

VILLAGER 4

(in response)

They simply don't trust French medicine. They prefer their amulets.

VILLAGER 2

I saw the emir at the circus a few nights ago. Or perhaps it was his brother. Which one wears the red robes?

VILLAGER 5

I was told that the emir is writing his autobiography.

VILLAGER 3

My wife says the emir is writing a history of the Arabs.

VILLAGER 6

My cousin was informed quite reliably that the emir is studying algebra.

VILLAGER 1

When he reads the Bible he likes to compare the Koran with the Gospels.

VILLAGER 4

Have you heard? The emir served champagne in his quarters to some local dignitaries who dined with him last evening.

VILLAGER 2

(to VILLAGER 4)

I did hear that. Did you hear, it seems he poured it himself?

VILLAGER 5

Shocking.

VILLAGER 3

Appalling.

VILLAGER 4

Impressive and humble.

VILLAGER 2

Admirable.

BLACKOUT

A LETTER FROM DAMASCUS

HISTORIAN

August, 1860, the editorial offices of the New York Times.

A REPORTER and the EDITOR are standing over a desk. The REPORTER holds a piece of paper in his hand.

EDITOR

People are outraged. And rightly so. Calling it the massacre at Damascus sounds sensationalistic, but that's the reality of it. It is a massacre. But we need to find some way to provide people with perspective on this. We don't want any reactionary riots over here. Violence feeding violence isn't the solution.

REPORTER

I might have something. It's a letter from the exiled Emir, Abdelkader.

EDITOR

He's a Muslim himself, is he not? So his letter supports the attacks on Christians?

REPORTER

No, actually. Quite the contrary. He places the blame squarely on extremists within his religion. Furthermore, and this is the interesting part, he is sheltering Christians from the attacks.

EDITOR

Sheltering them? Is it a trick? A trap?

REPORTER

Not at all. He appears as appalled by the events as the rest of the civilized world. In the letter he states that he is harboring Christians in his home, providing them protection from the rioting hordes.

EDITOR

Let me see that letter.

REPORTER

(handing him the page)

It begins with a recounting of the events and the devastating effects. The latter half notes his actions.

EDITOR

(reading)

"Seeing matters were so desperate, I lost no time in taking under my protection these unfortunate

(MORE)

EDITOR (cont'd)

Christians. I sallied forth, taking my Algerines with me, and we were able to save the lives of men, women and children, and bring them home with us."

REPORTER

It's remarkable that a man who gained fame and infamy for resisting the French is now supporting French Christians and resisting his own people.

EDITOR

I daresay, while they may share a religion, it appears he would be loath to call the rioters "his own people."

REPORTER

I take your point.

EDITOR

Listen to this... "For me, I deplore the disaster which has befallen the Christians. The places where their houses stood cannot be recognized; all their dwellings are reduced to ashes. ... All the Europeans and Christians I have collected are in safety in my house. I provide them with all they want, and pray Allah to save the unfortunate Christians from those fanatics."

REPORTER

That seems clear enough as regards his stance. How do you want us to handle this? How do we present it?

EDITOR

(hands the letter back)

Present it exactly as it is. Write a short paragraph in regards to the origin and veracity of the letter, then run it verbatim.

REPORTER

I'll have it ready by press-time.

The HISTORIAN steps out to address the audience.

HISTORIAN

And so it was that on the morning of August 20, 1860 the readers of the New York Times had a first-hand account of event that had happened a world away, through the eyes, heart, and words of Abd el-Kader.

BLACKOUT

HENRI DUNANT

HISTORIAN

February 1863, Geneva, Switzerland. Jean Henri Dunant meets with two other men, Gustave Moynier and General Henri Dufour.

DUFOUR

As much as we admire your position on the matter, you must understand the challenges of proposing such an endeavor on an international scale.

MOYNIER

Hear him out, General. Go ahead, Mssr. Dunant. Tell us, what do you envision?

DUNANT

General, I understand how you might feel, from a military standpoint, that this is an unreachable goal, but I assure it is not. I know of just such measures being implemented and respected on a national scale in the past. To do so on an international scale would be simply a matter of agreeing on the importance of humanity.

DUFOUR

You make it sound effortless.

DUNANT

Oh, it will not be achieved without effort, significant effort, but the rewards will be well worth the toil and travail.

MOYNIER

You said that measures similar to what you propose have been implemented and maintained in the past. Where?

