

The Thrill Book

Semi-Monthly

Oct. 15, 1919
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JUJU

by Murray Leinster

THE THRILL BOOK

SEMIMONTHLY

Vol. III

CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 15, 1919

No. 2

COMPLETE NOVELS

- Juju** **Murray Leinster** 3
Wherein African magic, witch doctors, jungle terrors, and the fortunes of three white men and two women are commingled in a Portuguese West African adventure.
- Hands Invisible** **William H. Kofoed** 154
There are all sorts of mysterious happenings in the republic of Oro Bamba—and then a murdered man is projected apparently from nowhere.

SERIALS

- The Gift-Wife** **Rupert Hughes** 61
Part III of this fascinating Oriental wonder tale of a quasiludal personality.
- The Heads of Cerberus** **Francis Stevens** 103
The final installment of the fantastic adventures of Terence Tremore and his companions in Ulithia and the Philadelphia of the year 2118.

SHORT STORIES

- The Ultimate Ingredient** **Grege la Spina** 45
An invisible man story—but quite different from the usual development of this idea.
- Amaratite** **Ralph Roeder** 56
It was a wonderful invention, and it proved the intellectual and every other sort of superiority of Missouri over Connecticut.
- The Mystery of the Timber Tract** **Francis Metcalfe** 87
A North Woods mystery. A good story to read in front of a log fire on a stormy evening.
- Like Princes** **Eugene A. Clancy** 96
Describing the adventures, both nautical and amorous, of Captain Hexameter and the sentimental stoker.
- Figure Nine** **Horatio Winslow** 124
The man was strangely haunted by the number nine—and the reason turns out to be a very odd one
- A Recruit for the Lambs** **L. R. Ridge** 130
The captain believed in applied psychology—even when it came to dealing with Filipino wild men

MISCELLANEOUS

- Concerning the Pithecanthropus Erectus—Verse** **W. B. Horner** 55
- Blind and Lame—A Sketch** **E. C. Beckwith** 86
- A Ballade of Morgan—Verse** **William van Wyck** 123

DEPARTMENTS

- In the Shadows of Infinity—Strange Experiences.** 156
- Cross-Trails** **The Editor** 159

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Announcing an Important Change

Owing to our wish to give a little more time and care to the preparation of each number of the **THRILL BOOK**, until the magazine conforms to our ideal of what a publication of this character should be, we have decided, beginning with the next issue, to publish the **THRILL BOOK** once a month, instead of semimonthly as heretofore.

You may therefore look for the next number at your newsdealer's on November 15th. It will be dated December. In like manner, the January number will be published on December 15th and so on, until further notice. All subscriptions will be extended so as to give readers the full value for which they have paid.

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No. 2

Juju

Murray Leinster



CHAPTER I.

AN AFRICAN NIGHT.

FROM the juju house the witch doctor emerged, bedaubed with colored earths and bright ashes. The drums renewed their frantic, resounding thunder. The torchbearers capered more actively, and yelled more excitedly. The drumming had gone on all day and its hypnotic effect had culminated in a species of ecstasy in which the blacks yelled and capered, and capered and yelled, without any clear notion of why or what they yelled.

With great solemnity, the witch doctor led forward a young native girl, her face bedaubed with high juju signs. She was in the last stage of panic. If she did not flee, it was because she believed a worse fate awaited her flight than if she submitted to whatever was in store for her now.

Two men stepped forward and threw necklaces of magic import about her neck. Two other men who upon occasion acted as the assistants of the chief witch doctor seized the girl's hands. The shouting mass of blacks formed themselves into a sort of column.

At the front were the drums, those incredible native drums hollowed out of a single log, and which come from the yet unknown fastnesses of the darkest interior, far back of Lake Tchad. Behind them came the torchbearers, yelling a rhythmic chant and capering in almost unbelievable attitudes as they passed along. Next came the witch doctor, important and mysterious. Behind him came more torchbearers, yelling hysterically at the surrounding darkness. Then came the two assistants, dragging the young girl who was almost paralyzed with ter-

ror. And the entire population of the village followed in their wake, carrying flaming lights and yelling, yelling, yelling at the eternally unamazed African forest.

The tall, dank tree trunks loomed mysteriously above the band of vociferous natives, with their thumping, rumbling, booming drums sounding hollowly from the front of the procession. The lights wound into the forest, deep into the unknown and unknowable bush. The yelling became fainter, but the drums continued to boom out monotonously through the throbbing silence of the African night. Boom, boom, boom, boom! Never a variation from the steady beat, though the sound was muted by the distance it had to travel before reaching us.

I glanced across to where Evan Graham sat smoking. We were on the veranda of the casa on his plantation, four weeks' march from the city of Ticao, in the province of Ticao, Portuguese West Africa. From the veranda we could see through the cleared way to the village, a half mile away, and the whole scene of the juju procession had been spread before our eyes like a play.

It puzzled me. I knew Evan made no faintest attempt to Christianize his slaves—and the villagers were surely his slaves—and yet, white men do not often allow witch doctors to flourish in their slave quarters. And the girl who had been led away—I had no idea what might become of her. Voodoo still puts out its head in strange forms in strange places. It might well be that some hellish ceremony would take place far back in the bush that night.

Whatever was to happen had been planned long before, because I had arrived some four hours previously from a trip up beyond the Hungry Country, and the drums were beating then. I looked curiously at Evan to see what he thought of the open prac-

tice of juju by his slaves under their master's eyes. His expression was inscrutable. I knew better than to ask questions, but I could not help wondering what it all meant. Evan was a queer sort, at best, but to allow his native to practice black magic—as was evidently the case here—before his very nose was queerer than anything he had done before.

He was not taken by surprise, I know. I had heard the drums that afternoon, long before I entered the village. They were beating with the rhythmic monotony that is so typical of the African when he is disturbed in spirit and wants to be comforted, or when he is comfortable and wants excitement. Either way will do.

My "boys," wandering along in a more or less listless fashion with the conventional forty-five pounds on their backs, had heard the drumming and became more interested. My caravan did not close up, however. It was spread out over anywhere from a mile to a mile and a half of the old slave trail that goes down to Venghela, and those in the rear hastened by precisely the same degree as those in front.

According to instructions, the foremost pair halted while still half a mile away from the village and waited for the rest of us to come up. For three months I had been back inland, a part of the time back even of the Hungry Country, where the grass is bitter to the taste, and all the world is half mad for salt. For three months I had been moving quickly and constantly.

Having quit the country—I fervently hope for good—it will do no harm to admit that my constant moving was due less to the demands of business than to a desire to be elsewhere when the Belgian officials arrived. The Belgian Kongo is just north of the province of Ticao, and I had been skimming its edges, buying ivory and rubber from the natives across the line.

The colonial government does not encourage independent traders, and it would not have been pleasant for me had I been caught. In Ticao, of course, I was not molested. A small honorarium to the governor of the province made him my friend, and my conscience did not bother me. I paid ten times the prices the natives usually got and I imposed no fines or contributions on the villages. If you know anything about the Kongo, you will regard me as I regarded myself—as more or less of a benefactor.

After three months of that, though, and two or three close shaves from a choice of fighting or capture, I was glad to get back to civilization, even such civilization as Evan Graham's casa. Away from Ticao, Evan Graham would have been shunned for the sort of man he was. In Ticao, one is not particular. There are few enough Anglo-Saxon white men of any sort—the two consuls, half a dozen missionaries, and about three men like myself, who take chances in the interior. The rest of the population is either Portuguese or black, preponderatingly black, with a blending layer of half-and-quarter-breeds.

Evan was a cad and several different kinds of an animal, but he was a white man, he talked English such as one hears at home, and he had a pool table and civilized drinks all of four weeks' march from the city of Ticao. I always stopped overnight with him on my way back from the interior. I knew that he had bribed the governor to overlook the law which prescribes that no white man shall settle more than forty kilometers from a fort, because he wanted to have a free hand with his natives. I knew, too, that he had no shred of title to the land he tilled, or to the services of the natives he forced to work in his fields. He had come out there with four or five of the dingy-brown half-castes that are overseers for

half the rocas in Ticao, had frightened or coerced the inhabitants of three villages into signing the silly little contracts that bind them to work for a white man for so many years at ridiculous wage, and now had a plantation that was tremendously profitable.

I never had understood just how he made the blacks serve him so well. He seemed to have them frightened nearly to death. Most plantations have the slave quarters—the blacks are officially "*contrahidos*," or contract laborers, but in practice they are slaves—most plantations have the slave quarters surrounded by a barbed-wire fence, and let savage dogs loose outside the fence at night, but Graham allowed his natives to live in the villages they had occupied before his coming and seemed to take no precautions against their running away.

This open practice of juju before his eyes and apparently with his consent was of a piece with the rest of his queerness. My own boys always seemed to be glad to get away from the neighborhood of his plantation. I had heard a word or two passed among them that seemed to hint at a juju house in some secret clearing near the village. I had thought it possible that it was by means of some mummery in that temple that he kept his natives in hand, but juju is a dangerous thing for a white man to meddle with.

In any event it was none of my business. I was sitting on his porch, one of his drinks at my elbow, smoking one of his cigarettes especially imported from London, and it behooved me to display no curiosity unless he should choose to speak. He looked over at me and smiled quizzically.

"I wonder what those poor devils think they get by all that juju palaver," he said ruminatively.

"I don't know," I admitted. "My own boys are constantly at it, of course. There's a witch doctor just outside of

Venghela who'll be rich when my caravan gets there, for his services in bringing my bearers back without falling into the tender hands of our neighbors."

My carriers were free men, whom I hired and paid. It would have been cheaper to adopt the *servaçal* system and buy contract slaves for carriers, but being free men they served my purpose better. For one thing, they gave the Kongo natives more confidence in me, and for another, they traveled faster when there was danger of pursuit. A slave would merely have changed masters if I had been caught, but these men had something to lose.

"I'm going to stop this juju sooner or later," said Graham lazily. "My brother Arthur has come out and is up after a gorilla in the Congo—probably around where you've been—and he's been asking me to hold on to a real juju doctor for him to interview. When he's through, I think I'll stop all that. Queer old duck of a witch doctor here."

He clapped his hands and one of the house servants came out with a siphon and bottle of gin. The man was trembling as he stood beside his master's chair. Graham snapped two or three words in the local dialect and the man's knees threatened to give way. He fled precipitately into the house and came out again—trembling more violently—with limes.

"Never can train blacks properly," Graham grumbled, as he sliced a lime in half and squeezed it into his tumbler. "Now, a Japanese servant is perfect."

He poured his gin and the seltzer fizzed into the glass. He lifted it to his lips and drained it.

"Japan?" I asked. "I've never been there."

"I have," said Graham morosely. "Been everywhere. England, America, Japan, India. All rotten places."

"No rottener than this," I said disgustedly. "I had three weeks of fever up in the Kongo, with a Belgian Kongo Company agent after me the whole time. I'm still shaky from it. When I can go back to white man's country again——"

I stopped. Graham was lighting a cigarette, and I noticed that the flame wavered as he held the match. There are some men who are cold sober up to a certain point, and then what they have drunk takes hold of them all at once. Graham was such a person. When he spoke again his words were slurred and sluggish.

"White man's country," he repeated uncertainly, and then made an effort to speak clearly. "I'm goin' back some day. Got dear old home, family servants, broad lawn—everything. Not mine though. Younger son. Had to win hearth an' saddle of m'own. Arthur's got it all, damn him. Always was lucky beggar. Got all family estates, all income, I got nothing. Then I liked girl. Second cousin. Arthur got her, or goin' to. Engaged. Damn lucky beggar. Always was lucky chap. Steady and dependable. Damn stogy, I think. Told him so. Called him a —— —— an' he kicked me out. All because I got into trouble and signed his name to somethin', to get out."

"Easy there, Graham," I warned. "I don't want to hear anything, you know."

"You better not," he said suddenly, in a clear voice. He turned beastlike eyes on me. "If anybody tries to pry into my affairs, they don't get far."

I blew a cloud of smoke over the railing of the veranda and said nothing. Through the moonlit night the throbbing of the drums came clearly to us sitting there. They beat on steadily, monotonously, hypnotically. There was something strangely menacing in the rhythmic, pulsing rumble. The

cries of night birds and insects, and occasionally an animal sound, seemed natural and normal, but the muttering of those drums with that indescribable hollow tone they possess, seemed to portend a strange event.

"Juju," said Graham abruptly, "is the key to the African mind. I don't give a damn for the natives. All I care about is what I can get out of this country, but I say that juju is the key to the African mind."

I smoked on a moment in silence. "I'd rather not meddle with it," I remarked. "Sooner or later it means ground glass in your coffee of a morning. Just before I left Ticao, Da Cunha found some in his. He shot his cook and then found it was another boy entirely."

"I'd have whipped him to death with a *chiboka*," said Graham viciously.

"That's what Da Cunha did," I informed him mildly. "But the governor's made him leave Ticao for six months. He's over in Mozambique."

"My boys'll never dare try to poison me," declared Graham. He leaned toward me in drunken confidence. "They believe that if they did——"

"The procession has started again," I said, interrupting him. "I hear the yelling."

It was so. The drums still beat monotonously and rhythmically, but beneath their deep bass muttering, a faint, high, continuous sound could be heard. The procession seemed to be making its way back to the village.

"I'm goin' to bed," announced Graham sharply. "You go t' bed too. Don't sit out here an' smoke. Go to bed."

He stood up and waited for me to enter the house. Puzzled, and rather annoyed, I went inside. I heard Graham walk heavily and uncertainly through to the rear and heard him speak to several of the servants. The contrast between his rasping, harsh

tones and the frightened voices of his servants was complete. They were very evidently in deadly fear of him.

The sound of the procession grew louder and louder. Something about it perplexed me for a moment, but then I realized that it was not making direct for the village. It was coming toward the house. I frowned a moment, and looked to make sure that my automatic was handy and in proper working order.

The procession was very near. I looked out of the window and saw the twinkling lights of the torches through the bush. The drums were thunderous now, but the beat was not the war beat. It was purely ceremonial. The yelling was high-pitched and continuous.

The head of the procession emerged from the bush and advanced across the clearing about the house. It swung and headed for the rear of the house, and the long line of capering, torch-bearing humanity followed it.

The witch doctor came into view, and the girl. Her panic had reached its pitch now. I have never seen such ultimate fear as was expressed on that girl's face, outlined by the flickering light of the torches. The procession moved until the end had passed beyond the rear corner of the casa, then turned and evidently turned again.

I saw it moving back toward the village. A pregnant fact impressed me. The native girl was missing. She had evidently been left behind somewhere about the rear of the house. The yelling mass of black humanity capered and shrilled its way down the cleared way to the village and gathered in front of the juju house.

Then some dance or ceremony seemed to begin. What it was, I do not know. I was very tired and presently I went to sleep. But the drums beat steadily, all night long. They entered the fabric of my dreams and made my rest uneasy. It could not

have been long before morning when I awoke with a start and found myself sitting up with every nerve tense. There was no sound, but I had a feeling as if I had been awakened by a scream, somewhere about the house.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEEKER OF VENGEANCE.

THE consul listened gravely while I told him about it. He had asked me to give all the information I could about Graham. We were on the porch of the consulate and the whole city of Ticao was spread out before us. The sea pounded restlessly against the low bluffs upon which the city was built, and surged angrily about the peninsula on which the fort is situated.

"I woke in the middle of the night," I concluded, "feeling that there had been a scream somewhere in the house, but not another sound came. I couldn't get to sleep again, and in the morning I noticed that the girl who had seemed to be the center of interest in the juju procession had been installed as a servant at the house. Another one of the servants had vanished. The new girl looked pitifully scared, perpetually panic-stricken, though the rest of the servants look frightened enough, in all conscience. That's all I know."

The consul tugged thoughtfully at his mustache.

"Now why——" he began, and stopped. "The mail boat dropped two Englishwomen here on her last trip, a Mrs. Braymore and a Miss Dalforth. Charming women, both of them. They are calling on the governor's wife this afternoon. They came to me and asked me to assist them in getting up to Graham's plantation. They told me he was Miss Dalforth's cousin."

I nodded, frowning. "He said that his cousin—second cousin—would possibly turn up. His brother is up in the Kongo somewhere trying to bag gorillas

and is going to come from there on through and stop at his place. Miss Dalforth is probably the second cousin and is engaged to the brother who is hunting."

"Hm." The consul looked somewhat relieved. "I see. But why on earth should two women want to go up there? Do you think they'd be safe?"

"I don't know," I said dubiously. "There's no fort anywhere near, and the natives are scared stiff. They might bolt, but Graham seems to have them thoroughly in hand. If the ladies once reached the plantation, they'd probably be safe enough, and Graham's brother could bring them down to the coast again. The plantation is a queer place, though. I think there's juju in the air. I'd discourage them from going, if I could."

"I've tried," said the consul. "I've informed them what sort the Portuguese traders are, and told them I simply wouldn't let them go up alone, or with one of those chaps as escort. I didn't know anything about Graham. They inquired around for an escort, and one of the missionaries mentioned you."

"As a respectable person?" I asked with a smile.

The consul nodded, matching my smile. "They have quite decided that you are to escort them to Graham's plantation. I don't think you'll refuse," he added, when I shook my head. "Miss Dalforth impressed me as a young woman accustomed to having her way. She saw the governor and smiled at him, and he agreed that you would be the best possible person. In fact, he said he would ask you himself."

"I'm not leaving for a month," I told him. "I've had enough of the back country for at least that long, and my carriers need a rest."

"We'll see," said the consul ruefully. "I'll wager she has you setting out in a week."

He was nearly right at that. I was introduced to the two of them, and Miss Dalforth was all that he had said. I had to give my bearers a rest, however, and it was two weeks before we set out.

It was a hindrance, having women with me. They traveled in an ox cart, and at nearly every stream the wheels had to be taken off and a tarpaulin fixed about the body of the wagon to make it into a raftlike float, in which they were ferried across. Had Miss Dalforth—or Alicia, as I heard Mrs. Braymore call her—had Alicia been less charming, or less anxious to cause as little trouble as possible, I would have cursed them nearly the entire time. As it was, I bore the delays with equanimity.

They were delighted the first day when we went up the trail to Venghela. I showed them the street lamp at which the great slave trail from the interior ended, and they looked dubious. When I showed them the Padre Silvestre's mission, with its three villages of redeemed slaves, they grew a little bit white and quiet.

The padre tried to persuade them not to go on, but as luck would have it, a runner came in on his way to Ticao with a message from Graham. His brother had arrived from the interior. That strengthened their resolution. We continued the journey.

While on the trail I could not speak to them, being busily engaged in the supervision of my caravan. At night, however, we conversed. It was good to hear cultivated white women talk again and talk about something besides the slave traffic, the missionary women's sole topic when they find a listener who can be trusted not to repeat their views to the governor.

The natives are kidnaped or captured far in the interior, brought down to the coast, and frankly sold. Then they are interviewed and, after making a

mark upon a bit of printed paper, are considered to have made a contract to serve a white man for four years at one milreis—about a dollar—a month.

To call it slave traffic is highly insulting to the Portuguese, but to call it the *servaçal* system is inadequate. They are *servaças*, or *contrahidos*, which means contract laborers, in theory, but in practice they are slaves. They never see their native villages again. The slave trail from the interior is littered with the manacles used to confine them, and there are gruesome relics all along the way, of those natives who were unable to bear the hardships of the journey.

I told them of these things. I told them of how the Padre Silvestre sacrificed his very soul to keep his villagers from being sold again as *servaças*, how the blacks rose on Da Vega's plantation and sacked it, and all I knew of the whole disgusting system. I had no intention of making myself a hero—and my conscience still hurts me when I think of some of the things I grew absolutely accustomed to—but I did allow myself to show my feelings on the subject of Portuguese government.

Alicia listened, and one night when I had explained to them precisely what it means for a black to be sent to the island of San Felipe or Gomé, she held out her hand to me very gravely.

"I think it is very brave of you," she said, "to stay here and do what you can to help the poor blacks."

I stared at her, tempted to laugh. "My dear young lady," I told her, "I am an outlaw, practically, who trades with the Kongo natives and attempts to elude the Belgian officials as much as possible. I'm tolerated here in Ticao because I bribe the Portuguese. I'm no hero. To the Belgians I am practically what an I. D. B. is in the Transvalle. And you know what an illicit diamond buyer is considered."

"I don't believe it," she said firmly:

"I think you stay here to help the poor natives."

She was so beautifully sincere in attributing the noblest motives to me that I could not laugh at her. Her blessed incomprehension made me forbear to kick Mboka, who is my official gun bearer and lieutenant, when he lost the bolt of my best rifle and threw away the weapon to conceal his misdoing. I had to kick him twice over the day following for the lapse, when he took advantage of my lenience and stole half of my jam.

She was a charming girl. Mrs. Braymore was suffering in the journeying and stoically relapsed into silence to conceal her emotion, but Alicia was perpetually lively and eager for new things of interest.

She soon grew to adopt a tone of frank friendliness with me, and I had to remind myself more than once that she was engaged to Graham's brother, and that it would not do for me to fall in love with her. It was odd about her engagement, though. She spoke of her fiancé quite simply, but without any excess of affection. In fact, she confessed that she thought of him more as a brother than anything else. All three of them, Graham, his brother and Alicia, had been raised together and were very much like brothers and sister.

I told myself sternly that, no matter how she felt about her fiancé, she was engaged to him, and I had better forget that she was delightful to look upon and an amazingly good companion. I could not manage it, however, and the last week of the trip was not easy for me. I had to be friendly and no more.

In a way I was very glad when we saw two khaki sun helmets coming toward us, though I was much depressed at the thought of parting from Alicia. I had sent a runner on ahead, and Graham and his brother met us some

four miles down the trail. I was pleasantly surprised at the sight of Graham's brother. Years before he had been at a little English seaside resort where I was spending the summer and we had grown very friendly. He kissed Alicia in a brotherly fashion and shook hands with me.

"I perpetrate a bromide," he said quizzically. "The world is a small place."

"Arthur Graham!" I exclaimed. "I knew you in Clovelly six years ago."

"You're right," he said cheerfully. "How are you now? Then you were flirting mildly with a buxom Devon lassie."

"And now we meet in darkest Africa," I said, smiling. "Let's move on."

We went forward again, Alicia, in the ox cart, gayly retailing to the two brothers our adventures on the trip up. I was rather surprised to notice that both of them were heavily armed, and it bothered me a little. It looked as if there were trouble with the natives. Each of the two brothers carried a heavy repeating rifle besides an automatic pistol in his belt, and Arthur looked decidedly worn, though I saw that he was trying to conceal it from Alicia.

My suspicion was confirmed when I observed that, though he tried not to let Alicia see it, he was keenly searching the way ahead of us with his eyes. He seemed particularly worried when we passed near a tree and his grasp on his rifle tightened. Even after we were well away from it, he looked back nervously.

We passed around the village and reached the casa by another route, Alicia chatting cheerfully with all of us from her seat in the cart. Evan Graham seemed quite at ease and entered into her talk with real interest, but Arthur—who as her fiancé should have been overjoyed to see her—was nervous and

preoccupied. His rifle was never far from a position in readiness to fling it to his shoulder, and his eyes roved restlessly about with a species of dread in them. I walked close to him.