DUNANT

While pursuing various business interests in Algeria, I heard tell of a leader, an emir who led his people in resistance to the French occupation two decades ago. This man was named Abdel Kader and, I was told, he took his inspiration from the Muslim holy book, the Koran. He sought to live by the Koranical passage, "Let not your hatred of other men turn you away from Justice. Be just... that is closer to piety." He had, among other military rules and regulations, specific guidelines for the proper treatment of prisoners of war. In the treatment of others under his control, he held himself and his men to a certain standard. Muslim, Christian, Jew, all were equal in his eyes, deserving of the same standard of treatment. Years later, when I witnessed firsthand the atrocities of war during my time in

(MORE)

DUNANT (cont'd)

Solferino, my memory returned to thoughts of Abdel Kader and his policies. Through his faith and devotion, he had found away to preserve humanity in the midst of battle. Can we strive for anything less?

DUFOUR

I daresay, you present a compelling argument.

MOYNIER

I concur. I would like you to meet with two colleagues of ours, Doctors Louis Appia and Théodore Maunoir. Next week, we have organized a meeting of what we hope will become a means of progress and change in this world. A committee of sorts to pursue the ideas you have proposed.

DUNANT

I would be most honored. What are you calling this committee?

MOYNIER and DUFOUR look at each other then back at DUNANT.

MOYNIER

Nothing has been confirmed yet, but as we are meeting under the Swiss flag, we were considering calling ourselves the International Committee of the Red Cross.

HISTORIAN steps out.

HISTORIAN

A week later, on February 17, 1863, the International Red Cross was formed. Also, as a result of this meeting, terms of guidelines were drafted for the first of the Geneva Conventions, providing regulations for the treatment of prisoner of war. The conventions were eventually ratified by 195 countries around the world.

BLACKOUT

LITTLE AB

HISTORIAN

The time is 1850. The place, Aintree Racecourse near Liverpool, England.

ALCROFT, a gentleman in period clothing, upper class, stands at a railing. BAINSFORD, a second gentleman, similarly dressed, approaches him.

BAINSFORD

Alcroft, old chap, is that you?

ALCROFT

Bainsford, old boy. How are you?

BAINSFORD

I'm just fine, simply smashing. I must admit, I certainly didn't expect to see you here today. I had no idea that your interests ran to the steeplechase.

ALCROFT

Normally they don't, of course, but there has been so much discussion of this Grand National that I decided I had to see for myself what the fuss was about.

BAINSFORD

And jolly good thing you did, too. This is the fifteenth year they've run the race here at Aintree. I daresay it's well established and may continue for a good few years yet. You need to keep up with the world. It's 1850, after all. The world is moving at a faster pace every day.

ALCROFT

I'm aware of that, old friend. I simply haven't had time for local affairs lately. I've just been more focused on world events. As you say, the world moves faster every day. One's business interests in England can easily be impacted by events in some far off land.

BAINSFORD

True enough, Alcroft. True enough. So, have you ventured a wager on today's race or are you simply here to observe the excitement?

ALCROFT

Of course I wagered. I may be new to the sport but I understand that the wager is an integral part of the experience. No half measures with me.

BAINSFORD

In for a penny, in for a pound, eh wot?

ALCROFT

Well, a few shillings, nonetheless. I'm no madman.

BAINSFORD

Of course. Wise thinking. So, who's your choice. What fine steed carries the future of your wagered shillings?

ALCROFT

An Irish fellow's horse, a Mr. Osborne I believe. Named the horse Abd el Kader.

BAINSFORD

Good God, man, are you serious? That horse is not even quoted. The bookmakers can't be bothered listing odds, it's such a long shot.

ALCROFT

Oh, I know, but the name caught my attention.

BAINSFORD

Pshaw, poetic poppycock. The horse's name is nearly unpronounceable. It's meaningless gibberish, surely.

ALCROFT

Quite the contrary, old chum. The horse is named for Abd el Kader, an emir of Algeria. A brilliant leader who defended his people against the French colonials. Defied the odds, he did. He was truly inspirational.

BAINSFORD

Well, he's inspired you to part with your shillings at the very least. What odds are on your ticket?

ALCROFT

I wagered to win at thirty-three to one.

BAINSFORD

Oh, Alcroft, old boy, perhaps the steeplechase is not the sport you after all. There are thirty-two runners in this race and you chose that nag. That was a fool's bet, my lad. You need to research the horses as well as the jockeys, not simply be "inspired" by some foreigner. For instance, I wagered on Peter Simple. Locked in at seven to one. The horse won the Grand National last year and he's favored to do it again. That'll be a feat for the ages. No horse has ever won two years in a row. Peter Simple will be the one to do it. Mark my words.

ALCROFT

Of course, Bainsford. Whatever you say. I'm just enjoying the experience. Oh, the race has begun.

BAINSFORD

See there? Peter Simple, straight out of the gate. Now that's a horse.

ALCROFT

It certainly is impressive, I'll grant you that.

BAINSFORD

And where is your Abd el Kader?

ALCROFT

There he is. Looks like he's in third place, so far. Come on, Little Ab.

BAINSFORD

Little Ab? What are you talking about?

ALCROFT

That's what they were calling him earlier when I visited the stables. Little Ab.

BAINSFORD

I'll admit it's certainly easier on the diction, but still a poor wager.

ALCROFT

Don't be so sure. He's in second place now and gaining.

BAINSFORD

What? Balderdash. There's no way he could-- By God, he is. He's gaining fast on, who is that? Is that The Knight of Gwynne? It is. Where the blazes is Peter Simple?

ALCROFT

Is that him in fifth?

BAINSFORD

Good heavens, you may be right.

ALCROFT

Come on, Little Ab. You can do it. Coming into the home stretch now. There's the finish line. Yes! Abd el Kader won!

BAINSFORD

I don't believe it.

ALCROFT

If Abd el Kader can resist the French army for all those years, winning a horse race is simplicity itself.

BAINSFORD

Well, I suppose we should go collect your winnings, Alcroft.

They start to walk off.

ALCROFT

I may get to like this steeplechase, after all. Perhaps Abd el Kader will win again next year. What say you, Bainsford?

BAINSFORD

You got lucky, is all. Don't think him blessed.

BAINSFORD and ALCROFT exit. The HISTORIAN enters from the opposite side.

HISTORIAN

He did it again the following year. In 1851 Little Ab became the first horse to win the Grand National Steeplechase two years in a row. Unstoppable and inspiring, just like his namesake.

BLACKOUT

READING THE NEW YORK TIMES

A BUTLER is setting a small table for breakfast. He places a cloche in the middle of the setting. A folded newspaper is tucked under his arm.

Mr. HOLLISTER, a well-dressed businessman, enters.

HOLLISTER
Morning, Carstairs.

BUTLER
Good morning, sir.

The BUTLER holds the chair as HOLLISTER sits.

HOLLISTER
What have you got for us this morning?

With a flourish, the BUTLER removes the lid of cloche.

BUTLER
For Sir's breakfast, Cook has prepared Eggs Florentine with only the freshest eggs and spinach, and hollandaise prepared just this morning, toast, lightly buttered, fresh fruit, orange juice, and coffee with just a dash of cream. And, to aid with Sir's digestion, this morning's edition of the New York Times.

*The BUTLER places the newspaper to the side of the table and steps back, waiting attentively just beyond HOLLISTER's shoulder.
HOLLISTER reaches for the paper and snaps it open.*

HOLLISTER
(slight chuckle)
Every morning, Carstairs, you say the same thing about the Times aiding my digestion, knowing full well that I will read the paper prior to eating.

BUTLER
One does what one must, Sir.

HOLLISTER
(browsing through the paper)
Well, you can tell Dr. Bronfman that my digestion is just fine and he needn't task you with mothering me.

BUTLER
I will pass your message along to the good doctor, Sir, but I expect that a change in his attitude towards the matter is as likely as a change in Sir's.

HOLLISTER

(pause to consider)

I suppose you're right. Still, it might work, you never know.

BUTLER

Indeed. One can but hope, Sir.

HOLLISTER continues browsing through the paper.

HOLLISTER

Hope is ever our companion in life, Carstairs. Hope is-- Oh, my goodness, this is sad news.

BUTLER

Sir?

HOLLISTER

It seems the Emir Abd-El-Kader has passed away.

BUTLER

Sad news, indeed, Sir. If I may say, even amongst the downstairs staff he was greatly admired.

HOLLISTER

I should expect he was. Yes. Listen to this, Carstairs, the New York Times calls him "one of the ablest rulers and most brilliant captains of the century."

BUTLER

From what I understand, that is quite true, Sir.

HOLLISTER

They go on to say, "The nobility of his character, no less than the brilliance of his exploits in the field, long ago won him the admiration of the world. Great men are not so abundant that we can afford to lose them without a word. If to be an ardent patriot, a soldier whose genius is unquestioned, whose honor is stainless, a statesman who could weld the wild tribes of Africa into a formidable enemy, a hero who could accept defeat and disaster without murmur- if all of these constitutes a great man, Abd-El-Kader deserves to be ranked among the foremost of the few great men of the century."

BUTLER

A fitting and moving tribute, Sir.

HOLLISTER

Indeed.