"Arthur," I said in a low tone that Alicia would not catch. "You're nervous. Natives?"

"They're acting queerly, but it's worse than that," he said in the same low tone, glancing at Alicia to make sure her attention was elsewhere. "I'd give anything I possess to have Alicia somewhere else. I'll tell you later. Just keep your eyes open and, if you see anything, shoot quickly."

Evan did not seem to be worried. He was strolling leisurely along, using his rifle as a walking stick, talking casually to Alicia. His manners were very good and his voice was soft, very unlike the rasping snarl I had heard him use to his servants. Looking closely at him, I could see unmistakable signs that he had been drinking heavily of late. He seemed quite sober to-day, though. The contrast between his careless attitude and Arthur's worried air was striking. We saw one or two natives on our way to the house, and they promptly hid themselves in the bush. Arthur paid no attention to them. Whatever the trouble might be, it was not the blacks that he feared, though he had said they were acting queerly.

He led me aside almost as soon as we reached the casa. I told Mboka to pile and count the loads, and sent the carriers to the quarters they would find ready for them. Evan was inside the house, installing Alicia and Mrs. Braymore in their rooms, and showing them the servants who would wait on them. Arthur came over to me with a worried frown.

"I say, Murray," he told me nervously. "I'd ask you to take Alicia back to the coast to-morrow if I dared, but she's here now, and it would be just as dangerous for her to go back."

"What's the matter?" I demanded. "It isn't the natives. What is the matter?"

He looked about anxiously. "I shot a female gorilla up in the Kongo," he said jerkily, "and her mate got away. He's followed my caravan ever since, up to two weeks ago. Then I hit him with a lucky shot, but he escaped. You know they will try to kill the slayer of their mate."

"I know," I replied. "One of them followed me for three weeks once, until I bushwhacked and killed him."

"I shot this female," said Arthur quickly. "I shot her through the hip and she screamed for her mate. She couldn't get away. He came crashing through the trees, and I fired at him. I thought he'd vanished and went up to the female. I finished her off, and then the male came for me. I shot him through the arm and he made off. All that night he moaned and shrieked around my camp. My boys were badly frightened. Next morning he dropped from a tree inside the camp, knocked the heads of two of my carriers together, and crushed in their skulls. I rushed out with a gun and he disappeared. Three days later he dropped straight out of a tree almost over my head and made for me. One of my boys was cleaning a spear, directly in the path of the gorilla. He tried to run the beast through, but it stopped long enough to break his neck and by that time I'd got a gun. The gorilla disappeared again. From that time on it haunted me. If one or two of my boys strayed from the camp, they didn't come back. The beast has killed six of my best carriers and my gun bearer. And I never got a fair shot at it! I fired at it two weeks ago and I found blood where it had been, but no sign of the beast itself. Since then I've been left in peace."

"The animal may have dropped the trail, or it may be dead," I commented

thoughtfully, "but I don't blame you for wanting to be careful."

"The thought of that huge ape perhaps lurking outside, perhaps about to drop down at any moment, with Alicia here," said Arthur desperately, "it's enough to drive a man insane. You know they carry off native women sometimes. We've got to protect Alicia. If it kills me, it doesn't matter. Evan won't believe it's around. He's going armed to humor me, but the beast is near; it's somewhere about."

I felt myself growing pale. A monstrous ape; lingering about the place with malignant intent, and Alicia laughing unconsciously inside the house, was enough to make me feel squeamish. I unconsciously tightened my grasp on my rifle. Alicia came out on the porch at that moment and beckoned to us.

"We'll not mention this—yet," said Arthur, as we went up.

I nodded. Alicia was all enthusiasm about the comforts Evan had managed to put into his house so far inland, and when we sat down to dinner, the bright silver and white tablecloth did give an effect of civilization. When one looked at the black faces of the servants who waited on us, and at the tattooing and nose rings that disfigured them, however, the illusion vanished at once.

I was a long time getting to sleep that night. The next morning would see me going on my way into the interior, and I would in all likelihood never see Alicia again. When I at last fell asleep, I was uneasy, and when I woke, it was in a strangely silent house. Evan Graham's voice aroused me. He was calling me to get up. His ease of manner and absence of worry had vanished. Arthur, over his shoulder, looked even more apprehensive than before.

"Get up," said Evan briefly. "The servants skipped out during the night,

Your boys have gone, too. There's juju business going on. And the oxen that pulled Alicia's cart have been clubbed to death in their stalls."

The servants had fled from the house. There was not another white man within a hundred and fifty miles. All about us were natives who might fear Evan Graham but certainly hated him, and somewhere in the woods, we had reason to believe, a monstrous ape lurked, awaiting an opportunity to wreak his bestial vengeance upon the slayer of his mate.

CHAPTER III.

EVAN'S SORTIE.

WE explored the house first and came upon a surprise. The native girl I had seen conducted to the house by the juju procession two months before crouched in one corner. She was too much frightened to give any coherent account of the other servants' leaving.

They had simply gone, she said. No one had said anything to her, and she had been left behind. The oxen lay in their stalls, their heads beaten in with blows from a heavy iron bar that lay bent on the ground beside them. Even my own boys had vanished. That struck me most forcibly of all, because I had treated them well and had thought I could count on as much loyalty from them as any white man can expect from the average native.

Mboka's defection really bothered me. I had believed well of him and was in a way genuinely fond of him. He had gone with the rest, though. The loads of the carriers lay in a huge pile. Small and precious possessions of my boys lay about them. That was perhaps the queerest part of the whole affair. In leaving secretly in the middle of the night, the servants had not stopped to steal, or even to take with them what was their own. They had

apparently risen and stolen away in shivering fear.

We went back to the house from the servants' quarters full of rather uneasy speculations. Jujur was obviously at the bottom of whatever was happening, and there is no telling what may enter the head of a juju doctor. Passing through the rear rooms, Evan paused to order the solitary native girl to prepare food for us. We went on to find Alicia and Mrs. Braymore up and curious. They were on the front porch when they heard us, and Alicia came inside to smile at all of us and ask questions.

"Where are all the servants, Evan?" she demanded. "We had not a drop of water this morning. And what's happened to the native village? On the way up here we saw lots of villages, but none of them were quite like yours."

We looked down at the squalid huts of the village. Not a sign of life could be seen. Not one of the usually innumerable tiny fires of a native village was burning, and the single street was absolutely deserted.

"We'll take a look at it," said Arthur grimly. "I don't like this business. Murray, you'll come?"

I picked up my rifle and moved forward. As we walked across the clearing before the casa, Arthur turned to me.

"Don't forget about that big ape, either. He's probably waiting for a chance to drop out of a tree on top of us."

It was a pleasant prospect. If we went down the cleared way toward the village, we would be perfect targets for bowmen or spear throwers from the bush on either side. If we went through the bush, we ran an amazingly good chance of running up against the gorilla. And the gorilla had learned cunning, too, and would not expose himself to a shot if he could help it. He

would wait patiently until the chance came for him to rush upon us and crack our skulls together without our having time to raise a firearm, or else, until he could reach a hairy arm down and seize us—

I have seen iron bars bent and twisted by the hands of those big apes. A sudden thought came to me. The iron bar in the stables, with which the oxen had been clubbed to death!

We made our way cautiously down to the center of the cleared space, searching the bush on either side with our eyes, but affecting an unconcerned air in case hidden watchers saw us. We came to the village and strolled inside. It was absolutely deserted. Not one man, woman, or child remained within it. Their possessions were undisturbed, save that all their arms were gone, but cooking pots, carved stools, skin robes, ornaments, minor fetishes, children's toys, everything else lay as it had last been used by its owners. Only a few native dogs skulked around the silent huts. There was not a single sign that gave a hint of the reason for the mysterious exodus of the natives.

"I've not been out here long," said Arthur crisply, "but I've learned that when natives do inexplicable things, juju is at the bottom of it. What do you say?"

"I agree with you. I wish I could see some signs, though. I can read some juju palaver. But there isn't a sign. No charms, no *spoor* whatever. We'll go back to the house and talk it over with Evan."

We started slowly back toward the house. I was walking on ahead, puzzling over the oddities of the situation and trying to piece together a meaning in it all when Arthur stopped short. His voice reached me, little more than a whisper.

"Murray," he said sharply, "that pongo is trailing us."

I listened, but could hear nothing. One would hardly expect a white man's ears to detect a gorilla taking special pains to be quiet. Arthur seemed to hear something, however. He quietly raised his rifle. I followed the direction in which he was pointing, but could see nothing. He fired. A branch swayed slightly where his bullet had grazed it, but aside from that there was no sign.

"I didn't see a thing," I remarked.

Arthur shook his head. "It may be nerves," he said quietly. "That damned beast has haunted me, but I think I saw it."

We went on up to the house slowly. Just before we reached the porch Arthur looked at me pitifully.

"I heard it following us all the way," he told me. The perspiration was standing out on his forehead. "It is there, and it is waiting for a chance to revenge itself on me. And the beast has learned cunning! We must look out for Alicia."

I nodded. Evan was waiting for us.

"Find anything?" he called down. "What did you shoot at?"

"The gorilla," said Arthur in a low tone. "It's there and it's determined. We'd better warn Alicia and Mrs. Braymore."

Evan looked dubious. "Did Murray see it?"

I shook my head.

Evan frowned thoughtfully. "Arthur, old chap, it may be just nerves. The women have enough to worry them with the way the natives are acting, anyway. We'll keep a sharp lookout, of course. I'm going to hunt up those natives, though."

"They're your natives," I said, "but I question whether that's a wise move. If it's just native foolishness, they'll come back. If not, they're liable to be pretty—well, reckless."

"They're my natives," said Evan angrily. "I don't intend to humor them.

I'll throw a scare into them that will last them ten years. If I know anything of juju——"

"What?" I asked

"They'll never dare breathe without permission hereafter," Evan said grimly.

He seemed to be in a cold fury. Remembering the abject fear in which his slaves seemed to be all the time, I wondered what he might have in store for them. I opened my mouth to protest against his trying to look for his natives, but stopped. That juju house at which my boys had hinted, concealed in some hidden clearing near the village, might hold a secret by which he controlled them. In any event, he knew his own natives best.

We went into the house and sat down to breakfast. We must have made a queer sight, sitting there before that spotless table, our clothing disheveled and hastily donned, our rifles leaning against our chairs. Neither Arthur nor myself could eat more than a little, but Evan's appetite seemed undiminished. The native girl waited on us, the lurking panic in her eyes never very far from the surface. It seemed nearest when she looked at Evan.

I was most worried about my own boys. It was decidedly queer that they had deserted me, especially Mboka. He had been with me for all of a year, and I had really grown to trust him. He had gone with the others, though, and the very mystery of his disappearance seemed to add somewhat to the menace of the silence that surrounded us.

When I thought of it, however, it was no less odd that Evan's overseers had vanished. From the nature of their position, they would be hated by the other and full-blooded natives, and it was singular in the extreme that they had gone with them.

Then I remembered a tale I had once heard, of a mystic voodoo worship that

was spreading secretly over the whole of West Africa. The story ran that an attempt was being made to band all the natives possible together in this voodoo worship, and then at a given signal they were all to rise. The Indian Mutiny would be repeated. Every white man on the West Coast would be rushed by the nearest blacks, and the dominance of the white race made a thing of the past, in Africa any rate.

I felt cold at the thought that the attempt—which I had thought dead these many years—might have been secretly and insidiously winning converts all this time, and that all the blacks between us and the coast might be risen and only waiting for courage to attack us. We were the only whites in a hundred and fifty miles anyway, and if the strange behavior of the natives meant mischief, we were probably doomed as it was. It gave me a sickish feeling to think that the other might be true, though, that a second mutiny was in progress.

As if to confirm my belief, at just that moment, drums began to beat, far off in the bush. To the south of us they began their monotonous, rhythmic rumble. Boom, boom, boom, boom! Never a pause, never skipping a beat, never altering in the slightest the hypnotic muttering. We stopped eating and stared at each other. The drums throbbed on, sullenly, far, far away. Evan grew angry at the insolence of his slaves. I looked at Alicia and made a mental vow that my last cartridge should be saved for her. Arthur listened with an air of detachment, and then went on with his breakfast.

The first drums had been beating for perhaps fifteen minutes when, to the northeast, more drums took up the rhythmic pounding. Evan's eyes narrowed. He went to a window and looked out. As he moved, he passed close to the native girl, and she shrank

back fearfully. While he stared out across the clearing, a third set of drums began to beat—to the northwest, this time. We were ringed in.

Evan came to the table with a grim expression on his face. "The black fools!" he said furiously. "They dared not come to me! I'll go to them and put a stop to this!"

"Evan!" exclaimed Alicia, frightened. "You'll stay here with us!"

"This is no time for caution," said Evan grimly. "If we leave them alone, they'll hold a juju palaver until they've gathered nerve to rush us. I'll walk in on their council, and we'll see what happens."

"I'll go," said Arthur, quickly sensing the psychology of the move Evan proposed to make. "I'd better go."

"It would be suicide!" Alicia exclaimed again. "One white man among all those blacks. They could kill you in an instant."

"That is precisely why they would be afraid to," I interposed. "The mere fact that a white man dared walk into their palaver and order them about, would frighten them. No negro would dare do it, and they would not understand how a white man could. It's quite possible that a sheer bluff may win out. Of course we've got to do something. I think I'd better go, though. My boys are in that crowd and they're rather fond of me, I believe. I'll have some of them halfway with me at the start."

Evan shook his head. "Your boys are in that crowd," he said curtly, "but the very fact that they're fond of you will make them kill you that much quicker. You know natives. Now *my* natives hate me like poison, and there's not one of them but would kill me like a shot if he dared. They'll be afraid when I drop in on them. I'm the one to go and I'm going. Besides, I know the local dialect. You don't. You'll

hear one set of drums stop in half an hour."

He picked up his rifle and went out of the door. Alicia watched him leave, her face utterly pale.

"He's going to his death!" she said in a whisper. "Stop him, oh, please stop him!"

"We're all in just as much danger as he is, dear," said Arthur tenderly. "He's taking the one chance that may bring us out of this without fighting. He'll go into the middle of that bunch of natives and by sheer nerve frighten them into doing as he says. If all three of us went, we'd be rushed on sight."

Alicia's lips trembled, and Arthur tried to comfort her. I went to the door and stood looking after Evan. It was illogical, but with all of us very probably facing death, and certainly a siege, I was struck with a pang of jealousy when I saw Arthur put his arms about Alicia's shoulder to comfort her. Mrs. Braymore was white to the lips, but gamely tried to be casual and cheerful. She *came* and stood by me as I looked out of the door.

"Quite frankly," she asked me quietly, "what are our chances?"

"I don't know," I told her gloomily. "We don't even know what the natives are up to yet. Those drums do not sound well. They may mean anything and they may mean nothing."

Mrs. Braymore looked at me searchingly. Any one could see that she was frightened, but she was doing her best not to show it.

"And if they mean—anything?"

"There is a Portuguese fort a hundred and fifty miles away," I answered grimly. "They might send soldiers to lift the siege on us if they hear about it. I'm assuming we'll be besieged. Things look that way. Evan must have treated his slaves worse than usual. Usually they simply run away. It's not often they try anything of this kind.

I don't like the sound of those drums. That means organization and purpose. All I can say is that I hope Evan succeeds with the natives."

Mrs. Braymore blanched a little more, but smiled as bravely as she could.

"Well," she said quietly, "I know Alicia well enough to promise you that we'll be as little of a drawback as possible. If you decide to try anything drastic, such as attempting to escape through the bush, we'll do our best to keep up. And I think both of us are fairly good shots."

"I'm hoping there'll be no need for anything on that order," I said with more respect than before in my tone. "We'll try to stick it out here. My boys are loyal, I think, at least they've been loyal up to now, and even if we are besieged, one of them will probably take a message to the fort."

I had little enough hope of that, Heaven knows, but I did not want Mrs. Braymore to worry more than was necessary. She seemed to realize that I was speaking more from my hopes than my beliefs, because she shrugged her shoulders.

"There's really no need to soften things for me," she said. "Alicia and I won't—"

She stopped and caught her breath. A shot had sounded, off in the bush from the direction in which Evan had vanished. A second's interval, and another shot. Then there was a horrid outcry, and a maniacal shrieking.

"The gorilla," I snapped, and started down the steps with my rifle at full cock.

We heard a second outburst of the same beastlike sounds and a crashing in the bushes. I raised my rifle. A figure showed dimly through the bush. I fired vindictively. *Evan* stumbled and fell in the clearing, just out of the jungle!

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST VICTIM.

IN a second he was up again, and ran desperately until he reached my side. Blood was flowing down his cheeks from five deep scratches.

"The pongo," he gasped. "Nearly did for me. Jumped me, but I got in two shots. Then he grabbed for me but I got away. Stumbled just as you fired. Damn lucky."

I stood still, facing the menacing jungle, but not a sound came from it except the monotonous, rhythmic beating of the drums from three sides, where juju priests worked their followers into a frenzy of hatred against the white men. Evan went slowly up to the house, exhausted and shaken by his narrow escape from death.

We held a council immediately. The drums on every side of us meant evil brewing. So much was certain. For a white man to attempt to stop the juju councils would be perilous in the extreme, but it was our only chance. On the other hand, for one of us to get through the jungle to take that desperate chance meant eluding the watchfulness of the hate-mad gorilla, whose cunning was increasing.

"I don't know how he got to me," said Evan, still shaking from the unexpectedness of the whole affair. "I heard a snarl, and he was coming for me not ten paces away. Startled, I pulled the trigger without aiming, and he came on. I got my rifle halfway to my shoulder, when he reached me. One of his great, hairy paws grasped the muzzle as I fired the second time, while the other reached for my throat. When the rifle went off, he started back and burst out in his screaming. It must have burned or injured his paw. I turned and ran, but he had done this to me in the meantime."

His coat was half torn from him, and the deep scratches on his cheek

showed where the claws had just grazed his face.

"I don't mind facing natives," Evan admitted in conclusion, "but I'll tell you frankly I don't care to go through that jungle again while that beast is in it."

The eternal menace of the drums came to our ears, borne to us through the open windows. Arthur began to pace up and down the room, cursing under his breath. Alicia bit her lip and tapped nervously on the floor with her foot. Mrs. Braymore carefully began to fold and refold her handkerchief. Quite suddenly, I noticed that it was falling into shreds beneath her fingers. Struggle as any of us would, our nerves were badly worn.

The strain grew worse during the day. There were two or three dogs about the place, and it was curious to see them puzzled over our abstraction. They kept alertly out of Evan's way, but they were obviously disconcerted by the absence of the servants who usually attended to them, and they looked at us with perplexity in their eyes. They could get no attention from the solitary native girl who remained. She had withdrawn into panic-stricken silence, serving us when necessary, but spending most of her time in the room to which she had been assigned. We had ordered her to leave the servants' quarters and stay in the house itself.

All the morning the drums beat rhythmically. During lunch they continued their hypnotic muttering. And all afternoon they kept on, kept on, until it seemed as if we would be crushed by their regular, pulseline, ominous rumbling. Far off in the bush, where we could never reach them, we knew juju councils were going on. Weirdly painted and tattooed witch doctors whirled in their mystic dances and inflamed the minds of the blacks against us.

Men beat upon the drums and yelled

and yelled, closing their eyes and surrendering themselves to the ecstasy of the rhythm until they became all but unconscious of the words they reiterated. Slowly and surely the blacks were nerving themselves to lift their hands against their masters. Given time, a drum and a rhythmic phrase, a native can convince himself of anything simply by pounding on the drum and yelling over and over the phrase that contains the idea. He will luxuriate in the rhythm, he will hypnotize himself by the monotony of the drum beats. He will go into an ecstasy, simply yelling over and over the one phrase.

Dinner that night was a repetition of breakfast and lunch. We sat down to the table, our rifles by our sides, our movements jerky and uncertain from the strain of waiting for we knew not what. The dogs lay about on the floor, watching us anxiously. The single servant waited on us, her face dull with apathy, though flickers of panic lighted her eyes from time to time. And always we heard the drums beating far off in the bush. I caught myself sitting with a fork full of food in mid-air, listening to their sullenly menacing rumble.

Arthur, Evan, and myself divided the night into watches. I took the first, and waited tensely until after one o'clock. I heard nothing but the muffled drumming to the northeast, northwest, and south. The moon shone brightly down and made the clearing about the casa like a lake of molten silver. I heard the noises of insects—the loud-voiced African insects—and the cries of the night birds. I heard nothing else. The night was quiet and peaceful, save for the ceaseless throbbing of the drums all about.

Evan relieved me. He came out on the porch and lit a cigarette.

"That drumming gets monotonous." He yawned. "I wish they'd come on and have the suspense over with."

"If they come," I remarked, "we're done for."

"Not necessarily. If we hold them off for a week and kill enough of them, they'll get tired and go away."

"That wouldn't help us much. I hardly see how we could make a hundred and fifty miles through the bush with two women and no carriers."

"We might try, anyway. Some of us would get through. You've heard nothing?"

"No," I replied. "Just the drums."

I went indoors and lay down to sleep. When I surrendered myself to the rhythm of the drumming, it put me quickly into a deep slumber. I knew what the sound meant, that naked savages yelled and danced themselves into a frenzy of hatred against us, but if one allowed it to become so, it was very soothing.

At one time I half started from my sleep. Some sound within the house aroused me, but a moment later I heard Evan's footstep on the veranda and recognized the sound of his shoe soles on the flooring. He was humming a little tune to himself. I was reassured and slept again.

I heard when Arthur relieved Evan, too. Their voices came clearly in to me as they exchanged greetings.

"Nothing new?" asked Arthur nervously.

"No. I say, Arthur, the natives are taking a deuced long time to get worked up to the sticking point. I had them pretty thoroughly frightened. Perhaps they'll hold a big palaver for several days, yell and dance themselves into exhaustion, and let it go at that. I've known such things to happen. Our primitive ancestors used to hold hee-hee councils and work off their surplus emotions in the same way. If this juju festival lasts two days more, I think it will peter out and wind up in a palm-wine debauch. Then they'll come back and be good!"

"It's the gorilla I'm worried most about just now," said Arthur grimly. "The natives are men, and you can anticipate their moves, but there's no telling what an animal will do, particularly a pongo."

Evan laughed. "I had a start just now," he said. "I heard a queer sound in Biheta's room. 'Biheta was the native girl. 'She gave a queer gurgle. I didn't know what was up, and I went and peered in the door. She was lying there quite still, evidently sound asleep. She must have had a nightmare, but it gave me the creeps for an instant."

Arthur seemed to pick up his rifle.

"Well, I'm going indoors to get some beauty sleep," said Evan with a yawn. "Cheer up, Arthur. There's a damn good chance that the natives will just yell themselves hoarse and come peaceably back to work. As long as the drums stay at a distance, we're all right. But wake all of us if they stop."

He came into the house and went into his own room. I dozed off again. When I woke, it was well after daylight. Evan had stuck his head inside my door and was grinning cheerfully.

"Get up," he ordered. "Breakfast will be ready in a minute or two."

I rolled out of bed and heard him go to the rear of the house. He rasped out an order in the local dialect, but there was no reply. He spoke again, harshly. There was still no reply. I heard him fling open a door. Then he exclaimed aloud.