BLACKOUT

INVENTORY LIST

A small room within the emir's compound in Demascus. Two men, KHALIL and SAMI are sitting at a table. Each has a notebook with lists.

SAMI

(turning a page in his notebook)

The next room is... the ground floor study. You've got the inventory list?

KHALIL

(turning pages in his notebook)

Ground floor study. Let me see. Yes, here it is. That is quite a list.

SAMI

The Emir's study is quite a room. What is first on the list?

KHALIL

(reading from the list)

A horse bridle with worn leather and broken buckles?

SAMI

This was the bridle worn by the emir's horse for many years, in many battles. The horse was given as a gift to the Duke of Aumale when the emir finally... submitted to French rule, but he kept the bridle by which to remember the horse. She was a favored mount.

KHALIL

(making a mark on the list)

Noted. Next item is... a small cross... with a figure of Jesus nailed to it?

SAMI

The Christian crucifix was a gift from Father Jacques Suchet, an Abbot with the Catholic church. He met with Abd el-Kader on behalf of Bishop Dupuch to discuss the humane treatment of prisoners. The emir was quite intrigued by the story of Jesus and asked the Abbot so many questions that his interpreter finally had to admit he didn't possess the vocabulary to properly translate the discussion.

KHALIL

(making a mark on the list)

Hmm. Interesting. Next on the list is... an unremarkable ring set with a dull stone.

SAMI

That ring was a gift to the emir during his exile and imprisonment in France. The ring was presented to him by a french school teacher whose father had fought in the Napoleonic Wars. The ring had belonged to his father. The stone set in the ring is a stone from the tomb of Napoleon the first. The teacher gave the ring to the emir because he felt there were several significant and admirable similarities between Abd el-Kader and Napoleon Bonaparte.

KHALIL

(making a mark on the list)

Does every item on this list bear a worthy tale?

SAMI

It is likely, yes. What is the next item?

KHALIL

Next is... A red sash and medallion of the Grand Cross of the Légion d'honneur.

(sideways look at SAMI)

Praise-worthy tale?

SAMI

(slight smile)

Praise-worthy tale.

KHALIL

(sigh)

Go ahead.

SAMI

Following the emir's efforts to save and protect Christians during the riots in Damascus, the French government bestowed on him the Grand Cross of the Légion d'honneur. It is the highest award in the Légion and the emir bore it with great dignity and humility. Next..?

KHALIL

(making a mark on the list)

A blue and white sash, and medallion of the Grand Cross of the Redeemer.

SAMI

The Grand Cross of the Redeemer is the highest decoration awarded by the nation of Greece. It was presented to the emir in recognition of his efforts during the riots in Damascus.

KHALIL

Noted.

(making a mark on the list)

A red and gold sash, and medallion of the Order of the Medjidie, First Class.

SAMI

The highest distinction awarded by the Ottoman Empire.

KHALIL

Presented to the emir in recognition of his efforts during the riots in Damascus?

SAMI

The very same.

KHALIL

Of course.

(making a mark on the list)

Next on the list is a medallion of Knight of the Order of Pope Pius IX. The Vatican?

SAMI

The Vatican.

KHALIL

Damascus?

SAMI

Damascus.

KHALIL

(making a mark on the list)

That singular act certainly earned the emir praise from all corners of the world.

SAMI

Continue with the list. As they say in the west, you ain't seen nothing yet.

KHALIL

What does that mean?

SAMI

I... am not certain. Just... just continue with the list.

KHALIL

Of course. Next item is... a pair of engraved Colt pistols in a wooden box bearing the inscription, "From the President of the United States, to his Excellency, Lord Abdelkader."

SAMI

Presented, as you may have guessed, in recognition of the emir's efforts...

SAMI & KHALIL

...During the riots in Damascus.

SAMI

Yes. Next?

KHALIL

(checking the list)

A gold-inlaid shotgun, you have got to be kidding me...

SAMI

The gold shotgun was a gift from the government of Great Britain.

KHALIL

In recognition of the emir's efforts during the riots in Damascus.

SAMI

The world finally saw him for the generous humanitarian he had always been.

KHALIL

It seems they truly did.

BLACKOUT

BOOKEND BACK

The HISTORIAN addresses the audience.

HISTORIAN

He was many things to many people. These were just some of the stories that show that. Abd el-Kader was a fascinating and complex man with a fascinating and complex legacy, all borne out of one simple truth: We are all part of the same humanity.

Learn more about the emir and the Abd el-Kader Education Project by visiting our website at abdelkaderproject.org. Also, talk to any of the students who have participated in the essay contest.