"Arthur! Murray! Come here!"

We went quickly, and into the room in which he was. It was the room assigned to the native girl. Evan was standing over her couch, looking grimly down at the figure lying there.

The dull features of the girl were twisted into an expression of the most horrible fear. It was appalling that such ultimate terror could show itself upon a human face. The eyes were wide and staring, the mouth was drawn

back in a voiceless shriek of utter, despairing fright. The hands were clenched so that the nails bit into the flesh of the palms, and the head was oddly askew. The girl was dead.

Evan lifted up her shoulders and the head fell back.

"Neck broken," he said laconically. "The gorilla!"

"Great Heaven!" said Arthur desperately, white as a sheet. "What next? How did he get in here? Alicia!" He ran from the room and called hoarsely.

Alicia's voice answered instantly. "What's the matter?"

"The native girl's dead, killed by the gorilla during the night. Are you safe?"

Alicia appeared in person and proved it. She was pale, but composed.

"Where? What——?"

I lost the rest of her question. Evan and myself were searching for the gorilla's means of ingress and exit. The flimsily screened window was intact. The door had been unlocked, but Evan remembered that he had found it closed and had closed it again after peering into the room during the night.

Was it possible that the monstrous animal possessed the cunning to unlatch the door gently before entering, and then the diabolical forethought to latch it again on leaving? It seemed impossible, but what other explanation was there?

"He's been in the house," said Evan grimly. "Where is he now?"

I went out and got one of the dogs. We brought it into the room and it sniffed at the dead body. Then we led it about the house. Once we thought it showed some excitement. It sniffed at the door of a room that was used as a storeroom.

With our rifles at the ready, we flung open the door. No sound came from within. The dog, bristling, walked slowly into the room. Cautiously, we followed. Boxes and bales were scat-

tered all about, but there was no sign of the animal that had killed the native girl. The dog growled, and moved about, stiff-legged, but soon grew puzzled and sniffed perplexedly all over the place. He could find nothing.

We explored the room thoroughly, though with our hearts in our mouths. Three men and a gorilla in a small store room would be unpleasant for the men, armed though they might be. We could find no niche in which the beast might have hidden, nor any evidence of his presence. After a time the dog gave it up, and lay down on the floor with his tongue lolling out.

"Do you suppose it could be a black that killed her?" asked Arthur suddenly. "A native would have known about the latch. One of them might have crept into the house and killed the girl in punishment for her having stayed behind when the rest left."

"If he did," I remarked grimly, "it's safe to say we'd better not touch any of the food he could have got at. Those voodoo poisons are deadly things, and you can bank on it he was prepared to use them."

"Hardly likely," said Evan.

"It must have been a native," insisted Arthur anxiously. "No animal would have had the cunning to creep in, kill the poor girl silently, and then creep out again. It must have been one of the blacks."

"Gorilla," said Evan, shaking his head.

Arthur suddenly looked up.

"I've got it! We'll take a photo of the girl's eyes. I saw a cloudy form on the retina. I've got an insect camera in my luggage, and can make sure what it was that frightened her that last moment of her life."

The expression on the girl's face had been one of terrible fear. Whatever it was that had killed her, she had seen it before she died—seen and known it for a deadly and horrible thing.

"Try it," I urged. "We can't be sure otherwise. If it was a native, our food is poisoned for a certainty."

Arthur went to his room and presently appeared with the queer camera. It was a long box, and evidently the lens was one of great focal length. It took Arthur a long time to adjust it properly. He proposed to take advantage of the fact that the eye of a dead person will retain for from twenty-four to forty-eight hours the impression of what it saw last while living. A great many people think that the shining image on the outer surface of the eye retains that picture, and wonder at it. As a matter of fact the picture is kept on the retina, in the inside of the eyeball. It is extremely difficult to photograph the retina without dissecting the eye, but it can be done—as Arthur proceeded to prove.

I went outside and searched around the house for possible footprints. After a preliminary search, I got Evan to help me. We could find no single sign of tracks leading toward or away from the house. There had been a heavy dew, and the top layer of the earth was dark and damp. Footprints would inevitably have been shown. When we had completed our search, we stared at each other. Whatever or whoever had killed the native girl must be still in the house. There were absolutely no signs of his having left.

We went inside. Beast or man, *something* had been in the house, moving quietly and undiscovered despite our watching. It had entered the room occupied by the native girl and had awakened her. She had seen it, and it had been a thing she recognized as frightful. Her horror-stricken face was proof of that. It had been cunning enough to latch the door of the room after the killing. That meant a native. On the other hand, it had broken the girl's neck, a feat that would require incredible strength. That spoke

of a monstrous animal. We heard Arthur shuffling about in his improvised dark room, and the clink of the dishes in which he had mixed his solutions.

How had the creature—man or beast—reached the house? How had it made its way silently through the rooms at midnight, with one of us awake and on guard? Could it be that one of the servants had remained, hidden in some secret place while the others had left, and now prowled about at night while the rest far off in the bush yelled and howled, drummed and danced, and gradually became ripe to attack us?

Arthur came out of his dark room with a glass plate in his hand. His face was pale.

"Look at this," he said quietly. "If you'll hold it so the light strikes it diagonally you'll see it in its proper lights and shades, instead of reversed."

The plate was still wet, where he had just taken it from the fixing bath. We looked. We saw, running aimlessly here and there, curiously like the branches of a tree, little dark lines. Those were the blood vessels that nourished the eye. We gave no heed to them, however. The sight that made both Evan and myself gasp was the strange picture that we saw amid all those little blood vessels.

There, distorted and hideous, menacing and terrible, we saw the cause of the native girl's death, and of her terror. We saw the head of a gorilla, with its horrible, discolored fangs protruding from blackened lips in a grimace of unspeakable ferocity.

CHAPTER V.

AS BY MAGIC.

AND it's in the house," observed Evan grimly. "A full-grown beast will weigh three hundred pounds, and he'd leave plenty of sign when he walked. There are no tracks leading away from here. Murray and I looked."

Arthur was ashen as he stared at us. I felt rather shaky myself. The thought of a creature like that in the same house, with Alicia exposed to its insane rage at any moment it might choose to emerge from its hiding place, was appalling.

The two ladies were in the large front room. I went in and remained with them, my rifle in my hand, while Arthur and Evan went over the house again. They had the dogs with them, and they went into every room and every corner, ready at any instant to face what is possibly the most terrible of all wild beasts at close quarters.

A full-grown gorilla has easily the strength of six or eight men, and in a confined space firearms would be almost useless. I heard the dogs pattering all through the house, sniffing eagerly everywhere they were taken, but finding nothing. Again they seemed excited at the door of the storeroom, and again they gave up the search after they had entered.

Arthur rejoined me and Alicia with discouragement on every feature.

"He isn't here," he said wearily, "and he is here. He was here and he wasn't here. I don't know where he is!"

Evan slumped into a chair, though it was noticeable that he kept his rifle in his hands. Through the window came the menacing rumble of the drums from all sides.

"I think," said Alicia, with a ghastly attempt at a smile, "I think a fit of hysterics would be a relief."

She looked as if she meant it. All of us looked thoroughly on edge. To have hostile drums beating all about you and to realize that a hundred and fifty miles of jungle lie between you and the nearest help is bad enough in itself. When you add to that the consciousness of having hidden in the same house with you a beast almost human in its cunning and fiendish in its hatred; with the face of the devil and the

strength of seven men, hysterics seem excusable. She did not give way, however, though we all felt on the verge of hysteria from the strain.

That day was one of the most terrible I have ever spent. It was not that anything happened to make it terrible. The strain came from the fact that nothing happened. If the beast were hidden about the house, it did not show itself, but we did not hear a board creak or a curtain swish against the window without turning with a start, prepared to face anything and to fire vengefully into a hideous, furry form.

The bush outside the casa seemed to take on a threatening aspect. The house was built on a small elevation and we looked for miles over the tops of trees, broken here and there by gaps which meant the existence of clearings and open fields. The treetops were dancing from the heat. The sun beat down with fierce intensity. Blasts of hot, humid wind blew upon us and scorched us, but we paid no attention. And always, from the mysterious, unknown and unknowable bush all around us, drums beat and beat and beat tirelessly and ominously.

When one of us went back to get food for the rest, he went with an automatic held ready in his hand, and the other two were prepared at any instant to hear a shot or the snarl that would mean the reappearance of the gorilla. We were doubly besieged, by the natives without and by the gorilla within. For fear of the natives in the bush, we kept to the house. For fear of the gorilla in the house, we kept to the one room.

Toward evening insensibly we relaxed. No one could keep to such an intensity of attention as we had maintained during the day. We ate a sketchy meal at nightfall and dragged two cots into one of the rooms adjoining the large front one in which we had stayed

all day. We explored the room thoroughly, and Alicia and Mrs. Braymore went in to lie down.

None of us thought of taking off our clothes. We three men prepared for a night-long vigil. One of us would keep thoroughly awake, and the other two would snatch such sleep as they could.

Long hours passed. We felt sure that some time during the night the beast would make his appearance. I sat alertly by a window, a dog at my feet, listening to the night sounds outside and the ceaseless drumming that meant the juju councils were debating whether the blacks were sufficiently worked up to attempt an attack.

Arthur and Evan reclined in their chairs and tried to doze, but there was little rest for any of us. We could think of nothing but the animal we felt sure would make some attempt upon us during the night.

At one o'clock Evar took my place by the window with the dog at his feet. I sat in one of the easier chairs and tried to relax, but it was impossible. I was suddenly conscious of the overpowering heat and humidity. I was bathed in perspiration.

"I've got to have a drink," I said abruptly. "I need it."

Arthur looked up wearily.

"We all need a drink," he said. "It's in the back of the house, isn't it?"

We looked at each other uncertainly.

"I'll go," said Arthur quietly.

I interposed. "We'll both go. Here, in the light, Evan can see to shoot if necessary. We'll use a flash lamp."

It was curious that neither of us cared to walk through three rooms and a hallway inside a house we had been in for days. That animal had fretted our nerves badly.

Slowly and cautiously we made our way through the dark rooms, searching before us with the flash light. I can't speak for Arthur, but my breath was coming quickly, and I heartily regretted

having expressed a wish for a drink. I would not back out now, though.

We went cautiously and slowly out to the rear of the house. I was in the act of reaching for the siphon of seltzer when we heard the dog scream in pain and a shout from Evan. We rushed madly for the front, our hearts in our mouths, and cursing our absence at such a critical time. When we burst into the room, Evan was dashing out on the veranda, and Alicia was in the act of emerging from the room into which she and Mrs. Braymore had retired. Alicia had an automatic in her hand and, though her face was full of dread, she was evidently prepared to face anything.

Arthur and myself were quickly by Evan's side and found him staring about the darkness, his rifle half raised.

"What is it?" Arthur demanded quickly.

Evan's breath was coming in gasps. "I heard you two moving," he said sharply, as one whose nerves are strained to the breaking point. "I heard a noise from your direction. I turned to look at the door and caught a movement at the window by my side. I jerked back and the dog screamed. A long, hairy arm had reached in the window and seized him. He was drawn through the window before I could lift my rifle, and the arm vanished. It's the gorilla!"

We listened, but the house was still. A faint moan came from the courtyard, and I flashed the lamp down. The dog, flung bodily from the porch, stirred feebly and stiffened. Its neck was broken. There on the shadowed veranda, with the bright African moon shining pitilessly down upon the hot, dank, fevered earth, the three of us swore nervously while we stood with our rifles pointing in as many directions, hoping, even praying for that monstrous ape to rush upon us.

"He must have gone somewhere!"

said Arthur despairingly. "Where *did* the beast go?"

"Into the house, no," said Evan crisply. "Under the house, perhaps. The roof, perhaps. We'll see."

My legs crawled as I descended the stairs to the ground. The house was raised from the ground on piles, and I could look clear underneath it. The moon was shining down whitely, and I saw the pillars silhouetted against the brightness on the other side. Half a dozen steps convinced me that the animal was not beneath. It would have shown as a dark outline. I tried to see up, over the roof, but could not. The roof slanted just a little and I could not see the center. The house being on an elevation, moreover, prevented me from backing off and getting a clear view of the top. I called up to the other two on the porch.

"He's not under the house, but I can't see the roof. He must be there."

The tree trunks of the forest all about us echoed my words strangely. I could see dim white blurs where the faces of the two brothers showed their position. One of them moved oddly, and in a moment I saw that Evan was swinging himself up the pillar before him. He grasped the edge of the roof and drew himself up. In a second he dropped down again. He spoke quietly enough to Arthur, but I heard his voice.

"He's there, squatting on the ridge pole. Lord! What a monster he is!"

"We must get the women out of the house," said Arthur sharply. "He may tear up the roof and come inside. Alicia!"

She had heard and came quickly out, Mrs. Braymore following her. We built a small fire to keep insects away from them, and sat them on chairs while we patrolled the area about the house. The drums still beat on all sides of us, but they had been relegated to a minor position now. We subconsciously counted on their remain-

ing a potential menace only, until they stopped or drew nearer. The moon made the whole world bright and shining. We could see clearly and distinctly. Nothing the size of a rabbit could escape across that stretch of sward without our observing it.

Alicia and Mrs. Braymore watched the fringe of jungle while we posted ourselves so that not even a cat could escape from the house without being seen. I leaned on my rifle near the two ladies, my eyes fixed on the edge of the roof, straining to catch a glimpse of the beast that squatted up there. When I thought of it, it seemed stupid of us not to have suspected that as a hiding place before. True, it was in clear view of the sky, but a beast cunning enough to creep about the casa at midnight as he had done, might possess the intelligence to reason that there was the ideal hiding place for him.

"Do you think there is any real danger from the natives?" Alicia inquired hesitatingly.

"When natives do inexplicable things, it is usually juju," I said grimly. "And where there is juju there is usually danger. There is one thing that can be said, though. While a native is making a noise, he is rarely dangerous in bulk. As Evan pointed out, they may simply exhaust themselves in yelling and dancing. I do not think it would be wise to count on that, however."

"Wouldn't it be the wisest thing to do, to simply try to make our way secretly through the jungle to the nearest fort?"

"It would be impossible," I told her frankly. "You don't know African undergrowth. We might make four or five miles a day, with luck. And at any moment in the twenty-four the natives might trail us. We'd have to make a new trail, or use the native ones. Making a new trail, we'd be followed and probably speared, besides the fact that

our animal friend would be haunting the treetops overhead, waiting for a moment when one of us would be off our guard."

Alicia shuddered. "But would you three try that if we weren't here?" she insisted.

"I think we'd wade into one of those juju councils," I remarked vindictively. "I know I'd gladly join such a party. We'd probably appear as suddenly as we could and start shooting. We might stampede them, and a show of boldness would be our best play in any event. Of course, if they rushed us, we'd be out of luck."

"You mean——?"

"There would be four or five hundred of them, and we might get ten or perhaps fifteen apiece. They'd overwhelm us if they tried, but the psychology would probably make us win out. The fact that we were hunting them, instead of their hunting us, would frighten them."

"Couldn't you do that now?"

I shook my head. "Not with our friend the gorilla about. And we wouldn't expose you two to the possibility of our failing. There'd be nothing left for you but your own pistols."

Alicia relapsed into silence. I saw her brow knitted as she tried desperately to work out some plan by which we might fight the incredible circumstances in which we found ourselves. Overhead, the broad moon sailed serenely across the sky, shedding its rays impartially down upon us, upon the shaggy, beastly ape squatting like some demoniacal creature upon the ridgepole of the roof, and upon yelling, capering blacks about the great fires they would have lit for their juju ceremonies.

Behind us, the busy, secretive life of the bush went on—all the feedings and drinkings and inatings and killings, all the comedies and all the tragedies of the jungle. Things went on, sublimely

indifferent to our petty frights and fancies. The jungle attended to its business, ignoring alike our strained attitudes as we sat in the moonlight and waited for the sun to rise that we might slay a malignant ape, and the yelling of self-hypnotism of the blacks as they danced about their juju fires, working themselves into a frenzy of hatred against the white man.

At last the moon dipped down toward the west, and the stars that had watched our vigil in mild, blinking surprise grew pale at the signs of dawn. The sky grew gray, then white. A high pallid veil hid the deep-blue arch of the night, and turned slowly to golden yellow as the sun rolled up.

The mist curled aloft from the tree-tops as the first rays of the morning swept across the land. We became aware that we had been cold and that we now were warm. We waited eagerly until we should see the roof of the casa, and be able to pick off with our rifles the beast that lurked there.

Morning had barely come when Evan clambered cautiously to the roof of the servants' quarters behind the house itself. We had left several of the dogs shut up in the house during the night. We knew that if the beast came down into the place, they would make an outcry before all were killed, at least. They had made no sound, but now one or two of them came out on the veranda, wagging their tails amiably.

Evan clambered to the roof of the servants' quarters, and Arthur passed up his rifle. Evan stood erect and raised the weapon. Then he stopped. From the ground, we saw him looking blankly at the roof of the house. From where he stood, he could see it clearly. His expression was at once amazed and apprehensive.

The beast had not left the house, or we would have seen it. It had not

crossed the clearing. It had not entered the house, because the dogs were unalarmed. It had not in any discoverable fashion escaped from its position astride the ridge pole, but Evan told us and we immediately verified the fact that it was no longer on the roof. It had not escaped to the jungle. It had not secreted itself in the house; yet the monstrous ape had vanished!

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORM THAT CREPT.

AGAIN we searched the house from top to bottom. - Again we led the dogs into every nook and cranny. Again they sniffed anxiously in the storeroom, but gave up the quest after a moment or so. In our search of the greater part of the house the dogs had seemed more bored than anything else. We had led them to the dog that had been killed, before attempting to enter the house, and they smelled at his neck cautiously and drew back with low growls. If the gorilla had been in the house, they would surely have scented him and warned us. The only time they gave any indication at all of interest, far less of excitement, was when they sniffed at the storeroom door. Once inside, they moved about aimlessly.

We debated our next move. The gorilla simply could not be in the house. With his ferocity, he would surely have made a move to attack one or another of us during our searchings. At last Arthur found a sign that reassured us as to his absence without lessening in the least the mystery of his means of escape. Something had led him to scout around the edge of the clearing surrounding the house. He straightened up with a shout.

"Look here!"

We ran to him and looked where he pointed. There, on the earth, just beneath the overhanging limb of the first

of the jungle trees, were the prints of strangely handlike toes.

"Here's where he jumped for the lowest limb there," said Evan excitedly. "See?"

Directly above us a heavy limb spread out from the trunk of the tree. Evidently the gorilla had leaped from that spot. How he had run across the moonlit lawn under our very eyes remained inexplicable. Thinking back, however, I remembered that once or twice wisps of infrequent cloud had temporarily obscured the moon. Could he have seized one of those moments of darkness? It seemed impossible, but there was no other explanation that could be made.

Somewhat reassured, we entered the house again. One of us stayed out on the veranda, however, and watched to make sure the beast would attempt no daring daylight rush on our stronghold. We planned to tether several of the dogs that night to the piles which raised the house from the ground.

Evan was on the porch. He peered in at the window suddenly.

"I'm going to take a look in the servants' quarters," he said abruptly. "It's just occurred to me that the beast may have hidden in there and made his break for the jungle from there. That would shorten the run he would have to make."

He moved away. I went back and tried to help Alicia prepare some food for us all. We had had nothing since the night before and all were ravenous. Arthur was sitting in the big front room, his head buried in his hands, his rifle leaning on the arm of his chair. I put my rifle against the wall and began to open the tins of preserved food, while Alicia donned an apron and with a quaintly housewifely air lighted a spirit lamp and heated water for our tea. Mrs. Braymore was gravely tasting the tinned butter and making a wry

face. It is poor stuff until you get used to it.

As I worked, I watched Alicia appreciatively, and far back in my mind a little germ of hope sprang up. It suddenly occurred to me that she had never shown that intense affection for Arthur one expects a woman to show for the man she is going to marry. She appeared fond enough of him, but she seemed nearly as fond of Evan. I remembered what I had been told, that the three of them had been raised together as children so they were little less than brothers and sister.

That was Alicia's attitude. She treated Arthur as an elder brother of whom she was immensely fond, but she did not treat him as a lover. It was queer that, with drums beating rhythmically night and day in the bush all around us, and in momentary danger from a monstrous gorilla, I should stop and think of romance and the peculiarly trivial shades of affection Alicia might show.

She turned and smiled at me just then.

"You look like a sword," she said mischievously, "a sword beaten into a can opener."

Mrs. Braymore joined in her smile. I suppose I must have looked rather queer. A heavy cartridge belt was slung about my waist, and two dull-metal automatics were stuck rakishly into it. I had not shaved for three days. Every moment was too full of suspense to allow for thinking of such minor things as shaving.

"Well," I remarked amiably, "since it looks as if our friends in the bush are going to do as Evan has suggested and yell themselves into exhaustion without bothering us, and I shall soon revert to peaceable pursuits, that doesn't matter. A sword is only useful on occasion, but a can opener links us with civilization."

"It would seem odd," said Alicia, "to

have some one bring one's mail in the morning, or to use a telephone."

"There's a mail once in two weeks at Ticao," I said, "but it's four weeks from England usually and often six."

Mrs. Braymore joined in the conversation. "I should like to receive an invitation to tea," she said wistfully. "I should like to go somewhere to tea and have people talk interestedly of poetry, and the approaching marriage of somebody's daughter, and what the curate said about the possibility of repairing the parish house."

We all laughed at the idea. I set down one of the tins of potted meat and reached for another.

"For myself——" I began and stopped short, every muscle tense.

On the veranda outside the house I had heard a sound, the creaking of a board as a heavy weight was put cautiously upon it. There was something infinitely furtive in the sound. I listened and heard nothing more, but was oppressed by a sense of danger. The sound had come from the front of the house. I drew an automatic from my belt and silently passed it to Alicia. She had heard nothing, but my expression warned her and she took it quickly. Mrs. Braymore took the other. I picked up my rifle from the side wall and tiptoed through the house toward the front. I heard an almost unbelievable slight sound again from the porch. The door into the front room was standing open. I slipped silently up to the threshold.

Arthur had heard. He was still sitting in the chair, but he was alert and ready. His eyes were fixed on the window some fifteen feet from him, and he was slowly and carefully bringing his rifle to bear. The sun was shining from without and struck upon the curtains that hung inside. Evan had made his house ready for the visitors he expected, and every window was curtained.

There was a moment of breath-taking suspense. Arthur, still seated lest the sound of his rising alarm whoever or whatever was outside, was bringing his rifle to his shoulder. I slipped into the room and came to his side, my own rifle ready. Our eyes were fixed upon the window. Then the slanting rays of the sun flung a shadow upon the curtain. The thing was not yet before the window, but its shadow moved on before it because of the position of the rising sun. We saw, cast in perfect clearness upon the flimsy cloth, the silhouette of the head of the gorilla! Its small ears lay back, its jaw protruded in that fearful ferocity of the anthropoid tribe, and we saw it peering from right to left in suspicious cunning. I held my breath, waiting for the moment when we could fire.

The head turned sharply, and I thought I saw the nostrils quivering. Then, abruptly, it vanished, and a dog burst into frantic barking and hysterical yelping on the veranda. Another instant and the dog screamed in terror. There was a crash against the wall of the house, and the yelping became a moan.

Arthur and I had dashed for the door and now rushed down the veranda with hearts thumping madly. One of the dogs was writhing in agony on the floor. It had been flung against the house with terrific force and now lay with broken ribs and backbone, dying. The gorilla had vanished.

Evan appeared with his rifle ready, out of breath. "What's up?" he demanded. "The beast again?"

Arthur swore hysterically. "The damned beast is here!" he cried. "It's *here!* It's hiding somewhere about!"

We were all thoroughly reckless by now. We went after the huge ape with the temerity that would have made the blood of any of us run cold in a sober moment. We penetrated every corner of the house. We went over every bit

of the grounds. We clambered upon the roof and searched there in foolhardy indifference to the danger we might be in if we only located the animal.

"I think it was hiding in the servants' quarters," said Evan grimly. "I saw signs of its having been there. It must have grown shy when I explored the place and it probably slipped off toward the house to escape me. I don't see why it didn't make for the woods, though."

None of us understood, but we went about our search as before. We found absolutely nothing. At last we stopped and stared at one another.

"We would have killed it in another moment," said Arthur despairingly, "but the dog saw it and yelped. Then it ran."

"Could it have made the woods before we got outside?"

"Heaven only knows," said Arthur wearily. "I begin to believe the natives have bewitched the thing to kill us all."

"How many dogs have we left?" asked Evan suddenly.

There were four or five of Evan's animals, and one or two of the village dogs had begun to lurk about the house in hopes of food. There was none left for them in the deserted village.

"We'll tie up the dogs," said Evan. "We'll fasten one on the veranda at the front, and another in the rear of the house. We'll put two on the ground below, tethered to the piles, and spread the others in the rooms here. Then the beast will have to kill them before it can get at us, and we'll have some warning."

We began to improvise collars for the native dogs and scattered the others about as Evan had suggested. When we had finished, as far as we could see there was absolutely no way for the gorilla to emerge from his hiding place

—if he were hiding in the house—without being instantly detected by a dog. Certainly, he could not reach the house from the bush without discovery and an alarm being given.

With a dog in every room, dogs on the veranda, and others underneath the building, we should have felt safe, but did not. There was something uncanny in the appearances and disappearances of the monstrous ape that left us apprehensive even when we had taken every possible precaution to provide for its instant discovery if it made another attempt to reach us.

The pertinacity of the beast was appalling. To think of a colossal anthropoid with the cunning of the devil himself, the strength of seven men, and all the malignant hatred that possessed this one, to think of such an animal lurking about seeking an opportunity to wreak vengeance on one of our number was horrible. And it would not stop with one of us if more than one were within its reach. Once in a killing rage, a gorilla goes mad with blood lust. It would tear and rend, would crush and utterly destroy.

We were white and nervous from the strain long before. Now we went about with something akin to hysteria just beneath the surface. There was nothing we could *do!* We had to wait for the beast to reappear, knowing that when it did, its coming would be cautious and cunning, its patience infinite, its strength colossal and its hatred fiendish. Any or all of us might expect at any instant to be gripped by a hairy arm of incredible power, to see the bestial face of that demoniacal animal grimacing at us in utter malignance. And we had before us the picture of the vision that would confront us in such a case. The picture taken from the native girl's retina was warning. Little, evil eyes glittering fiercely, flat, horrible nose above a terrible mouth parted in insane rage, and discolored

fangs showing above the blackened lips.

Action of any sort would have been a relief. We went through the morning, making desperate efforts to stave off hysteria, and aware that at any moment one of us might crack beneath the strain.

Noon came. We ate mechanically. Evan was standing up better than any of the rest of us. Alicia was quiet and still. Her eyes alone showed the tension she felt. We were all keyed up to an almost unbearable pitch. Queerly enough, in our absorption in the threat of the gorilla, we had almost forgotten the drums that resounded on every side of us from the bush. It was Mrs. Braymore who called our attention to them.

"I wonder what's the matter with the drums?" she said wearily. "I've been noticing them for the last ten minutes."

We listened. The monotonous rhythm was still going on, rolling through the hot midday air in muffled waves of sound. The drums seemed louder than they had been.

"They're beating more rapidly," Evan remarked in a puzzled tone. "They were going along slowly. Now they're quite fast."

Only one of the drums had quickened its beat, however. The others thumped on monotonously. About four o'clock in the afternoon—allowing the length of time necessary for a runner to get from the first village to another—a second began to beat more furiously, and shortly after dark, the third joined in the trilogy. Our dogs were moving restlessly about, chafing because of being tied. We all were increasingly anxious, but this new danger had, strangely enough, the effect of steadying us.

We waited a long time, and at last the two women lay down to try to rest. Through the moonlight night the drums rolled and rumbled. Standing out on the veranda with my rifle in my

hands, I listened intently. I saw with some disquiet that the night threatened to become cloudy, but hoped that the dogs would give warning of any danger that might impend. For an hour I stood there, looking and listening. There was no mistaking the new note of the drums. They meant resolution, renewed activity. Faintly, beneath their muttering, I caught a high, sustained ululation. The yelling of the natives had not been audible before. Evidently they were in perfect frenzy. That meant that an attack was imminent.

Arthur came out on the veranda beside me. He listened as I was listening.

"They'll attempt to rush us in the morning, I suppose," he remarked grimly. "They'll hardly try it before dawn, though. Blacks don't like the nighttime."

One of the dogs tied to a pile below the house growled softly. The dog on the veranda echoed the growl. I glanced at him quickly. He had risen and was standing tense, looking toward the edge of the bush. He growled again.

At just this moment, one of the little wisps of cloud overshadowed the moon and left the courtyard in darkness. I moved quietly over beside the dog and felt the hairs on his neck bristling. Finding him staring steadfastly in one direction, I strained my eyes trying to pierce the darkness. The cloud thinned a trifle and objects were dimly visible. I saw a shape coming slowly and cautiously toward the house, a shape that moved hesitatingly and furtively.

Arthur exclaimed softly. "Murray, it's the gorilla!"

The figure was hunched up and ape-like. It moved awkwardly toward us. The cloud thinned still more and we could distinguish its location clearly, though it was still impossible for us to see distinctly.

"For the body," Arthur whispered. We raised our rifles together and aimed carefully. Arthur's rifle flashed, and mine an instant later. We heard a choking, beastlike cry, and the figure toppled and fell.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE ALLY.

EVAN rushed out from the interior of the house, rifle in hand.

"What's up? The natives?"

"We've got the gorilla, I think," said Arthur quietly.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a flash light. The three of us started down the steps and approached the fallen figure cautiously. As we drew near, we could hear it moaning. The moans were curiously human. I glanced up at the sky. The last wisp of the cloud was just passing before the face of the moon, and when I looked down again, the figure was outlined in the pitiless glare of the moonlight.

Evan uttered an exclamation. The moaning figure was not that of the gorilla. It was a man, a black man, in the monkey skin of a juju priest, with all the amulets and charms of his calling strung about him. Evan started forward and shot out a string of questions in the local dialect. I could not catch a word, but Evan's voice was stern and angry. The moaning witch doctor spoke feebly, his voice growing weaker and weaker, and his words interrupted by gasps of pain. At last he choked and coughed weakly and was still.

Evan turned to us in a towering passion.

"Those damned natives are going to try to rush us at dawn! The witch doctor came to put a spell on us so they'd succeed. Oh, when I get at the black animals——"

He burst out into a string of profan-

ity. The slave owner in him had come uppermost, and the news that his blacks were going to attack us aroused his anger at their presumption more than his fear that they might succeed. He stirred the dead figure with his foot.

"They dare to threaten me!" he rasped. "I'll shoot one man in every four of them! I'll whip the rest until they can't stand. I'll——"

My old dislike of the man returned, I could not doubt his courage, but I had never been particularly fond of the *servaçal* system and had their effort not imperiled the lives of the four of us, I would have had the best of wishes for the natives in their attempt to liberate themselves.

"We'd better decide how we're going to stand them off before we decide how we're going to punish them," I remarked. "There are three of us. There are at least six hundred of them."

Arthur suddenly turned with a start.

"Alicia's in the casa," he said sharply, "and the beast may come back."

He started for the house on a run. We heard his voice as he called to Alicia and heard her answer. Evan and I followed more slowly, discussing methods of protecting ourselves against the coming attack.

"There's one thing," I observed thoughtfully, "with the bush about the clearing full of natives, the gorilla will either keep a safe distance away—as is most likely—or else will have to fight his way through to get to us."

"Perhaps," said Evan gloomily, his voice still full of anger toward the blacks. "We'll worry about him when we have to. The important thing is the siege we'll have to stand. If we can stop the first rush, I think we'll be all right."

"We're all right for ammunition?" I asked.

He nodded. "I could outfit a small

army from my gun chest and I've ammunition to last a year."

We mounted the steps of the casa.

Alicia greeted us with a white face. "I can shoot," she told us both bravely, "and I shan't mind shooting at these people."

"You shall shoot," said Evan grimly, "if they get a foothold in the house. Otherwise there's no need. You know enough not to be taken alive."

"I know," said Alicia quietly.

The last I saw of her for an hour or more, she was going through Evan's assortment of firearms, picking out a light rifle for her own use and another for Mrs. Braymore. She already had a small-caliber automatic pistol hidden in her bosom.

For an hour or more we worked, moving the bundles Evan pointed out in the storeroom to form a breastwork behind which the women would be safe from stray shots. We tore up a section or so of flooring, too, so we could fire down in case any of the blacks found a refuge from our weapons beneath the house. Bars nailed across the openings at once provided us with assurance that they could not climb up, and that we would not accidentally fall through. We brought supplies of food and water where they would be close at hand.

For close quarters, we were depending on repeating shotguns loaded with buckshot. Three of us with those weapons should be able to stop almost any number of blacks. These lay close beside us. We had our rifles and our pistols in addition.

The drums were beating madly now. The high-pitched ululation that was the blended note of all the frantic yelling came clearly to our ears. When we had finished our preparations I went outside to listen. I instantly realized that the drums were nearer, much nearer. The dogs were excited and restless.

"We'd better get the dogs up from

the ground," I suggested. "They'll only be killed."

Evan went silently down and unleashed them. They were growling and bristling, particularly those near the back. They seemed to realize the imminence of danger.

I looked at my watch. It lacked two hours of dawn. The drums were growing louder and louder, and the yelling more distinct and defiant. From three sides the drums closed in on us, and from three sides choruses of high-pitched yells informed us of the hatred of the blacks for their masters. Evan interpreted as he caught some of the words.

"They say the juju has declared we are to be killed," he announced with a faint smile. "We are to be slaughtered and our flesh boiled down until the fat can be collected, when it will be used to light fires. Pigs will feed upon us, and our bones will be scattered among the juju priests of a thousand villages to tell them to rise and slay all white men."

The drums came up to the very edge of the clearing, and their thunderous voices boomed with a full-throated below across the open space in a deafening volume of sound. In the moonlight, we became conscious of darker bodies moving among the bush. Evan sighted from an open window and with compressed lips fired. There was a mocking yell.

"They say our guns have been bewitched so we cannot harm them," he informed us a second later. "Give me a shotgun."

The load of buckshot gave better results. Two or three shrieks of pain announced its arrival. Then the drums boomed forth more loudly. Evan fired again and again. There was a yell of rage at the third shot, when the resonant voice of the huge drum became muted and a mere shadow of itself.

"I was trying for the drum," he re-

marked. "They were brought from a thousand miles inland, and there's no way to tell what price was paid for that one."

The two other drums hastily shifted their positions, and recommenced their devil's tattoo. Emboldened by the fury of sound, one or two of the more daring spirits ventured to advance a little way out in the clearing to howl maledictions upon us.

Arthur's rifle cracked spitefully, and mine followed. Two bold spirits ceased to yell.

From time to time, as we saw an opportunity and a target in the moonlight, we shot vengefully into the bush, and several times cries of different timbre from the hysterical yelling of the blacks followed our shots. Once or twice, too, I had that curious feeling of certitude that follows some shots, when one is confident he has hit his mark, though no cry came to assure me.

Evan fired again and again with his heavy shotgun, almost every deep explosion being followed by a cry. The range was hardly more than a hundred yards, and the buckshot carried that distance easily. Spreading as it did, it had a daunting effect.

Our object in taking the initiative was solely that of dampening the blacks' enthusiasm. Allowed to cheer themselves with yells, they would make a rush that would be formidable in the extreme, but if we began to inflict losses before their attack began, the edge of their determination would be taken off. They would no longer believe in the efficacy of their juju to compass our destruction, and we would have a fraction of that psychological superiority that the white man must possess in order to handle natives, the complete possession of which enables a single fever-ridden white man to cow and rule ten thousand blacks.

Evan made a tour of the house, to make sure that the natives were equally

reluctant to advance on all sides. We heard him fire twice back there, and painful yells followed each shot. He rejoined us.

"I'm going to take the rear," he said briefly. "They're in the bush all around. I'll hold them off easily. They'll make their main rush from this side, so you two stay together."

Arthur's answer was a deliberate squeeze of his trigger. A yell followed.

"At a hundred yards," he commented, looking up, "one can make good practice in moonlight like this."

"Dawn soon," said Evan and went once more to the rear. We heard him settling himself for the rush that we expected.

So far, there had been nothing but yells from the natives. We knew they had some firearms, but ammunition is very valuable in the bush. Natives are never supposed to have arms of precision, and when they possess modern rifles, they have to keep them concealed lest they be taken away by the Portuguese; but now and then a black boy will make off with a rifle and a store of shells, and there are other sources of supply.

At that, though, rifles and ammunition are immensely valuable back in the hill country. Up beyond the Hungry Country, I have known slaves to be sold for three rifle cartridges apiece. In fact, my boy Mboka—now run off in the bush with the rest of them—had cost me exactly six .30-30 shells. I had found him the slave of a portly Kuloga chieftain who was about to sell him to a half-caste Arab for export to the Sudan.

I had wondered why the house servants did not clean out the gun chest when they ran away in the middle of the night, but thanked my luck that they failed to do so. Half a dozen rifles in the hands of the blacks would have made matters awkward for us at close quarters. Off in the bush we

could have disregarded them, as the native custom is to fill the barrel with slugs and fire from the hip. Anything like accuracy is impossible to them, of course.

When the sky began to pale toward the east, however, they opened up. No less than six firearms began to bellow at us, from an ancient fowling piece of who knows what ancient lineage to a modern smokeless-powder magazine rifle. The slugs and bullets tore through the flimsy walls of the house, or else imbedded themselves with a thud in one of the posts that supported the roof. Arthur and myself began to concentrate upon those weapons. The black-powder arms showed their position at every fire in the now growing dawnlight, and we fired vengefully at the puffs of smoke.

The sky was growing lighter now. The stars above us were paling and winking feebly in an attempt to outshine the sun. The first dim grayness became nearly white. The east turned from pallid luminosity to rich rose and then to gold. The gold, in its turn, faded to yellow, and the first rays of the sun struck the tips of the highest trees about the clearing. The drumming became fast and furious. The fires of the guns in the bush ceased for a moment, and wild yelling began. We heard Evan firing occasionally from the rear of the house. Now his shots came more rapidly.

With a hideous yell, the fringe of bush about the casa erupted black figures. Ancient spears, knobbed and gnarled war clubs, fiercely pointed arrows, and occasional rusted and long-cherished firearms armed the motley throng that ran yelling toward us.

Arthur dropped his rifle and took up the repeating shotgun by his side. I took my stand at a window and opened on the advancing mob. In such a mass it was impossible to miss, and the buck-shot was deadly. If we had had sawed-

off shotguns, the loads would have spread more and inflicted more damage, but as it was we had merely to pull the triggers to see one or more figures crumple or spin half around and fall. In their state of frenzy, that did not stop the blacks.

Evan's gun was booming from the rear of the house. Arthur's spoke with a shattering roar. My own barked angrily. The drums in the bush were pounding in a mad rhythm that made the universe a place of unbearable sound. The yells, the shots, the cries, and the thunderous drumming created an uproar in which I loaded my weapon and emptied it with a sense of curious detachment. Alicia and Mrs. Braymore were behind the breastwork we had made for them. I cannot speak for Mrs. Braymore, but I glanced once at Alicia and saw her grimly holding her light rifle in readiness.

The blacks came on. The losses we inflicted went unnoticed. They swarmed up the rise on which the house was built. We took heavy toll of them, but from sheer weight of numbers their casualties seemed insignificant. Their yells were deafening as they swept up the last twenty yards. I emptied my shotgun and began to use my two automatics.

A mass of black humanity flowed up the steps, though a gap in the stream widened for a moment as Arthur poured the last shells from his shotgun into them. They clambered the pillars that supported the veranda and made for the windows.

At that distance, barely ten feet, we could not miss. The veranda was a shambles. They could not live there. Arthur and myself with an automatic in each hand swept the place. I heard a shot and a yell behind me. One of the openings in the floor showed the barrel of an ancient musket that was just falling back. Alicia had fired down the opening and undoubtedly

saved my life. The musket was aimed directly for my back, and would have torn my head from my body.

There was a crashing, and an antique blunderbuss appeared through a hole smashed in the flimsy side wall of the house. Arthur fired quickly. Then I heard Evan cry out at the rear of the house. Before we could move, there was an outburst of demoniacal, bestial screamings of rage. To one who had once heard that sound, the noise was unmistakable. The gorilla had appeared in a killing fury and was going for the blacks, as their panic testified. In a moment the clearing was dotted with running natives. They dared face our weapons, but the gorilla—

Evan's rifle was silent. There was an instant of almost unbearable quietness. Then came a triumphant, horrible outcry from the beast. It had slain.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNMASKED.

THE quiet was deadly. Where five minutes before had been the yelling of the natives and the roaring of the drums, the sharp cracks of our rifles, and the bellowing of the native firearms, now there was not a sound.

Arthur and I, shaken by the suddenness of the transition, waited in cold apprehension. Would the door from the rear of the house burst open and the shaggy beast rage into the room, its colossal arms crushing whatever might come within its grasp? Would we, the four in that one room, fire futilely into its barrellike chest, and then be rent and tore in the huge ape's hairy arms, while its great discolored fangs sank into our flesh?

The stillness was broken by a feeble sound, and we quivered, gripping our rifles the more tightly. The tension was terrific. Another feeble sound, a scraping sound. Then two or three faint jars, followed by an uncertain,

tottering footstep, and a second. We heard Evan's voice, barely above a whisper, muttering pain-racked imprecations.

The door opened slowly and he limped weakly into the room. His clothes were torn and gory. Blood dripped from a deep cut across the back of his hand. He stared at us uncertainly, and a look of relief came across his face.

"Well," he said slowly. "They've gone."

Alicia, for the first time, gave way. She burst into sobs, against which she struggled bravely.

"The gorilla!" I snapped, fearful lest I too give way.

Evan shook his head. "The blacks had crept up to and filled the servants' quarters during the night. I suppose that's why the dogs were restless. When they made a rush, they dashed out from there and I couldn't stop them. They were inside, and I was just about gone when the gorilla appeared from nowhere. I dare say I shouted, and then the beast made for the blacks. I suppose it was as frightened as they were, but it charged them, screaming with rage, and they ran. It got one of them. The poor devil is out there now. I'd been knocked down and one of the blacks was just about to finish me off when the brute appeared."

"Where is it now?"

Evan shook his head again. "I don't know where it went. It was going for the blacks."

Alicia stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and tried desperately to get a grip on herself again.

"We'll go and look out at the back," said Arthur grimly. "You stay here, Evan."

We went cautiously out toward the rear. There lay one of the natives with his neck broken, an expression of infinite horror on his face. Others

lay in twisted attitudes about the place, gaping wounds from the buckshot at close range showing how desperately Evan had fought. Of the gorilla there was no sign. We searched the place thoroughly, but found nothing.

We returned to the others, a curious lethargy settling upon us. We had been at such high tension for so-long that it was impossible to keep keyed up. I, for one, felt an almost-overpowering desire to sleep. Alicia had recovered her composure by now and was trying to bandage Evan's hand. He was indifferently submitting, but after she had finished, he looked at it and took the bandage off, substituting a mere strip of adhesive for the many turns of the cloth.

"I can handle my rifle like this," he said dully.

Mrs. Braymore made coffee and we drank it in silence. Presently Arthur motioned to the women to leave the room and began to tug at the bodies lying on the floor. It was absurd for us to think of trying to bury them. He dragged them to the edge of the veranda and dropped them over the edge to the ground below. He moved jerkily, almost like a man asleep.

"No need to do that," said Evan suddenly, a little while later.

Arthur stopped and looked at him questioningly.

"We'll have to start for the coast," Evan explained uninterestedly. "We can't stick it out here. The natives won't bother us now. The fight's taken out of them."

"But the gorilla?"

"Have to chance it," said Evan slowly. "There's nothing else to do."

"He'll get us within the first ten miles," I remarked, speaking with difficulty because of the peculiar lethargy that affected us all. "You know how he trailed Arthur."

There was a moment's silence, then Arthur automatically resumed his task.

Alicia came into the room and silently gave us something to eat. Arthur stopped dumbly and began to chew on his food, forgetting the grisly labor he had been performing but a moment before.

"We can't start to-day, anyway," he said after a little. "We've got to rest. We're all in bad shape and we've two weeks' travel before we reach another white man's house."

Evan made some reply, but I did not catch it. I fell asleep with food in my hands and slept like a dead man for hours. Alicia waked me at noon to eat again.

All that day we were possessed by a peculiar indifference, the result of the reaction from the tension at which we had lived for so many days. I woke with a start at three o'clock, hearing the dogs bark. Evan came slowly into the room.

"I let the dogs loose," he said, noticing my expression. "They were whining."

"We'll need them to-night, in case the beast comes back." I rose stiffly and went back to douse my head with water. It roused me a little and, after a cup of coffee, I joined the other two. We were all languid and tired, but thoroughly awake now.

"Of course we can't stay on here," Arthur was admitting, "but we wouldn't have one chance in a hundred to make it through the jungle with that ape following us. You've seen how it manages to reach the house here."

"I've figured," said Evan thoughtfully, "that it was in the fringe of bush, and when the drums began to close in from three sides, it was flushed out and came on to hide here in or about the house. It had hidden here before."

"Probably," Arthur agreed. "But that doesn't say how we're going to elude it during a journey of a hundred and fifty miles without carriers."

Evan threw out his hands. "But what are we going to do?" He appealed to me. "What do you think, Murray?"

"If we stay here," I reasoned, "either we'll get him or he'll get us. If we go, he'll probably get one or more of us and we may get him. But we can't stay here. The only thing I can think of is that we had better try for him to-night. With the dogs to warn us, we'll have a better chance than before. If he doesn't come to-night, try to-morrow night. Hang on here as long as we dare and then, if we must, try the trail. If we could strike a caravan coming down from the Hungry Country, now——"

Evan shook his head. "I haven't been very hospitable to the Portuguese traders," he remarked. "They steal my slaves and sell them in Ticao. They don't turn off the main slave trail to my villages any more."

We were silent for a moment or two.

"Are there any of the rest barricades any short distance away?" asked Arthur. "We might reach one of them and wait for a caravan to come."

From time to time along the great slave trail from the interior, you will find big inclosures made of tree trunks and filled with grass huts. They were originally built for halting places for the caravans that go up and down from beyond the Hungry Country. Of course they are in ill repair because of the attacks of insects and rot upon dead timber in that climate, but the carriers feel safer in them after night-fall, and the slave traders find them convenient to avoid possible attempts to escape on the part of the "voluntary labor recruits" they are escorting to the coast.

"We might try," I said doubtfully. "Frankly, I think the beast would have as much chance at us there as here. If we happened on a caravan right away, though, it would help."

"Why doesn't the damned thing go away?" Arthur looked at us with something of dread in his eyes. "I shot its mate four hundred miles away, up in the Kongo. It trailed me those four hundred miles, making attempt after attempt on me. I wounded it once, and got a fair shot at it two weeks before Murray brought Alicia and Mrs. Braymore here. I thought I had killed it then. It went off through the trees as if it were badly injured. I'd made sure it was dead."

He began to pace up and down the room nervously.

"I've never known one so far from Kongo before," I said, in an attempt to encourage him. "You know what animals are. They'll stick at a thing for an amazing length of time and then will drop it like a shot. He may get a touch of homesickness any day and swing off to the north again."

"If he only would!" Arthur burst out. "I'm beginning to feel that he's going to get me yet. Something tells me he's going to get me."

"Nonsense," said Evan heartily. "Get a grip on yourself, old man."

"If he killed me," Arthur muttered morosely, "he'd be satisfied. I'm the one he's after. If he killed me, he might go off and leave the rest of you in peace."

"Don't be an ass, Arthur," I told him sharply. "The beast can't distinguish between white men. He'd be just as apt to try to wipe out the lot of us, and I have a strong objection to being wiped out."

Arthur walked out on the veranda and stood there, leaning against the side of the house and staring moodily off into the bush. Evan looked at me significantly.

"Nerves," he said quietly. "I feel the same way, but I'm trying not to show it. I'll go and round up the dogs. I have a feeling that something is due to happen to-night."

I went out to the back. Alicia saw me passing her door and joined me, leaving Mrs. Braymore behind.

"Have you decided on your course?" she asked in a low voice. "You know both of us are willing to do anything you think wise. You mustn't hold back for fear we may not be able to stand hardships."

I shook my head. "The only thing we can do," I said wearily, "is hope the beast turns up to-night and that we kill him."

Alicia put out her hand and let it rest on my shoulder in comradely fashion.

"Please don't be discouraged," she said urgently. "We've stood so much, surely we can endure a little more."

I tried to smile. "We'll stick it out. It must be much harder for you and Mrs. Braymore."

"Don't worry about us." Alicia shook her head decidedly. "It's the waiting for the beast to come that worries you. We're growing accustomed to grisly sights, but you'll never be used to just waiting. Why, I've got so I can look at those poor natives and not even shiver."

My eyes followed her glance. I smiled wryly. "It isn't pleasant for me to look at that particular native," I remarked. "He was one of my carriers. I bought and freed him when he was to be used for food—a tribe in the interior. All my boys joined Evan's blacks."

Alicia looked at me with her large eyes. "Let's go and talk to Arthur," she said suddenly. "He needs cheering as much as you do."

The veranda of the casa went all the way around it. Arthur, when I had seen him, was leaning against the wall before the main door. Alicia and I walked around the outside.

"I didn't thank you for shooting down the hole in the flooring—" I be-

gan, then quickly snapped my hand to the pistol at my belt.

From inside the house had come a snarl! Before I could take another step, I heard a queer, gurgling gasp and a sickening crack. In a second I had bolted around the corner of the casa, rushing madly, my automatic in my hand. Arthur had been leaning against the wall near one of the windows. Now he was crumpling limply to the floor, while the curtains behind him were still fluttering where the arms that had broken his neck had been jerked back. I dashed through the door, absolutely desperate and utterly reckless. A dark form was bounding down the hall that led to the rear. A frightened cry came from the room in which Mrs. Braymore had been left. I ran down the passageway, furious and desperate, I heard a door slam shut—the door of the storeroom! I made for it, stumbled, and fell into the room on all fours.

Evan Graham was in the room, trying to stuff a furry something into an open box! As I sprawled on the floor, he whirled and saw me. From his lips issued the identical snarl I had heard five seconds before, and he raised his automatic pistol and fired!

CHAPTER IX.

THE GORILLA'S SCREAM.

I CAME slowly back to consciousness, feeling weak and giddy. I essayed to move and found I could not. I opened my eyes. Despite the gathering darkness, I discovered that I was seated in a chair in the large room of the casa. A second attempt to move disclosed the fact that I was tied tightly.

Alicia stared at me dumbly from an opposite chair, and Mrs. Braymore sat in one corner, her face white and set and her eyes full of horror. Evan was standing at his ease by the doorway, smoking with evident enjoyment.

In one of his hands he held a shaggy object that for some seconds held, weakly, my half-focused attention. It was a baglike object, that yet seemed to contain a framework. Not yet awake to full consciousness, I saw that it was strangely animal. It was a mask in the perfect, horrible likeness of a gorilla.

Evan turned and saw my eyes open. "Well, Murray, old top," he said amiably. "You caught me, didn't you?"

My throat was dry and parched, and my shoulder ached abominably. "What the devil?" I croaked weakly.

"Give him some water, Alicia," said Evan cheerfully. "He's thirsty."

Alicia gave me water. "He has my pistol," she whispered despairingly as she bent over me.

Full consciousness returned with a jerk. Evan had shot me. Evan had snarled at me as he fired. Evan—why Evan must have killed Arthur! He grinned approvingly as he saw me straighten in an instinctive effort to break my bonds.

"Ah, feeling better," he commented. "I'm sorry you caught me. I'd have liked to take you back to Ticao and hear you tell the tale of this week's work of ours. You always were a great one for telling tales, Murray."

He puffed luxuriously at his cigarette and looked at the gathering darkness outside.

"You're a connoisseur of tales, Murray, so I think I'll tell you one. I'm going off to get in touch with my natives in a little while, as soon as it's dark, but I've a few minutes to spare and might as well be pleasant during that little while. I'm afraid I'll have to be unpleasant later on, you know."

"I didn't know."

I have never found that losing one's head is an advantage under any circumstances, so I prepared to make an effort to keep mine. Evan waved his hand airily.

"Oh, I'm going to be put to the unpleasant necessity of disposing of you and Mrs. Braymore. No one could regret it more than I do, but the necessity is there. You see, I was the gorilla." He indicated the gorilla mask. "And it wouldn't do for you to tell that story about."

"I can believe it," I admitted. My head was spinning, but I tried to follow what he was saying in the hope of finding something therein to my own advantage.

"You understand, of course," said Evan cheerfully, "that I don't mean that I was the beast whose mate Arthur so inconsiderately shot, or the one who followed his caravan all the way here from the Kongo. That was another gorilla altogether. I simply happen to be the one that hung about the house here. Arthur shot the other one two weeks before you came. It got away, but he must have wounded it fatally. Otherwise it would have turned up long before. I'll admit that I was a little nervous about the animal at first, but I soon realized that it must be dead. I saw to it that Arthur was not similarly convinced, however. I had already made more or less of a plan. You know about my slaves?"

"No," I said rather weakly. I had lost a lot of blood.

"I'd knocked about the West Coast for quite a while before I came here." Evan stopped and drew up a chair. He sat down comfortably. "I had learned the secret of controlling natives. As you know, that secret is fear. I knew that if I could get, say, a village full of them thoroughly afraid of me, they would be to all practical purposes my slaves. Normal means of frightening them would have the disadvantage of not frightening them too much to invoke juju to get rid of me. And juju, invoked against a white man, means poison. The obvious solution was to

frighten them by means of the very juju they would use against me."

"Poison?" I asked. My head was spinning, but I tried not to show it.

"No." Evan puffed casually upon his cigarette. "Poison would be the result of the juju. I went at the fountain head. Kongo natives are deadly afraid of gorillas, but just a little way from gorilla country, the natives fear them vastly more than where familiarity has had time to breed, if not contempt, at least some measure of accustomedness. The natives here would be horribly afraid of them. I made my preparations accordingly. Having bribed his excellency the colonial governor, and having had this mask made and learned how to imitate to a fair degree of perfection the cries of the beasts, I came out here. Have you seen my mask?"

He held it out for me to see, even going so far as to strike a light so that I might examine the thing more closely. He held it before my eyes and turned it about. It was an amazingly perfect bit of work, perhaps larger than a normal skull of one of the beasts would be. For all their size, their skulls are comparatively small. It was lifelike to a surprising degree. The disgustingly human and yet unhuman ears stuck out against the skull. The jaw protruded in truly simian fashion, and the caked, black lips were drawn back from discolored fangs in a grimace of almost unimaginable ferocity. The broad, flat nostrils were distended in rage, and the eyeholes of the mask sank deep back below the low and beetle-headed forehead. If small, glittering eyes had shone evilly from those now blank holes, I would have been tempted to believe that a live beast was before me.

"Good work, isn't it?" asked Evan. "I came out here with my four overseers, wandered into the village, and metamorphosed myself before the villagers' eyes into a gorilla clad as a

man, which at one moment spoke with the voice of a man, ordering them to obey, and the next screamed at them in tones of one of the monstrous apes of which they were in such dread. I built myself this casa, demanded tribute of gums and produce, started a small juju house off in a small clearing, and in a couple of weeks had established myself as a deity, demanding to be worshiped and sacrificed to, exacting all sorts of tribute, and so on. Very profitable, I assure you.

"They soon believed that I could change myself into a gorilla at will and respected me immensely. I took care to throw a few scares into them. In Japan, some years ago, I learned a small and very elemental jujutsu trick which requires very little strength to break a man's neck. A few broken necks, a few snarls, a scream or so of rage, and they'd no more think of crossing my will than they'd think of jumping into the fires of hell."

"They attacked the house," I remarked, trying behind my back to wriggle one of my hands free from the bonds that held it fast.

"They'll suffer for that." Evan was smiling, but there was something in his tone that made me feel slightly cold. "They'll suffer for that. I told my juju priests to take the people off into the woods and keep them busy with a juju council until I had finished my business with you. They forced your boys to go with them. They simply got out of hand, that's all. The witch doctor you and Arthur shot was coming to tell me that they were out of control. If I had gone and appeared among them, wearing my gorilla mask, and snarled at them once, they would have been like lambs. I simply couldn't get away from you people without making you suspicious."

"But what was the object of it all?" I demanded. I had found it impossible to free even one hand.

"Arthur was my elder brother," said Evan amiably. "Consequently, being English, he had all the money in the family. I do not like West Africa. If I disposed of Arthur, I could go back to England and live with some comfort. I thought of shooting him and calling it an accident, but people would talk, you know. When he came here with his tale of being followed by a gorilla, I saw the possibilities. When I heard you people were coming up, I saw I would have witnesses. My idea was to convince you of the presence of a gorilla, break Arthur's neck precisely as I did this afternoon, and return to England. I rather thought I would be able to comfort Alicia, in time."

Alicia shuddered. Evan grinned at her.

"I shall comfort you, Alicia, but presently. My people will return, Murray and your estimable chaperon will be disposed of, and you and I will escape precariously to Ticao, telling the tale of hairbreadth escapes during the uprising of my natives and during the trip."

"Never!" said Alicia desperately.

"Oh, yes." Evan was polite, but there was evil determination in his tone. "You never cared much for Arthur, and I more than suspect you're in love with Murray. You'll do as I say for his sake."

There was mute interrogation in my expression.

"Not to save your life, of course, Murray," Evan hastened to assure me. "I really can't allow you to spread tales of what happened up here. She'll be pleasant to make sure that you depart this life, er—comfortably."

Alicia looked at me in despair.

Evan glanced out the window. "Not time for me to start off yet," he remarked. "They'll have to go down and worship me when I turn up in this little fixing." He indicated the gorilla-

head mask in his hand. "Is there anything that isn't clear to you?"

"I don't understand anything," I said.

"I'll begin at the beginning, in your own fashion. Let's see. Biheta. You remember you were here the night she was installed in the casa? One of my servants had been insolent. I sent word to the village that Biheta was to be sent here to take the other's place. She was frightened, and the juju ceremony you saw was for the purpose of heartening her for the time she would spend in proximity to my godlike person. When the other servants left, by my orders, she was too stupid to go with them. She was perpetually frightened, anyway. You see, she saw me dispose of the servant that had been insolent. Jujutsu is useful. I'll show you how to break a neck." He started to rise, then sank back in his chair. "Come to think of it, I need you to convince Alicia that she had better do as I tell her. You will depart this life tomorrow. As I was saying, Biheta stayed behind when she should have cleared out with the others. So, in the middle of the night, while on guard, I went into her room, wearing my mask. I made a noise, she woke, saw me—and that was the end of that. The photograph of the retina of her eye showed the face of this mask. Rather clever idea, don't you think?"

"Very," I admitted.

"Thanks." Evan smiled sarcastically. "Well, Arthur just imagined he heard the beast following him through the trees. He shot at nothing, when you and he went down to explore the village. My own 'encounter' with the animal when I started off in the jungle alone was purely imaginary. I scratched my own face and jabbered like the gorilla myself. Like this——"

He emitted a succession of incredible sounds, so beastlike and ferocious in their tones that I could hardly believe it was not an animal uttering

them. There was a peculiar echo from the bush outside.

"The dogs were excited in the store-room," Evan went on easily, "because they could smell the fur of the mask I kept in a small box in there. When I told that wild tale of a hairy arm reaching in at the window and dragging the dog out, to fling it with a broken neck into the courtyard, I need not say that I had done the killing. And my seeing the gorilla on the roof was more fiction. Of course he wasn't there at dawn. I was laughing in my sleeve at you people all night long, while we patrolled the courtyard. The silhouette of the gorilla's head you two saw on the window curtain was the shadow of your humble servant. I had decided that the play had gone far enough. The presence of the gorilla had been proved. The three of you, my present audience, would corroborate my story of the gorilla's having killed Arthur. I was on my way to break his neck. You nearly got me that time, and I had to kill the dog to get away. Then the natives got out of hand. I could have stopped them by a simple appearance, but you people would have missed me. I waited until they were near the house, then rushed out in my mask, snarling and raging at them, and they ran. After that I hid the mask quickly and pretended to you that I had been knocked down. It was really very simple. With the natives quieted for a few days, I simply carried out my plans to dispose of Arthur. I'm sorry I'll have to put you two out of the way, but Arthur's dead, I'm his heir, I'm going to marry Alicia and become a country gentleman in England, and I can't let you two people talk."

"You'll never dare take me to England," said Alicia, desperately white.

"You'll marry me, Alicia," said Evan coolly. "You won't split. When you see the preparations my natives will

make for the entertainment of Murray and Mrs. Braymore, you'll swear to anything, and you'll marry me when we get to Ticao. You'll corroborate my tales of a slave uprising, too. You don't know what can be done to Murray, and will be done before he dies, unless you do as I say."

Alicia moistened her lips. I saw her half close her eyes.

Evan laughed. "It's about time for me to call on my natives. This will be our wedding night, Alicia. One of the local witch doctors will marry us, and the ceremony will be repeated when we get to Ticao. Murray and Mrs. Braymore will be kept alive until tomorrow lest you refuse to go through with the ceremony. If you hesitate, I dare say I'll be able to make up your mind for you. Too bad I'll have to kill the other two, though." He strolled over to the door. "I'll call up my natives. You'll hear the gorilla again."

Derisively he opened his lips and from them issued a strange cry, that I had heard once before. It was the challenge of a bull ape to battle. And—good Heaven! *It was answered!*

There was a snarl behind him. He turned with a gasp. There on the veranda, leaping toward him, he saw, not a masquerading white man, posing as a jungle god, but a colossal gorilla in actuality, gnashing its teeth in rage, and with its huge, hairy arms outstretched.

I shall remember Evan's shriek when the beast seized him, to the end of my days. Sometimes, even now, I start up at midnight with the echo of it in my ears. For one instant the two figures were outlined against the fading light of the sky. Then the ferocious fangs buried themselves in Evan's throat and the beast leaped clumsily to the ground, bearing the still-struggling body in its immensely muscled arms.

We heard the sounds from the courtyard, sounds at whose meaning I do not wish to guess. And then our ears

rang with the horrible, incredible, terrifying scream of a gorilla that has made a kill.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE PADRE'S.

WE passed through the night somehow. Alicia, half dead with terror, managed clumsily to release me, but weak as I was from loss of blood, we dared attempt nothing that night.

In the morning the great ape was gone. I might as well say now that I believe that it was the same animal that had trailed Arthur, and which Arthur had gravely wounded some two weeks before our arrival.

For three weeks it had hidden while the wound healed, and then came cautiously toward the casa again. It heard Evan's first beastlike cries, and its response was probably the queer echo I had thought I heard from the bush. It crept forward, and when Evan derisively uttered the challenge cry of the monster anthropoids, it had leaped to the attack.

Limited as is the intelligence of the creatures, it would never distinguish between white men. A white man had killed its mate. It had killed a white man. With the blood lust sated, by now the shaggy brute was doubtless swinging rapidly through the treetops toward its Kongo hunting grounds.

That is my explanation. I know I never saw any other sign of the huge gorilla either then or at any later time. I have told the tale on different occasions to many different people, and my surmise has always been accepted as correct.

Our predicament was not entirely done away with by the disappearance of the gorilla that had come to our deliverance so unexpectedly. We were still a hundred and fifty miles from another white man or woman, absolutely without carriers, and I was abominably

weak from the wound Evan had inflicted. Our chances looked slight indeed until nearly noon of the next day.

A very much ashamed, and a very apologetic black figure emerged from the bush on the side farthest from the village. It was followed by about forty other similarly ashamed and apologetic figures. I recognized Mboka, my gun-bearer in the lead and had to struggle to restrain an impulse to jump up and shout aloud to Alicia that we were all right at last.

Instead, I sat impassively on the veranda until Mboka stopped humbly in the courtyard before me. I paid absolutely no attention, but smoked indifferently as if his presence or absence were a matter in which I had no concern. He waited and fidgeted, scraping his bare feet embarrassedly on the ground, until at last I looked down and inspected him impersonally. I looked away again. Presently, looking off through the bush as if he were the most insignificant atom in the universe, I remarked:

"Pig!"

Mboka beamed. It is the custom in West Africa for the lower in rank, the inferior, to speak first, but Mboka was too ashamed to presume. He stood there uneasily and tried to look apologetic while I informed him that he had put me to some inconvenience, that he was to go and never dare appear before me again. I added that I would see to it that no other trader ever dreamed of employing him for any purpose whatever.

It does not do for a white man to admit himself in any degree dependent on a black. I told him that he need never come to me again and resumed my stare into the bush. He may have had some idea of trying to bargain with me, but my attitude put him back. He hesitatingly and humbly told me what I already knew quite well, that he and

the others had been forced to accompany Evan's natives off into the bush.

One or two of the carriers had been swept away by the fervor of the juju council and had joined Evan's folk in their attack on us, but the others had now fled to put themselves under my protection. They begged that I would receive them again and assured me of their undivided loyalty, if I would take them again into my service.

I kept them waiting for an hour while I went indoors and ate a leisurely breakfast. When I came outside again, I seemed to have forgotten them. My indifference completed their subjugation. They were abject in their pleadings for me to take them back. When I finally consented, it was with the scornful statement that I was going to take them to Ticao and discharge them from my service forever.

They burdened themselves joyfully with the loads they had brought up from Ticao and waited anxiously for me to announce my readiness to start. Alicia and Mrs. Braymore would have to walk, as their ox-cart was useless. I began the journey on foot, but could not keep up. I was too weak.

The second day I had to be carried in an improvised hammock, and the third or fourth day I found myself in a raging fever. Alicia worked over me bravely, but I lapsed into semidelirious feverishness in which I was of no use whatever.

I must credit Mboka with a great deal more faithfulness than I had expected of him. He kept the carriers under an iron rule, and Alicia told me later that the length of the journeys was stretched to the greatest possible distance every day. With nothing but the scantiest of medicines—as my own drug chest had been accidentally left behind at Evan's deserted casa—she fought off the fever, but when we arrived at the Padre Silvestre's mission, I was in very bad shape. The padre

doctored me, however, and in two weeks I had not only ceased my delirium, but could move about a little. I remember the first evening I was allowed to sit up.

The padre, Alicia, and Mrs. Braymore had celebrated my recovery at dinner that night, the padre making one of his graceful little speeches on the subject. I am not of the padre's faith, but we are great friends, and after dinner he announced that I might sit up. With great ceremony they got me into a chair and made a great to-do over me. Then they helped me to a chair on the little screened-in veranda of the padre's house, where I could look out at the perfect African night and see the small mission church, and farther off the village in which the padre's converts live.

Mrs. Braymore went back indoors to discuss with him some aid she proposed to give the mission. She was an Episcopalian, but she had seen the work the padre had done, and a difference of creed had long since seemed unimportant. The main thing was that the natives needed aid. Alicia and I on the veranda talked for a long time, disjointedly.

"What will happen to Evan's plantation?" she asked presently, naming the place with reluctance.

"The natives will move away," I answered thoughtfully, "and a tradition will grow up, making the casa the abode of a devil-god who will destroy all comers. Slave caravans passing down the great slave trail will make offerings to appease the evil spirits in the house, and a juju house will appear, where the witch doctor will grow rich and fat on the contributions he will exact. The casa itself will stand untenanted and deserted, while tall grasses grow in the courtyard, and at last the house will fall in shapeless ruins."

"It was terrible there," said Alicia with a shudder. "And Evan—it is al-

most unbelievable that he should have done what he did. He was always a black sheep, but that——”

I was silent for a moment. “He was planning to force you to marry him,” I said presently. “Not thinking of how you might feel for Arthur.”

“Arthur was like a brother,” Alicia said sadly. “I was very, very fond of him. We were engaged, but we had nearly agreed that we did not care for each other enough to marry. I was very fond of him, though. I could not have cared for him more if he had really been my brother.”

The great white African moon was silvering the whole earth with its pale rays. From the village came negro voices, singing the native words to an old, old devotional melody. From within the house came the rustle of papers. The padre and Mrs. Braymore were going over the details of the small hospital she proposed to erect for the mission. The padre is an old man, and more than forty years of his life have been spent at his little mission station, trying to help the natives despite the Portuguese and the *servaçal* system. Now, at last, he was to have adequate equipment through Mrs. Braymore’s generosity.

She was going back to her beloved England, where she would go to her five-o’clock teas and discuss the neighborhood gossip and hear the curate talk about the possibility of repairing the parish house. I knew she was glad that she could again sink into the pleasant rut of well-to-do English country life. Alicia would go too, and I would see her no more. It suddenly seemed unbearable that she should leave me.

“I shall be leaving Ticao soon,” I said abruptly.

Alicia turned. Her face was grave and sweet in the half light.

“Why? I thought——”

“This is an evil country. White men denegate and black men are like beasts. I am sick of the place. I shall go back somewhere in the States and see what I can find to do there.”

“I’m glad you’re leaving Ticao,” she said slowly. “I should not like to think I would never see you again. We have grown to be very good friends.”

I waited a moment or so and then said quietly:

“When Evan was explaining to us after he had shot me, he said that he would force you to do as he said by threats of my death by torture. You remember?”

Alicia nodded silently.

“He said that he believed you cared a little for me. I have been hoping very much that he was right. I’m more or less of a ne’er-do-well, but if there’s any hope for me, I’ll try hard to change.”

I waited breathlessly for her to answer. She looked out at the moonlight for what seemed an age-long time. At last she turned again to me. I had a moment of panic, and then I saw that she was smiling.

“Why, Murray,” she said in a flash of mischief. “I may call on you to change after a while, but for the present, say for the next ten or twenty years, I think you’re perfectly all right as you are.”

I had not thought myself so strong, but when I saw her smiling at me with her face close to my own, my fever weakness left me and I reached out my arms. Alicia was quite considerate of me. She struggled only a very little.



The Ultimate Ingredient

~~Greye~~
La Spina



IT has always appeared plausible to me," observed Doctor Wilson thoughtfully, "that some day there may be discovered—perhaps entirely by accident—a combination of chemicals which will possess the property of raising the vibrations of the human body to such an extent that solid flesh will become invisible to the eye."

"That is a ridiculous supposition in my opinion," objected Burton Howe contemptuously, flicking the ash from his monogrammed cigarette.

"Not as ridiculous as you claim," cut in Philip Lindsay.

"How do you make that out?" laughed Howe, his eyebrows lifted incredulously.

"How? My dear fellow, between ourselves, I know of an actual case where just such a discovery was made."

Howe and the doctor laughed outright in unison. Lindsay looked at them more seriously than the occasion warranted in the doctor's opinion.

"Well, tell us about it," invited the latter, smiling quizzically.

"Do you remember the man I had so many years?" inquired Lindsay abruptly. "The nervous fellow? Of course you do! Well, that man had

reason to be nervous; he went through an experience once that was quite sufficient to unnerve any one permanently."

"I observed the chap particularly, I remember," said the doctor interestedly. He leaned forward in his chair. "Do you mean to tell me that he had a story?"

"That is just what I am trying to tell you," retorted Lindsay a bit impatiently. "You may remember what a nervous wreck he was. He would not remain alone in the dark under any circumstances; he jumped like a timid hare at the slightest rustle; he continually glanced behind himself, peered back of doors and draperies.

"In spite of his efficiency he got me keyed up to such a pitch that one night I fairly yelled at him to stop pawing the air as if he were warding off an invisible menace.

"'Confound you, Mallett, if you don't quit your nervous tricks we'll have to part. You're getting me to jumping, too!'

"He gave me a reproachful look.

"'I'm sorry I annoyed you, Mr. Lindsay,' said he. 'But my nerves are ruined. It's the effects of a ghastly experience I had several years ago. I

don't believe I'll ever recover from it entirely,' he finished mournfully.

"You fellows may understand that it interested me considerably to discover that Mallett had a story, for he had appeared such a colorless individual. I finally got him to tell me the story. I may as well tell it to you, for it is of a nature strange enough to be of considerable interest to lovers of the unusual.

"Mallett used to be secretary to old Ebenezer Starr, of Starr & Co. Mr. Starr had two motherless children, Paul, thirty, and Constance, twenty, at the time he died."

The doctor settled himself more comfortably in his armchair. Howe lit another cigarette and leaned his elbows on the table, his eyes on Lindsay.

"Go on!" he commanded. "Let's have the story!"

Lindsay's Story.

PAUL STARR seemed an estimable young man, devoted to chemical research. He frequently worked into the small hours in his laboratory, following out some obscure experiment. He utilized the willing and interested Mallett as an assistant, and many were the strange and eccentric experiments the young chemist made. Up to a certain point he had the complete confidence of the secretary, who was doubly devoted to his service because he adored the young mistress of the house hopelessly. Finally, however, Paul began to dabble in the forbidden arts; his requirements grew more and more exacting, until Mallett found it incumbent upon himself to refuse further assistance in experiments which bore the stamp of demonism and witchcraft.

Mallett had permitted himself to be hypnotized on several occasions by his young master, who—as unscrupulous as he was learned and clever—now took advantage of the weakness of will which frequent submission had brought

about on Mallett's part. The unfortunate secretary awoke one day from a trance to find that he had written in his own handwriting a document purporting to be a confession of a crime so heinous that he shuddered at the remembrance of it when he told me his story. Shocked and horrified beyond measure, Mallett inquired falteringly what this meant.

"Mallett," Paul said unconcernedly, "it is necessary for my experiments that I have some one attached to me so irrevocably as to carry out whatever directions he may receive, no matter what the cost to him. I assure you, my good Mallett, that I have no intention of injuring you, unless you attempt to deceive me or refuse to aid me in my work. But if such an occasion arises I shall feel obliged to put your confession into the hands of the proper authorities, and I regret to state that they will find full circumstantial evidence of its truth, since to have been confessed, a crime must have been committed." He smiled at Mallett with a significance that made the unfortunate secretary's blood run cold.

From that time Mallett became a weak, terrified tool in the unscrupulous hands of Paul Starr. No matter how strange or how unusual were the young man's wishes, the secretary was compelled to carry them out. Finally the experiments arrived at a stage where they required careful, undisturbed attention and an absence of the constant jarring that is not to be avoided in a city house. The chemist decided that he would carry them to a conclusion in a more secluded spot than could be afforded by the laboratory he maintained in his residence, where his sister was continually disturbing him and the servants constantly intruded.

Young Starr owned a hunting lodge in the woods of Maine. He made arrangements to fit up this bungalow for the conclusion of his work. The place

was situated twelve miles from the railroad station and the village was fourteen miles away. One had to make one's way by wagon over a primitive country road to reach it. An automobile would have been racked to pieces after a single trip over that road; only a bicycle or a rude country wagon could make the trip. From the road a narrow path branched off through the woods to the lodge.

Mallett was an indifferent cook, but Paul would take no one else with him in his retirement. Large supplies of canned food and of chemicals were transported to the lodge, and arrangements made for Mallett to make a weekly trip to the station for other necessities, small quantities of which he could carry in a wire basket attached to the handlebars of his bicycle. Mail was held for these weekly trips, as the place was out of the way of the rural mail delivery.

After arriving at the lonely lodge, Paul began to shut himself up for days at a stretch in the room which he had equipped as a laboratory, only opening the door to admit Mallett with meals. He ate, slept, worked with the enthusiasm of a man completely under the domination of an absorbing idea. Once or twice, when something had to be watched continuously for a longer time than he could remain awake, he called upon Mallett, while he snatched a few moments of sleep.

Weekly Mallett went to the station for letters. There were always more than one in the handwriting of the young lady. Mallett knew that his master had written no one since his arrival at the lodge. He therefore took the liberty of sending her a short, respectful note, informing her of her brother's preoccupation with his work. Paul Starr laughed shortly when Mallett told him of this bit of thoughtfulness.

"You may be a fool, Mallett," said he scornfully, "but even a fool has his

uses. And you will shortly be of great use to me, as you shall see. It may interest you to learn that my sister has written me of her engagement to our next-door neighbor—Jack Allison, the pigeon fancier," and he curled his lips with a sneer, while his sharp eyes seemed to probe the other man's heart.

Mallett soon found that he was destined to be useful indeed to his master. He was summoned one day to the laboratory to assist in an experiment. Paul wore a clumsy bandage around his left wrist; through it the blood had seeped, and there was blood on the table and the floor. The secretary gave an alarmed exclamation.

"You have injured yourself!" he cried.

"It was intentional," replied the other shortly. "I've taken all I dared from my own veins, as you may observe. Now I'll thank you to give me a little of your blood."

So commanding was his manner as he made this astounding demand, so little did it brook of contradiction, that the dazed assistant mechanically held out his arm and permitted the enthusiastic inquisitor to open a vein and help himself to sufficient blood to continue the experiment, whatever it was. It was not until afterward that the wretched man realized how completely he had fallen under the hypnotic influence of his unscrupulous master. But worse was yet to follow.

A couple of days after this experience Mallett knocked at the laboratory door as usual and it swung open before him as though by invisible hands. He walked in after a moment's hesitation, put the breakfast tray on the table where his master usually ate, and then turned to inquire if there were any special orders for the day. To his vast astonishment there was no one in the room with him.

In spite of the testimony of his eyes, something gave him to understand defi-

nitely that he was not alone. He saw no one; he heard nothing. There was no hiding place for an intruder in that room, bare except for the shelves and the experiment tables. Yet that there was some one else in the laboratory Mallett was absolutely convinced.

His hair slowly rose on his scalp with a pricking sensation as he realized that he had to deal with a something unearthly, a something uncanny and strange, in close contact with himself. He felt hands that touched his shoulders from behind. He whirled around, his breath almost quitting his body with the awful horror and fear of he knew not what, and he saw that there was nothing behind him. But when he had turned abruptly he felt that he had brushed against something palpable that retarded his movement, just as might have been done by another human body. He could not bear the awfulness of his sensations. With hands stretched fearfully before him he fled from that haunted room and out of the house. Mechanically he followed his impulse to escape by mounting the bicycle and starting down the path that led to the main road.

Why he fled he could not have explained, for he knew that somewhere inside the lodge was Paul Starr. But he felt that he was fleeing from something menacing, something unutterably frightful. He pedaled with all possible speed. He had begun to recover in a measure from his unreasoning fear when he heard a bicycle bell behind him; he turned to look.

Horror upon horror! The other bicycle sometimes ridden by his master was pedaling down the path behind him, apparently of its own volition. It swayed from side to side as though the invisible rider were in haste. Whatever the Unknown Thing was, it was undoubtedly pursuing Mallett. As it approached, the poor secretary's brain began to whirl; he could bear no more;

he felt his consciousness leaving him, and with a wild and terrible cry he fell from his wheel to the ground.

When he came to himself again he was lying on his bed in the lodge. Evidence that he had not dreamed he found on a sheet of paper lying on the table beside the bed. The writing was in his master's hand, and ran much as follows:

My good Mallett, you should really know better than to try giving me the slip. As you must now realize, it is futile for you to attempt an escape. As I don't wish you to be alarmed needlessly, however, I will explain that in the course of my experiments I have compounded a salve which makes the user invisible. I have discovered a combination of chemical substances that produces a higher rate of vibration in the atoms of the human body, thus making them swing farther apart in their motion, which results in the body becoming invisible, just as by applying heat to certain substances they become invisible gases. Unfortunately, in raising the rate of vibration in this way, I find that the vibrations of the vocal chords have been accelerated to such an extent that they can make no impression upon the etheric waves that will be reproduced upon the tympanum of the human ear. I am unable to make my voice heard, although I can make a noise by moving articles about me. In future, until I shall have solved the *immediate* problem before me, of compounding a salve that will restore me to my original state of vibration, I will write out your orders daily. Don't, I beg of you, distinguish yourself by another piece of idiocy such as this morning's; with the sole exception that you cannot hear or see me, I am quite the same as yesterday.

To claim that the secretary was entirely reassured by this astounding document would be taking too much for granted. On the contrary, he began to fear that either he or his master had gone quite mad. Warned by his vain attempt at flight, he did his best to accept the situation, putting his mind on his daily tasks without pondering too much over the wild statements in the letter. He did debate much over the wisdom of notifying Miss Starr of her brother's strange discovery, but even had he written to her he could not have

stolen away for the trip to the station without discovery.

So each day Mallett carried Paul's meals to the laboratory door, controlling as best he could his shrinking repulsion for the strange and unhallowed conditions he felt prevailed within that mysterious room. Each day he watched the door swing open by hands unseen that he might place the tray on the table within. On one occasion those unseen hands took the tray from him, causing him to jump with an uncontrollable cry backward out of the room.

Even with the passing of weeks he could not accustom himself to that silent, ominous presence. He found himself dwelling with terror upon the memory of the last demand the bold experimenter had made upon him, and imagination ran riot over the possibilities of future demands. Every night the poor trembling secretary implored Providence to spare him from the untold horrors that he felt were slowly developing around him, and every morning he braced himself anew to face that gruesome ordeal of the laboratory with its invisible inmate.

His nerves went back on him to such an extent that he developed habits which were to cling to him the rest of his life. He never knew when that invisible presence would be near him; when a hand would reach out of the luminous daylight invisibly to touch him as he worked about the house or walked about the grounds. His life became a living agony, filled with the most terrible apprehensions, the more dreadful because he knew not what he had to fear. At last these intangible misgivings were justified.

A letter addressed to him lay on the laboratory table one morning when he went in with the breakfast tray. He was to present himself in the afternoon for a repetition of the blood-letting operation. His terror was extreme. Who knew how much of the precious fluid

would be required of him? How long would this slow draining of his lifeblood last? Would he ever see the outside world again?

He realized with poignant despair that the recent development of Paul Starr's character left him no grounds for hope; he knew intuitively that he would be sacrificed in the interests of Paul's experiments as pitilessly as a dog is sacrificed by the vivisectionist. He spent the remainder of the morning locked in his room, on his knees, in a mental condition that was most unenviable. His powers of resistance had become so atrophied that he did not even contemplate a dash for freedom. The hours flew. The appointed moment arrived when he must make another unwilling sacrifice on the altar of his master's insatiable Baal.

He entered the laboratory with dragging feet and thudding heartbeats that shook him with their violence. Invisible hands took him by the hand. Again the vein was opened and a quantity of blood drawn into a vessel held by an invisible hand.

Fainting with weakness, loathing his cowardliness, and hating with all his soul the man who dared rob him in this unparalleled manner, the poor fellow permitted the unseen hands to bind up his wrist. As he staggered from the room a paper was thrust into his hand.

He gained his room and sank upon his bed, weeping tears of silent, impotent outrage and humiliation. It seemed to him that he had fallen to the lowest depths of degradation. For a man to give up without a good fight his very lifeblood to a phantom—it seemed as though he could die with shame.

At last he opened the paper to see what fresh trouble was brewing. It was as he had dreaded. The chemist wrote that if the blood already drawn did not suffice he would need yet more from "his good Mallett."

The wretched man lay weakly on his bed, vainly praying for deliverance. With the afternoon came the clear voice of a young woman halloing outside the bungalow. And the voice was the voice of Constance Starr.

He walked to the window and leaned out. He wanted to warn her not to enter the accursed and fatal house. She did not see him. And then hands were laid on Mallett's shoulders; he felt himself being propelled toward the door. He knew, as though he had been directed in so many words, just what he was expected to do. He was to open to the young lady and he was to give no sign or warning that would frighten her away. He cried out from the depths of his heart: "No! No! I cannot!" The pressure of those terrible hands on his shoulders urged him forward; in the very touch there was a threat. He weakened, and gave in.

She stood on the low porch, a traveling bag at her feet, in her right hand a wooden cage in which cooed four pigeons.

"Letter carriers," she explained smilingly as she turned it for him to look in. "Mallett, what is the matter with my brother? He has not written for weeks. I've been awfully anxious about him. I thought I would just run down to see how he was getting along with his mysterious experiments."

The secretary incoherently explained that his master was engaged on some work behind locked doors, and that the experiment would undoubtedly be completed by the following day, when she could see him for herself. With all his heart he hoped his words would be true prophets.

Constance caught a glimpse of the poor fellow's face. It was drawn and absolutely colorless.

"Why, Mallett, you look as if you hadn't a drop of blood in you!" she exclaimed in amazement. "Your face is terribly white. Have you been ill?"

Again the secretary was forced to dissemble. His brain was whirling with his enforced blood-letting. He felt that he must get away to think in quiet; otherwise he knew he could not cope with this new condition. He dared not surmise just what the young lady's dramatic entrance might mean at this critical juncture, but he still had hopes that Paul had been able to complete the experiment successfully and that further sacrifices would be unnecessary.

Directly after supper Constance retired to her room, and while it was yet light wrote a little note to her betrothed. She fastened it to one of the carrier pigeons, which she took to the window and sent on its way. As she sat fondling the other three birds her door opened softly and an envelope whirled through the air, to alight on the table before her. The door closed again with suspicious caution. Mallett had received his orders to lock her in, and with a vague feeling that in so doing he was safeguarding her he tried to slip the key into his pocket, but no sooner had he started back to his room than the invisible horror was upon him, and he felt the unseen hand searching his pocket and abstracting the key. The omnipresent had guessed at his wish to help Constance.

Mallett fell on his knees outside her door. He dared not speak. His agony of mind was intense. But he felt that his presence near her might help when the blow fell, for that there was a blow to be dealt he now felt intuitively.

He heard the young lady strike a match and light the lamp. Then there was a short silence, followed by her exclamation.

"Impossible!" she cried. "Why, he has gone absolutely mad! My poor brother! This is what comes of brooding too long over forbidden mysteries."

She paced the room restlessly. The man lying outside her door felt the rustle of the letter as she picked it up

to reread it. She threw it down upon the table, apparently in a sudden rush of unreasoning terror, and ran to the door, rattling the handle with a cry that rang with growing fear and dismay.

"Mallett, Mallett!" she cried desperately, and began to beat upon the panels of the door.

A restraining hand made itself felt upon Mallett's bowed shoulder and he dared not reply. The hand was removed, but the poor wretch lay on the floor beside the young girl's door, sobbing softly in his helpless weakness, his hands stretched out before him as if to implore silently her forgiveness.

All night he lay there. All night he heard the poor girl pacing back and forth. He dared not speak for fear of attracting the attention of Paul Starr. But he decided to make a last attempt to communicate with Constance. He got up quietly, went to his room, and wrote her a few hasty lines, begging her to dispatch another pigeon at once, as the situation was critical. He asked her to do it immediately, before her brother was up, for a sight of the liberated bird might hasten designs that were odious to consider. This note he slipped under her door, tapping cautiously to attract her attention.

After a moment the note was withdrawn from under the door. There was a moment's pause, then another letter was pushed out to him. It was Paul's letter of the night before.

"I will do what you suggest at once," she said very low and guardedly. "I have been too confused to think of it myself. Thank you, Mallett."

Mallett hid the letter under his coat, returned to his room, locked himself in, and read it.

I have seen the letter myself. Mallett slipped it back into his pocket after reading it, so that it was preserved for record in this narrative. Here follows

that unutterably selfish and astounding document:

MY DEAR CONSTANCE: I have at last discovered, in the course of my experiments, a compound that, used as a salve, will render the user invisible to ordinary rays of light. This may seem strange to you, but it is a very simple matter to understand for one who has studied even superficially ether vibration as a carrier of light. Unfortunately, I have not as yet been able to find the exact combination of chemicals that will restore the user to visibility again. I used all I dared of my own blood in my first experiment, but I need other blood for the anti-compound; and Mallett's blood has not done what I expected of it. I need blood from a young and healthy woman and I need it in large quantities. I am sure you, my dear sister, will hasten to offer yourself to science, as it will mean the establishment of one of the most epoch-making discoveries in the world's history. I shall not take *all* your blood immediately; only what I need now to restore myself to visibility, for I labor under a disadvantage inasmuch as my vibrations are now raised to a point where I cannot make my vocal organs start ether waves of sufficient force to vibrate upon the tympanum of others in a different state of vibration. As soon as I have returned to visibility, I will gladly accept the balance of the blood your fine young body can offer me, so that I may make up a sufficient quantity of the compound to serve my purposes for some time to come. You can therefore plan for two more days of life. I need only remind you that in case you should be so selfish and unreasonable as to refuse to offer such a trifling sacrifice on the altar of science, I shall be obliged to take from you by force what you refuse to yield of your own free will. This I trust I shall not be obliged to do. I infinitely prefer that you offer yourself freely.

PAUL.

"Monstrous!" cried the secretary aloud. His blood—what there was left of it, poor fellow—ran cold in his veins. The sacrifice of that beautiful, vital, young creature by a madman was too dreadful to contemplate. He hoped the pigeon was on its way!

He moved to the window, and leaned out to get a good look at her adjoining one. As he watched he saw Constance's hand emerge, and a pigeon stepped mincingly from it to the window ledge

and began to strut there, arching its neck.

"Go, go!" he whispered with hoarse impatience.

The pigeon's pride proved its downfall. A shot rang out, and the poor bird fell, scarlet-breasted, to the ground below. Mallett saw the letter being disengaged from the bleeding body, opened by invisible hands. He knew unseen eyes were scanning that frantic call for help. The little paper fluttered to the ground.

Then came a sound of hurrying feet, the sound of a key in the lock of Constance's door, which sprang open under the impetus of an invisible body that flung itself furiously into the young lady's room.

The secretary unlocked his door and ran toward the other room. Before his eyes the plucky girl was struggling with an unseen something that held high a pigeon, wringing its neck ruthlessly, while under the shower of crimson drops fluttered in terror the last bird, its plumage all flecked with its companion's blood.

"How can you kill that innocent thing?" cried Constance, her indignation getting the better of her fear. "Let it go, I tell you."

She tried to protect the last pigeon, beating against the invisible intruder with puny fists. The window closed down suddenly with force; the bird could not issue there. Constance caught up her hairbrush from the dressing table and flung it with all her nervous force against the pane. With the crash and the tinkle of falling glass she laughed triumphantly, for the pigeon, seeing the way clear to liberty, darted like an arrow out of the broken window, and in a moment disappeared among the trees.

Miss Starr's triumph was short-lived. Mallett saw her caught up from the floor. Struggling and calling to him for help, she was borne past him down

the hall. The fury of the exodus convinced the secretary that his master was in no mind to wait for a calmer moment to continue his experiment; he undoubtedly intended to make sure of the ultimate ingredient before further complications ensued. With an access of nervous strength, Mallett sprang after them and clutched the air in a vain attempt to seize the madman by the throat. He missed and fell heavily to the floor. Without pausing, the invisible Paul carried the poor girl, shrieking, into the laboratory, and the door closed behind the pair. Mallett, picking himself dizzily from the floor, heard the key turning in the lock.

There was a short and furious struggle within, Constance's screams ringing out wildly, until there came the sound of a blow or a fall, and her voice dying away in a choked-off moan, then silence.

Mallett, wringing his hands in despair, stood outside the terrible door that had closed upon that innocent victim to Paul Starr's mad projects. After a few moments that seemed hours to him the door suddenly opened, a sheet of paper, which he took mechanically, was extended. The door closed again with ominous grinding of the key.

The secretary read the paper. It contained directions for him to meet the two o'clock train that afternoon and to bring back a box of chemicals that were absolutely essential for the prosecution of the experiment. Hope sprang up in Mallett's heart. Perhaps the young lady would be safe for a few hours at least. And what might not happen in those hours of respite from the dread sentence? He began planning wildly all manner of schemes for her rescue. In spite of the warning to remember the confession which had held him for so long, Mallett took courage from the very desperateness of the situation, and made up his mind to risk all in an attempt to save his adored young mistress.

He could hardly contain his impatience for the afternoon to come, that he might get out his bicycle and go, ostensibly to the station, actually to seek help in the village. When he found himself finally on his way, it seemed too good to be true, and he almost felt that the whole happening had been a terrifying nightmare. Three miles out on the main road, he saw an automobile coming toward him at a speed that was reckless, considering the condition of the road. As he neared it he waved one hand to stop the driver. Then he gave a cry of relief and joy; the driver was Jack Allison, Constance's betrothed husband.

The situation needed but few words to make it clear. The face of the young lover grew whiter and sterner as he listened. He pulled Mallett's bicycle upon the running board, and they went rocking and plunging along the road to the side path that led through the dense woods to the hunting lodge. As they rode, Allison expressed his fear that Paul had sent Mallett to the station merely to get him out of the way. He related the feeling of premonition he had had when he received Constance's first letter. Then the blood-spattered pigeon arrived which bore no message. This was sufficient for the lover; he was on his way within the half hour, at breakneck speed, to rescue or avenge the girl he loved.

Leaving the automobile at the edge of the woods, the two men plunged down the path, fear lending wings to their feet. They burst out of the woods into the clearing and ran across to the lodge. They went down the hall to the laboratory door. It was wide open! Paul had not expected intrusion.

Stretched out upon an operating table lay Constance, gagged. Her hands and feet had been secured to the table legs. One hand—they could see it as they stood for an instant in the doorway—was covered with blood, and blood was

running from an open vein in the wrist into a test tube held under it by invisible hands. She turned her head toward them with an agony of appeal in her eyes that fell upon their blanched faces.

Allison leaped toward her, his eyes aflame, his face ashen. He came in contact with something as he neared her, something that pushed him aside roughly, following up the push with a sudden blow. He staggered under the unexpected attack, and his hand sought his pocket instinctively. A revolver fell clattering upon the floor. But he did not stop to recover it; of what use was a revolver against an invisible foe? He had seen a knife lying on a stand near by, and with a quick motion he possessed himself of it, and in another moment Constance was freed from her bonds. Allison flung the knife to one side to help her to her feet. She stood sobbing dreadfully, leaning half on him and half on the table, for she was weak with loss of blood. He tied his handkerchief about her wrist, and would have gotten her at once from the room, but she seemed unable to stir, so weak was she from her fearful experience.

In the doorway, Mallett picked up the revolver warily and held it behind him stealthily. He believed his action had gone unnoted, for the invisible experimenter had carried the test tube across the room with a haste which showed that he did not care to be disturbed at this critical point. The secretary watched the visible manifestations of that invisible force, while Jack Allison freed his sweetheart from the cords that had bound her.

Mallett saw the blood poured into a vessel partly filled with liquid which bubbled over a bunsen burner. He saw a wad of absorbent cotton lifted from the table and dipped lightly into the boiling liquid, squeezed out into a dish to cool it, and then—the cotton began to make circular sweeps in the air,

From behind it there emerged a face, a horrible, rage-distorted countenance with furious eyes and bared, gnashing teeth. The cotton was flung aside. Mallett, staring, fascinated, as though hypnotized, realized that Paul Starr had successfully completed his experiment. He had found the ultimate ingredient that could restore his body to its normal rate of vibration. His face and hands, having come into contact with the anti-invisible mixture, developed as it were from the air; they floated as though supported by their own buoyancy; then they turned, those burning eyes, in the direction of the drooping girl and her lover.

Paul Starr flung himself across the room at the couple standing there. He gave vent to hoarse cries of savage fury as he went. His face, all stained with his sister's blood, leered at young Allison, who turned to protect Constance, warned by her weak cry of horror at the sight of her brother's face.

That face and those hands, that seemed to float in the air, now flung themselves at Allison with a raging strength tenfold that of an ordinary man. Allison was forced backward, for added to the impetus of the sudden attack was the contracting horror and loathing his heart felt at that frightful sight. He was obliged to battle with a something which fought with a savagery hard to resist, a something he could not see, against whose attacks he could not protect himself. And while he fought, that horrible leering face, ugly with its crazed fury, pressed itself upon him out of the air, and the two bloodstained hands caught at him and tore at him, those terrible hands that came out of nothingness.

Weak and trembling, with foreboding clutching at her fluttering heart, Constance leaned against the wall, to which she had shrunk to make place for the terrific struggle going on before her wide-opened, agonized eyes.

In the doorway the secretary watched silently, tensely, Allison's revolver hidden behind him.

Back and forth the man and the horror swung and balanced, fell, and rose to fall again. Paul's hoarse exclamations burst out spasmodically as he dealt blow upon blow to his opponent.

"Miserable fool! Wretched bird breeder! Do you think I can be balked by you? We shall see whether your interference will do you any good—or her, either!"

Now they swayed down the room, locked in a mutual embrace of fierce and desperate hatred. They fell against the table that held the vessel with its unholy contents. Jarred by the shock, it fell, staining the floor crimson in all directions. The bunsen burner was upset as well, and the issuing flame began to lick the surface of the table, seizing upon the chemicals spread over it.

Paul gave a wild cry of outraged desperation as he saw the fate of his precious mixture. With a tremendous effort he threw Allison upon the floor, and with both hands at the young man's throat he bent his whole weight and strength in a last attempt to beat his Nemesis.

Constance shrieked.

The only calm person was the secretary. He came close up behind the writhing figures on the floor. He pulled the revolver from behind him, pointed it at the head that seemed floating there in the air above the prostrate Allison, and pulled the trigger. There was a loud report, followed by ghastly silence.

Constance staggered toward the combatants, catching at tables and wall to support herself. Mallett dropped the smoking revolver as though it burned his hand. The horrible head wavered a moment in mid-air, then slowly described an arc that finished on the floor almost at the secretary's feet.

From Allison, in answer to Constance's, "Jack, Jack, are you hurt?"

came a long, painful, gasping breath as he drew the air slowly into his tortured lungs. He put his hand uncertainly to his throat, drawing himself to a sitting posture and looking about him dazedly.

On the floor lay Paul Starr, or what they could see of him. His head was steeped in his own blood, as well as in that of his sister. Mallett's timely shot had put an end for all time to the experiments of the unscrupulous, ambitious chemist. His eyes were open yet; although he could not speak, the light of such a triumph shone in his terrible smile that Allison was filled with fresh apprehension. He looked hastily behind him, and realized their imminent danger.

The flame of the bunsen burner had

ignited the chemicals, and the blaze had made headway that in their preoccupation they had not noticed. If they wished to escape with their lives they would have to be quick. Allison put his arm about Constance, and the two, lovers, mutually helping, swayed from the room. Mallett stood looking at the Thing on the floor. If he tried to pull it out he himself would beyond all doubt be caught in the swiftly advancing flames. The secretary shrank away in horror and dread, and fled while there was yet time.

And not a moment too soon. Hardly had the three gained the open when a loud explosion thundered on their ears, followed by a series of smaller ones. Paul Starr and his unhallowed secret had disappeared together in the flames.



CONCERNING THE PITHECANTHROPUS ERECTUS

By W. B. Horner

THERE in a primal forest lair, astride an ancient bough,
In melancholy frame of mind he sat and wondered how
To curse with greater gusto and relieve his feelings some,
For Mr. Pithecanthropus was feeling rather glum.

The banyan crop had failed that year; his wife had gone away
With an ugly, big orang-utan from over at Bombay.
She wouldn't crack his coconuts or comb his back for fleas;
And so this anthropoidal heart was sorely ill at ease.

He wasn't a philosopher; his half-soul couldn't know
That joy is only inverse grief, and pleasure, painted woe.
So through the torrid tropic day and in the tropic night,
He nursed his aching feelings and bewailed his weepful plight.

But suddenly a mighty thought exploded in his gray;
So he broke him off a crooked limb and started for Bombay.
And the evolution processes advanced a mighty step
When your ancestor discovered that all he lacked was *Pep!*



Management

Strategic Development

As a result of the merger, the two companies will combine their respective "brands" under one umbrella. The combined firm will be 50 percent owned by each company. Management will be split evenly between the two companies. The combined firm will have a total of 100,000 employees, with 50,000 from each company. The combined firm will have a total of \$1 billion in assets, with \$500 million from each company.

Several issues will need to be resolved before the merger can be completed. These include: (1) the division of assets, (2) the division of liabilities, (3) the division of employees, (4) the division of management, and (5) the division of brand names.

The first issue to be resolved is the division of assets.

I would recommend that the assets be divided equally between the two companies.

The second issue to be resolved is the division of liabilities. I would recommend that the liabilities be divided equally between the two companies. The third issue to be resolved is the division of employees. I would recommend that the employees be divided equally between the two companies. The fourth issue to be resolved is the division of management. I would recommend that the management be divided equally between the two companies. The fifth issue to be resolved is the division of brand names. I would recommend that the brand names be divided equally between the two companies.

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Gosset,' Delgrazas told me. 'The rebels are immune to bullets; it is impossible to kill them!'

"'Nonsense!' I replied. 'Your men ain't shooting straight.'

"'No, no, it is not that,' he answered, excited. 'Our brave men have crept right upon them, and shot at twenty paces, and they have but smiled. Our people are becoming panic-stricken. Palo Lomas will be in their hands in one more week.'

"'Quit your kidding, excellency,' I replied. 'Give me them two Maxims, and I'll spoil this Emancipation Day percession.'

"He gave me the Maxims, and I put them, with twenty men to work them, on the little narrow-gauge railroad, and ran up to the Guilas River, where the government army was, under General Regeras. The general told me right off that I couldn't do any good. He gave me a gloomy tale of having been forced back three or four miles every day by Tamasca and his thousand bullet-proof negroes, and claimed he was plumb near wore out and crazy with the strain of it. He said his men were beginning to desert; they weren't any too strong-minded to start with, and being beaten steadily by men that didn't mind bullets any more than cream puffs was causing them to cross themselves and mumble, and then sneak off into the bush.

He ended by solemnly telling me that he believed that Tamasca's men ate the bullets. Upon that assertion I casually reminded him that the nature of my first name necessitated having ocular demonstration in all things, especially in seeing banana-plantation colored gents eat up high-power, low-trajectory, steel bullets.

"'We'll stay right in this camp,' I told him. 'And in the morning, there will be a stop to this foolishness.'

"It seemed that it was getting to be such a snap for Tamasca that he had a

regular time for making his attack—every morning about daybreak, that being the coolest time. He would drive General Regeras back three or four miles nearer the capital, and then rest up for the next morning.

"We were in a pretty good position—at the top of a small ridge, with slopes that were clear of any growth—making it necessary for Tamasca's men to climb six hundred yards in the open before they reached us. I had the men throw up some low earthworks during the night, and stationed the Maxims in the center of the line of defense, about forty feet apart, and loaded, ready to spit out four hundred and fifty steel-nosed bullets a minute.

"Next morning, as the dawn flashed up all of a sudden, like it does down there, and before we had time to boil our coffee and fry *tortillas*, Tamasca's men came out of the jungle at the base of the slope, in a long, black line, and began to advance up the hill, popping away with their Krag-Jorgensens. Our men returned the regards, and, when the rebels got within a range of four hundred yards, I let loose with the Maxims. It ain't ping-pong nor Kelly pool to walk calmly up a hill with them two automatics talking right into your face, but them smokes did it; easy and steady, and dropping our men by twos and threes, while nary a one of their own so much as missed a step.

"It was sure creepy. Regeras' men cut and run, gathering up such of the baggage as they could, and, about two seconds later, my own men suddenly grabbed the hand ropes, and, pulling the guns with them, followed suit. I couldn't blame them, and didn't blame myself for taking up a position as rear guard shortly after.

"Tamasca didn't chase us very hard. He knew that he had our goat, and could do the same thing the next morning, so he thought he might as well make the trip to the capital in easy

stages. His men stopped after they got into our camp, and began eating our breakfast. Me and the rest of the government forces went three sweating miles before we stopped. General Regeras pulled up near the same spot that I did.

"'You have seen, Señor Gosset!' he panted. 'With your own eyes beheld it! It is supernatural.'

"'I have beheld,' I answered, 'but it ain't supernatural. Before Tamasca takes his to-morrow morning's constitutional, I'll solve this little sleight-of-hand performance he is pulling off on us, or go back to Pike County and settle down on a duck ranch.'

"I rested up all that day, and at dusk that evening took Iago, the quickest-headed of my gun boys, and struck out in the direction of Tamasca's camp. The glow in the sky from their fires guided us, and we trailed through yucca palms and jungle for an hour and a half.

"We came upon the camp from the rear, where the jungle reached right up to it, and we hid in it close enough to see the men moving around the camp fires. The men were mostly playing cards or just lolling around. Some of them were leisurely taking little walks, and not caring how far from camp they went.

"'We'll get one of them careless pedestrians in a minute,' I said to Iago.

"We watched close, but all of them turned back before they reached the palms where we were hiding. Directly, however, a tall, lank man—a white man—came strolling on and on and right up past us. Before he could turn around Iago had his hand over his mouth, and I had my arm choking his neck. I took his revolver away from him, and we hustled him back to headquarters.

"In the lantern light in General Regeras' tent, where we sat him down, I saw that he was a down-East Yankee—lean, shrewd-looking, and tight-

mouthed. He was the kind of a prisoner that looks best tied, so I took a piece of packing rope and decorated him.

"I was fumbling around his legs when I noticed that he was the hardest-feeling man I'd ever touched. I pinched his left calf to investigate. It was like trying to pinch a tight-pumped automobile tire. He looked down at me and smiled, a pitying, sour smile.

"'Don't hurt your fingers, brother,' he sneered. 'You look like a strong man, but I reckon you can't squeeze steel.'

"'Steel!' says I.

"'Yes,' says he, like a big boy teasing a little one; 'one-sixteenth of an inch of Sanker's amaratite steel. I'm Hezekiah Sanker, and I'm covered with it; so is every man back yonder in the camp. Feel my face.'

"I did. It was hard as stone on the surface, but flexible, like chain armor, only more so.

"'The only way to get a bullet into me,' he went on, 'would be to pop it down my throat, when my mouth was open. Otherwise I'm hog tight, and bull strong. I devised this little article of flexible steel coating up in my laboratory in Bridgeport, Connecticut, about three weeks ago. We are pretty smart people up there in Connecticut; about the smartest in the whole United States, I reckon. I had considerable trouble getting an alloy that would adhere to the human skin without harming it, and be flexible enough to allow you to move around in it like a union suit; but Sanker's amaratite steel does it, and it's slightly porous, too. Lets your skin breathe freely. I'll be the richest man in the world when I get the nations of the league bidding for the right to coat their armies with it. I am just trying it out down here; I've got a contract with Mr. Tamasca. I get the job of Secretary of the Treasury under the Tamasca administration.'

"There won't be no Tamasca administration!" I butted in.

"Sanker smiled his tolerating, mean smile. 'You've got me, but my job on those colored men is a good one. It will last until they get into the capital; one application of Sanker's amaratite lasts a month. They'll be in the capital in two days more.'

"They won't be there in two hundred years!" I flung back, and walked away, leaving Iago on guard.

"I wasn't near so confident as I bluffed up. I had never bumped up against a bunch of human ironclads before, and my course in business college hadn't included metallurgy. But I wasn't going to let a two-by-four State like Connecticut put it over the imperial commonwealth of Missouri in a little matter of science. I sat on a mahogany log, lit my Missouri meerschaum, and figured.

"For ten minutes I couldn't think of any way except to dig big pits in front of our camp that Tamasca's men would fall into when they charged us, and then chop off their shells before they could crawl out. But there was two objections to that—we didn't have shovels to do the digging, nor axes to do the chopping. Then, all of a sudden, the answer came to me, and so easy it made me laugh. I was out of camp in three minutes, riding a wagon mule top clip for the capital.

"I got there near midnight. The white, low streets was quiet as a cemetery, as the mule and self ambled in, some tired. I went to the little power house that made the juice for the single-sticker street-car line—tram line, they called it—and waked up the superintendent. I diagramed to him the trump hand that Tamasca held on us, and my little scheme to spring the joker on him. He was more interested in the flexible amaratite steel than in my way out; he called it the most marvelous discovery of the century.

"I switched him onto the main track again by telling him that Tamasca was only two breakfasts away from the capital, and that he'd better get busy right away.

"The pair of us did some swift work around the power house, and then, summoning to our succor six fresh mules, an artillery wagon, and three mechanics from the juice works, we transferred our field of sweating to the long road which led back to the field of battle.

"Right where we figured that field would be at dawn, which wasn't far off, we stopped. We were four hundred yards in front of our own line of defense, and in the middle of the ground that Tamasca's hardware brigade would have to cross to make their attack. What we did there will be inferred subsequent. What I did after we got through and retired into our camp was to report to General Regeras, and then lay down at his feet and fall asleep.

"I hadn't snatched more than forty winks when I felt somebody shaking me by the shoulder. I looked up and saw the superintendent.

"The enemy are approaching, Mr. Gosset!" he exclaimed.

"I scrambled up, and he and I went to the front and lay down near the two Maxims and watched. It was five o'clock, and, prompt as an alarm clock, Tamasca and his men had started on their daily jaunt.

"The air was damp and chilly, and hung white and misty over the rank fields. We could barely see their long, dark line coming slowly forward. Pretty soon they began to shoot, the shots showing ugly yellow flashes in the mist. Our men dutifully returned the fire, well knowing they weren't doing nothing more than playing the obbligato for Tamasca's triumphal march.

"The superintendent watched the advance closely. Suddenly he grabbed my arm.

"'In about a minute!' he whispered. 'They are still fifty paces beyond its influence.'

"He had figgered well. Tamasca's men came fifty paces nearer, and then their rank wavered all of a sudden, the two halves of it came together like the blades of a pair of scissors, and the men sort of melted all in one spot, and stuck there in a tight bunch 'round a little black machine, the same being the machine we'd kindly put there during the night. They couldn't move nor get away, and, after a few minutes, our men walked out and pulled their guns away from them, and made them harmless as kittens. That ended the war."

Missouri Gosset had finished his story. He gulped down the last of his julep and then looked up, honestly and frankly, into my wondering eyes.

"But," I exclaimed hastily, "what

was that remarkable little black machine that they all stuck to?"

"Just a plain, everyday, electric magnet of tolerable good strength. Me and the supe took it from one of the dynamos in the power house. It drew those steel-coated colored gents like a little five-cent horseshoe magnet draws iron filings. And they stuck there, too, until Sanker went out and showed us how to dissolve the steel off them with some mixture he had. But the shame of me getting the best of him worried him so that he committed suicide, the next night, by drinking what was left of the mixture. The secret of flexible amaratite steel went with him. The superintendent was almost crazy trying to find it out when I left. He's mighty well learnt, and a hog for work, but I ain't got much faith that he will come across it."

"I haven't, either," I answered dryly. "Let's have another julep."



THE DISAPPEARING POET

THE sudden disappearances of men and women of to-day—alas! the poets stay with us—fill columns of newspaper space. Apparently it is an old trick, for Aristetas of Proconnesus tried it over twenty centuries ago. This man was not only a poet, but a man of rank and importance. He went into a shop in his native city and fell down dead.

The storekeeper immediately locked up the shop and went to tell the news to the poet's family. The family at once made due preparations for removing the body with all proper ceremonies. But when they got there the store contained no poet, dead or alive. The shopkeeper protested that Aristetas had come in, spoken with him, and then dropped dead. No one had been in the store since.

Additional mystery was added when a traveler newly arrived from a neighboring town said that, as he stepped aboard the wherry which brought him over to the Island of Proconnesus he had seen Aristetas and talked to him.

Seven years later the disappearing poet came back home, resided there several years, and then disappeared again. Nothing was heard of him for three hundred and forty years! Then he showed himself at Metapontum and commanded the inhabitants to erect a temple in his honor. This being done, he raised himself a few yards in the air, assumed the form of a crow and flew away. The Poetry Society of America is looking for his reappearance at any moment.



The Gift Wife

Rupert
Hughes

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Two old college friends, David Jebb and Bill Gaines, meet in the Nord Express, bound for Ostend, where they are to embark for America. Jebb is a famous surgeon, who is in charge of a little girl, Cynthia Thatcher, whom he is taking to her mother. He confesses to Gaines that he is subject to intermittent spells of drinking, when he knows nothing of what he does or says. Gaines gets off the train and is left behind. Jebb's hand is mangled in a door of one of the cars, and he faints. He is given brandy by one of the passengers. This starts him off. He leaves the train with Cynthia at Cologne and begins to drink. The next thing he knows he is lying in a strange room, attended by a black man. The child is gone and all his money. Suddenly a woman heavily veiled enters. She speaks English and from her he learns that he is in a Turkish harem, where he has been brought in a state of unconsciousness. The woman's name is Miruma, and she has been given as a wife by the sultan to a pasha named Fehmi. The black slave, Djaffer, breaks his arm, and Jebb sets it. No tidings can be learned of Cynthia. Jebb becomes deeply interested in Miruma, and she in Jebb. It is dangerous for him to remain where he is, so, with the assistance of Miruma, he is taken away in disguise, and goes to a hotel. The young son of a certain bey is ill. Jebb performs an operation and saves the boy's life. Then Miruma's husband, Fehmi Pasha, comes to him to ask him to attend his first wife. Jebb goes to the pasha's house, and Miruma is sent for to act as interpreter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BASH-KADIN.

THOUGH he could not understand the elaborate Turkish of the pasha's greeting, Jebb could see the mingled constraint and curiosity of his manner. There was something of the aged bridegroom in his cordiality as he seemed to peer through the yashmak of the woman who had been his yes-and-no wife for years. There was something of the faithful husband, too, for Nahir Hanum was lying in the next room, and weeping weakly, a sick woman in great dismay.

Miruma, speechless with triple dis-

stress, answered the pasha only by making deep obeisances as she came forward and kissed his hand, like a slave afraid of a master; a second wife intruding upon a first wife before she was in her grave, and, besides, a girl confronted with the man she had begun to love, but dared not acknowledge.

The pasha received Miruma's homage with a poor attempt at lofty majesty. Then he remembered Jebb, and spoke of him in Turkish with an evident flourish in his praise. Miruma, thus licensed, turned her eyes full upon him, and the pasha made the presentation in his best French.

Jebb bowed, Miruma lifted imagi-

nary dust and placed it on her breast, her lips, and her brow.

Then the pasha raised the portière to his wife's room and Miruma went in, trembling with fear and bowing with all the deference required of a second wife before the Bash-Kadin.

The curtain fell and hid what followed. Jebb could hear the pasha's uneasy treble in halting phrases of Turkish; the faint whimpers of Nahir Hanum fighting her weakness and her jealousy in vain; the deep tones of Miruma rich with appeasing tenderness. Three destinies unwillingly chained together, unable to break the mutual links they all resented.

A little later Jebb was summoned. The pasha spoke again to Miruma, evidently counseling her to talk freely to the *Amèriquali jerrah*. Then he bowed himself out.

There was a pause of embarrassment, the sick woman's eyes rolling like a terrified animal's from one to the other of the invaders of her sanctuary. She was mortally afraid of the foreign infidel to whose magic she must intrust the temple of her body and the failing lamp of her life. But she seemed even more afraid of the woman of her own race; for she herself, as she knew all too well, was worn from the bearing of many children and their sustenance, and from the drain of their sorrows upon her; she had been Fehmi Pasha's wife till she had no longer a new look, word, or thought to offer him. Miruma was yet a girl, a mystery; in her eyes was the light of unappeased youth; a wealth of hair was crowding her veil, and one could surmise what lips the muslin hid. And the shapeless robes about her form were eloquent at least of the absence of angles or exuberances; her hands and forearms were an earnest of every grace, and her voice was luxurious with charm.

The worn-out wife could not know how Miruma dreaded Fehmi Pasha;

she could only think of her as envious, ambitious to crowd the Bash-Kadin into her grave, and possess the dignity and the power of the household.

There was dire bitterness in the gaze of Nahir upon Miruma, and the very homage she paid her charms were further condemnation of the interloper, the usurper. But she was too feeble to rise and expel her, too feeble to ask her to remain away and forbear from troubling the last rites of dissolution with life.

She could only turn her eyes upon Jebb, wondering if the foreign hireling could or would be her friend or a treacherous ally to her enemy. She could only try to pray with her eyes for his pity and his mercy.

Miruma felt all these things in the air, read them in the woman's look; she had understood them by intuition in the carriage before she reached the house. She felt that every kindness she showed would seem but a sneaking hypocrisy, like the solicitude of an heir apparent. But she did her best, treating the Bash-Kadin with almost royal deference, easing her silken pillow with more silken tenderness, and murmuring words of hope and good cheer.

Tortured with her own impossible position, Miruma turned to Jebb with a halting:

"What please am I to say or to do, Jebt Effendi?"

Even Jebb could feel the sultry oppression in the air, but he knew of no way of relief except to save the woman's life.

"If you will ask her my questions, and tell me her answers—please—Hanum Effendi—madame."

Her eyes gleamed at his remembering her liking for "madame," and he felt that she smiled under her yashmak. But she answered solemnly enough:

"Please to ask me, and I ask the poor hanum."

"Ask her where her pain is greatest."

Miruma put the question in Turkish of evident circumlocution. For answer Nahir raised her right hand heavily and put it at the base of her breast.

Jebb placed under the heavily coated tongue a thermometer he had borrowed from Murison. Then he took her pulse. He found her temperature high, her pulse feeble but swift.

"Ask her how long she has been ill."

After cross-examination, Miruma answered:

"She say she is seck for very, very long times. She have great fever in the night. In the morning she is better, but not well; in the morning she can eat some little, but later nothing at all."

"Ask her what treatment she has had."

Miruma bent close to hear the thin voice of Nahir. Then she interpreted:

"She say she have had the prayers of the dervish sheikh, breathings, and the *nushka*. She have these to please her old slave who is supersteetious. Also, she have two Turkish doctors, who is here but did went away, and she have Doctor Murison effendi. They all say she have *humma*—how to say, a *fièvre*. They geeve her of bitter medicines. But she is get no better."

After further minute examination and tests and endless questions, he nodded his head with decision.

"You have finded the evil?" Miruma asked eagerly.

He nodded again, and went into the hall where the pasha sat running through his fingers the chain of prayer beads, each bead one of Allah's nine and ninety perfections. The pasha rose to his feet, anxious with questions. Miruma translated Jebb's diagnosis of "gastric erosion."

Miruma's brows were sweet with sympathy. She explained as best she could the deep-seated and gnawing evil and the operation Jebb declared immediately necessary if Nahir Hanum's

agony was to be ended and her life saved. The old pasha became a child with fear and grief groaning: *Vakh! Eyyah!* and many a Turkish "Alas!"

He plucked his beard in mourning, and sent his lean hands to and fro among his beads, as if they prayed for him. But at last Jebb and Miruma brought him back to hope, and he gave his consent to the terrifying knives.

Miruma had shown such calm, such gentleness in the presence of her rival, and such courage, that Jebb felt her qualified in spirit, if not in training, to be the elder wife's best nurse.

"I need some one to care for Nahir Hanum afterward—to help me," he said. "Will you?"

Had the pasha been less engrossed in his own griefs, he might have seen his junior wife crowd a soul full of devotion into one answering look. Had Nahir Hanum seen that look she would have suspected Miruma's designs upon her pasha no longer.

Miruma did not trust herself to speak. She shook her head. And Jebb understood her Turkish consent. He took refuge from her gaze by saying brusquely:

"And now I must find Murison. Explain it to the pasha, please—madame."

Then he told Miruma all the things he would require to turn the house into a hospital and bring it as near to aseptic conditions as he could expect in such a place. As he hurried down the steps, he paused again to call back:

"Take command of the house, madame—and the servants."

He descended a few steps and stopped again to say more gently:

"We both—you and I—want Nahir Hanum to get well, don't we?"

All he saw of her face were her eyes. They were enough. They widened and deepened with understanding of an inner meaning he had hardly realized himself till the moment. In a seizure of confusion he dashed from the house.

He hastened to find Murison, losing himself in blind alleys, almost bowling over black-clad, veiled figures, shoving gypsy beggars aside, cutting under the very noses of horses, and braving the horns of restive buffaloes. Murison's home was empty, and the Albanian servant could not understand a word Jebb said.

Frantic with impatience, he hailed a passing *talika*, and ordered the driver to make haste to the Austrian consulate.

He found Hellwald at the door and was invited to join him in coffee, but he explained his urgent need of Murison. Hellwald had seen him a moment before on his way to the British consulate, and offered to go along to show the way.

When he learned the cause of Jebb's speed he clapped him on the shoulder.

"*Himmelswillen!* But you will be rich in a day, Doctor Chebb. Fehmi Pasha is made of money. He's an old skinflint, but you should tap him well. How much did you ask him?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! Are you crazy? You must make a big bargain with him."

"I haven't the time. Afterward, perhaps."

"Afterward is too late."

"The woman is dying. I must operate at once. And such a beautiful operation! An operation in the stomach itself. Do you understand? It's a very rare piece of work. I've only had it twice before."

"All the more reason for a beautiful fee. Really, my boy, you must."

"There's Murison! He just turned the corner."

And Jebb deserted him incontinently.

He was thinking of a deal more than the operation or the money. His heart was pounding in his ears "Miruma! Miruma!" The sight of her, the being with her, hearing her, watching her great soul on trial proving itself won-

derful, had engulfed him deeper than ever in the thought of her.

When he left Fehmi Pasha's roof, it had swept over him that a failure to save Nahir's life meant surrendering Miruma into the hands of Fehmi Pasha. He could see his skinny talons caressing her as if she were his gold.

He was the more eager to have Murison's Scottish calm to steady him, lest his fierce desire set his nerves in un-surgently disorder.

He came up with Murison and told him breathlessly what he wanted. The fellow countryman of the poet who grieved over a frightened field mouse needed no urging. He said that he had himself been called in to prescribe for Nahir Hanum, but had come to no nearer diagnosis than typhoid fever, which did not materialize; malaria, which did not respond to his quinine; and consumption, for which he knew no relief. He had never heard of Jebb's empyema, but he had faith in Jebb.

On their way they stopped at the *ejza-hanè* or drug bazaar, but its stock was chiefly filled with things that were just out or had never been in.

They stopped at Murison's home to get the case of instruments, sutures, gauze, and everything his little equipment provided. Then they quickened their steps to the *konak* of Fehmi Pasha. As they neared it, they saw a stream of women entering the gate in the wall, and other women coming out.

"What does that mean?" Jebb asked.

Murison answered solemnly: "They must be the women of the neighborhood. When they hear that a woman is dying they go into the sick room, strangers and all, without ceremony, and kneel there to pray for her repose, just as strange men help to carry the coffin to the grave."

"But she isn't going to die," Jebb insisted. "I'm not going to let her die." And he thought of Miruma as much as of Nahir.

He knocked at the door and was admitted by a servant who had been weeping. He went up the stairs with as businesslike an air as if he were in an American home, and marched straight into the sick room, beckoning the uneasy Murison to follow. He paused at the door, for the room was filled with heavily veiled women surrounding the bed, where Nahir, feeling grateful to her anonymous comforters, was also praying. With her right hand raised, the forefinger pointing upward, she faintly murmured her testimony that there is but one God and Mohammed his prophet.

Her hand fell of its own weakness before she finished the long ritual. Jebb stood irresolute at the door, angered at the resignation which would not help him in his battle. Murison stood by him, feeling a reverence that Jebb could not respond to. It was Murison's profession to make death easy and beautiful. It was Jebb's to fight it to the last.

Hearing a rustle, he turned to find Miruma with her hands full of fresh linen. She was still occupied with the tasks he had set her.

He pointed to the premature mourners and spoke gruffly.

"Get 'em out! She must not be allowed to give up. She must help us make her live."

Miruma put down her burden and, going among the kneeling women, whispered gently to them. They rose and withdrew—almost with disappointment as it seemed to Jebb. When they had gone, Jebb forgot them. He turned to Miruma.

"You have boiled water in plenty?"

"Yes, Jebb Effendi."

"Will you please take some of it in a clean bottle and let it cool on ice if you can. Is there ice?"

"Yes, Jebb Effendi."

"Where is the pasha?"

"I deed advised him to go to the

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mosque to pray for Nahir Hanum, and to take weet him his three sons who deed come home to help their mother to die in peace and to exchange the *helal* weet her."

"You are a genius," Je' said.

She was not quite sure what a genius might be, but Jebb's look was so warm with admiration that she fled in terror. A compliment is a dangerous thing in Turkey. It makes the genie jealous.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DUEL WITH THE CUPBEARER.

AT Jebb's request, and with the pasha's authority, Miruma had taken command of the house. The old housekeeper, and all the other servants, seeing in her their probable future mistress, trod upon one another to please her. There were many of them and she set them flying in all directions.

First, she ravished the entire supply of the household's linen and had it transported to the upper floor, where it was put to baking in every utensil she could gather. She invaded the kitchen building in the garden, won over the savage negress in charge, and persuaded her to put her copper kettles and earthen jars at her disposal. In the hall the old coffee woman was heating water for scouring floors and tables. And on the two American stoves above stairs and below and on every foot warmer she could find, she had some vessel boiling or baking fabrics, instruments, utensils.

The eldest son's room had been emptied of all its furniture and scoured with boiling water—floor, walls, windows. A long table from the kitchen, scoured and scoured again, had been taken thither by the porter.

Jebb found the whole household in an orderly commotion. The bathroom in marble, but tubless, had been set apart for him. He and Murison retired there to prepare themselves for

the task. They slipped off their street clothes and put on two newly baked house robes and two pairs of baked slippers. Then they began on their hands.

He worked over his hands and his finger nails as if they were his most dreaded enemies. He made Murison, also, parboil and scrape his hands till they were almost raw.

To the eyes of the sick woman the doctor and his aid looked less like human beings than like the two dread angels, Moonkir and Nehir, who sit at the foot and the head of a fresh grave to catechize the soul on trial. Nahir Hanum feared them as much as her feeble strength permitted.

Miruma was begging her to wish to live and try to live, for the sake of the children who needed her and the husband who loved. She was so gentle and so eager that Nahir Hanum was almost persuaded to believe her.

Jebb, entering the hanum's room, found there a covey of terrified daughters who had stolen in for further prayers. He scattered them like partridges, and, gathering the frail form of Nahir Hanum into his arms, carried her into the operating room.

Miruma waited outside, trying to comfort the ancient baby the pasha had become through fear. It seemed an eternity of waiting. Through the closed door came occasionally a quick murmur of Jebb's voice giving some command to Murison, the click of an instrument laid down or dropped on another. That was all for ages of suspense.

Then the door was opened, and Jebb reappeared with the unconscious form of the pasha's wife in his arms.

He carried his burden to her room and restored her to her canopied and coquettish bed from Paris. After a long while, she came back to consciousness. Her great, dreamy eyes glowed through her veil in questioning patience. A phrase came to Jebb from

his Turkish grammar, the greeting the Osmanli bestow on one who has come safely through a sickness:

"*Gechmish ola!* May it be past and forgotten!"

Her eyes showed that she understood. She was too weak to feel much, but what little she felt was better than the great fear that had possessed her.

There were anxious hours and days of danger and of wrestle with the cup-bearer of the sphere who kept setting his fatal cup to the lips of Nahir Hanum. But Jebb thrust it aside always with his skill. But there were times when Miruma, alone in the house in the dreary night hours, must give battle herself with the dark angel.

It was not altogether an unselfish fight he waged, or altogether a selfish one. She sought to remember all of Jebb's confusing directions and when, the next day, she would report to him what had happened, and could point to her ward still living, her triumph was sweetened by the admiration that grew in his eyes and deepened into a warmer approval than respect.

He never failed to give her her meed of praise, or to report to the pasha how unwearyingly his second wife was defending his first wife from the incessant dangers hovering about her.

"You should be the only wife of a doctor, madame," he told her one day, and then blushed to realize how much his words implied.

And she blushed with him; then sighed to think how far from out of her reach this cup of happiness was held.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EXILE FROM EDEN.

IT was a long and busy week before Jebb felt that Nahir Hanum could safely be intrusted to the care of Miruma and Murison, though he had schooled them in all the tasks and problems that were likely to arise.

Meanwhile, Gani Bey was flourishing in the radiant household of his father and mother, the British consul was again out-swaggering the Russian consul in the streets of Uskub, the Serb's sick buffalo no longer leaned on its yoke to cough, and various and sundry beggars, beys, and aghas were, the better for Jebb's visit. He felt that he had a right to set about his own business.

It had been a busy week in Turkey, too. Abdul the Damned had been plucked from his throne like a vulture dragged from a charnel nest. The Young Turks governed a new Turkey.

Jebb called upon the pasha, and, after as much delicacy of palaver as his curt soul could manage, he broached the hateful subject of compensation. The pasha's coffee cup shook, and he choked a little on his smoke. He recovered sufficiently to say with a rather restrained enthusiasm:

"Your servant can never repay you for your service by mere paras and piastras, Jebb Effendi, but may he ask what you would consider a fair recompense?"

His smile turned to a grimace of pain as Jebb answered crisply:

"Twelve hundred pounds."

The pasha translated it into his own terms:

"*Bîñ iki yüz lira!*" He nearly rolled off the divan. "It is the price of the wife herself."

"You have your wife back from the edge of the grave, haven't you?" said Jebb. "It was a hard fight."

"Oh, yes, Jebb Effendi. You have accomplished a miracle. But twelve hundred pounds is much money for a physician."

"Is it much for a wife?"

"No, no, but——"

"Of course, if the pasha is poor, let us say no more. I have cured beggars in Uskub from whom I asked nothing except their thanks."

The pasha loved the reputation for money almost more than the money. He wriggled a little.

"No, no, your servant is not so rich as some men, but he is not so poor as others. But twelve hundred pounds for a week's labor. Why, look, effendim, when the padishah—whom Allah preserve—presented me with Miruma Hanum he gave me for her *nekyah* only one thousand pounds for her whole lifetime."

Having led him into the noose, Jebb tightened it with a sudden turn:

"I will throw off one thousand pounds of my bill, pasha, if you will release Miruma Hanum and restore her *nekyah*."

The pasha was too full of astonishment to have room for wrath. He sputtered:

"You ask me to—to divorce my wife?"

"Your extra wife."

"But wh-why? Do you want to marry her?"

"If I wanted to marry her, should I be leaving Uskub to-morrow forever?"

One thunderbolt followed another about the pasha's head.

"You leave Uskub forever. What of my poor sick wife? You will leave her to die?"

Jebb had foreseen the question, and he had planned his answer with care, composed it in French and rehearsed it. He spoke with less than his usual stumbling.

"The best thing I can think of to cure your wife, pasha, would be the news that she no longer has a young and beautiful rival. If you went to her and said, 'You are my only wife now,' it would be better than any medicine I could prescribe. I put a knife almost in her heart. You have left one there. Give Miruma Hanum the *talaq* and you will save Nahir Hanum."

The pasha was breathing deeply and his eye was soft.

"And," Jebb added, "you will save one thousand pounds of my fee."

Even greed was less strong than curiosity. The pasha studied Jebb closely as he asked:

"But why—what difference does it make to you?"

It was well that Jebb's profession had taught him in many a crisis to keep his emotions out of his features, for he said with perfectly level look and tone:

"It is a whim of mine, pasha. Besides, it is my duty. I see Nahir Hanum heartbroken by the presence of another woman in your life. She is the mother of your children. It is horrible to my American notion, that a man should have two wives. Most of your Turkish people feel the same way. The padishah gave you your second wife. The padishah is deposed, exiled from Constantinople. A better man rules in his place. You are paying me to bring health into your home. Make Nahir Hanum happy, you will make her well.

"As for Miruma Hanum, she has worked hard for your wife. She is worn out with watching and with sleeplessness and labor. Without her your Nahir Hanum would have died many times in my absence. As a physician I hate to see a human life wasted. Miruma Hanum should be a true wife; she should be a mother. Set her free. It ought to be your pleasure; it is your duty. And it will save you one thousand pounds."

The pasha was still craftily looking for some occult purpose. He had not been trained to believe in straightforward dealing or direct bargains.

"You are sure you do not intend to marry Miruma Hanum?"

"I leave Uskub to-morrow. I shall not return. I have business in Salonica and in other cities, and then I return to America. I have no expectation of ever seeing Miruma Hanum again."

He looked the pasha in the eyes as he spoke and there was no questioning the honesty of his intention.

"Let me think it over," the pasha pleaded.

"I leave Uskub to-morrow," Jebb reiterated as he rose.

"Another cup of our miserable coffee," the pasha urged, pressing him back in his seat.

The pasha sipped two cups and puffed yards on yards of smoke before he spoke. Then he said:

"You think my wife Nahir is well enough to leave?"

"With the instructions I have given him, Murison Effendi, with the aid of Miruma Hanum, can bring her back to health in two or three months."

"You think it will help her to recover if I inform her that I shall put away the gift-wife?"

"It will help more than all my skill."

"Then your servant will obey your instructions in everything."

"And Miruma Hanum shall have her *talaq* and her *nekyah*?"

"On my honor, and as soon as the court will grant the decree." And once more: "You are sure you are leaving Uskub forever?"

"To-morrow without fail. If you could have my money at my hotel——"

"It will be there, effendim. For your skill I shall pray Allah also to reward you. For your journey *Allaha emanet oloun*."

Thus commended to Allah, Jebb paid a last visit to Nahir Hanum and through the pasha warned her to keep her bed for two months at the least. She looked so wan and hopeless at this sentence that Jebb turned to the pasha and nodded to him meaningly, and murmured:

"Tell her."

The old pasha dropped down at the side of the foreign and frivolous bed and, taking one of Nahir's wisplike hands to his lips, poured out a stream

of lovely Turkish; Jebb understood only a phrase of it here and there, but he caught the words "Miruma" and "*talaq*," and through the transparent veil on the waxen features there spread a sudden gleam.

In the eyes shining through the rift in the veil, there grew tears, large blinding tears; but they seemed to bless rather than burn, and as Jebb bowed himself out, her eyes followed him with a look he always remembered. That was a fee he could never spend.

As he passed from the house, he looked eagerly about for Miruma, hoping that she might chance to be there and that he might bid her at least a farewell of the eyes. But she did not know, and he did not dare ask to see her lest the royal privileges he had enjoyed as a physician be withdrawn and he find himself abhorred as an invader of the sacredness of a Turkish home. So he left the *konak* of Fehmi Pasha with a great heart-hunger unappeased.

He had, indeed, as he had said, resolved to leave Uskub forever, and Miruma forever. The fierce demands of his duties to the lost child cried out against him for his long neglect, but he felt absolved to a degree by the necessity of earning funds and saving the lives perishing at his very feet. But now there was no further excuse to give his conscience.

He had come to know Miruma better, through the veil, the actual veil she wore and the impalpable yet impenetrable veil her self-respect, her duty, the danger of their situation drew about her. And he had come to love her and desire her with a passion his heart had never dreamed itself capable of entertaining.

For a few days his dreams took wings. He had devised his plot for her release from the useless chain that fastened her to Fehmi Pasha. He planned to hurry forth to hunt the lost child. He dreamed that he stumbled upon her

without delay. He imagined himself telegraphing Miruma to join them and go with him to America as his wife.

His heart was lonely for a helpmeet. His life was as empty as hers. They belonged to each other. He thanked the very fates that brought them together through the wilderness of the world.

And then his thanks choked in his throat. A chill hand seemed to reach from the fog and throttle him. It was his curse that had brought him to Uskub with infinite disgrace, with a deep shame, which he had concealed only by cowardly silences.

His curse forbade him to marry any woman, least of all Miruma. For a black long night he wrestled with the genie from the bottle and the morning found him a victor, though his triumph had cost him a broken heart and a broken life.

Utterly convinced that he would be an odious villain to marry Miruma, he felt it his absolute duty to check the young love he had seen spreading into fuller bloom in her heart at every one of their meetings, though so few words were said, so few looks exchanged.

Jebb was a surgeon. He believed in the knife only as a last resort, but then he believed in cutting deep and once for all. It had been his horrible office to read a death warrant to many a wretch he could not save, and he had come to believe that the anguish was only prolonged and embittered by postponements and evasions.

He thought long and fiercely over his farewell to Miruma. He wrote many letters and tore them in pieces and burned them in his lonely room at the Hotel Turati with its window opening on a neglected graveyard. Worn out and nauseated with life, he dashed off and sealed the curtest message of all, with no hint of the love that neither had expressed in a word, and both had understood with all their hearts.

MIRUMA HANUM,

MADAME: I leave for Salonica by the next train. I shall hunt for the child until I find her. I will let you know when I do. Fehmi Pasha has promised me on his honor that he will grant you at once a *talaq* and restore your *nekyah* in full. I should like to be assured of this. You might send me word, if it is not too much trouble. My permanent address will be the Union Bank, I Graber 13, Vienna (Viyana), Austria.

With all good wishes, yours faithfully,

DAVID JEBB.

He slipped this into his pocket and left the hotel. The streets of Uskub are lighted only for a while of evenings, and only an infrequent patrol or a hungry dog disturbed the night. Jebb easily avoided the patrol and found his way by starlight to the slumberous home of Miruma.

He paused in the shadow of the wall opposite and mused on the chain of events that had brought him in a night of storm to her door. It was another man than himself that had taken that wild vagary. He must retrace him through the labyrinth without a thread to guide him. It was another man than the old Jebb who stood before her door now and ached with desire to remain, or to take back to his own country the treasure he had happened upon in the labyrinth.

In one of the windows there was a faint glimmer struggling through the lattices. He imagined Miruma there, and he believed that she was thinking of him. Mad projects to climb to her window like a Romeo, or to knock at her door like a minstrel, teased him, but he was not mad enough to attempt them.

It was late when the light from within was extinguished, and the window was only a blur in the starlight. Still he waited, helpless to move, till in the distance he heard the tag-tag of an approaching patrol. Then he slunk away, stumbling as he gazed back at the dim and dwindling walls of her home.

The porter at the hotel was half

asleep as he opened the door, and left him to grope to his room and throw himself down on the bed of loneliness and despair.

The next morning, as he was paying his farewell calls on Hellwald and Murison and other friends, he saw Djaffer passing with a *botchka* or parcel carrier loaded with purchases from various bazaars.

Djaffer salaamed as to a grand vizier. Jebb paused ostensibly to examine the bandage on the wrist. He slipped Djaffer the money to redeem his ring, and made him promise to have it at the hotel that day. Djaffer promised with a grinning gratitude that died out suddenly, for Jebb had secretly pushed his farewell letter up the sleeve of Djaffer's coat and as he moved away whispered:

"Miruma Hanum."

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEBB FINDS HIMSELF.

SALONICA, the Hot Springs of ancient Greece, the neighbor of Mount Olympus where the twelve gods resided; the rendezvous of the unimaginable army and navy of Xerxes; rebuilt and renamed by Alexander the Great's brother-in-law for Alexander's half-sister Thessalonica; Thessalonica where St. Paul preached and whence he was driven away by "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort"; Salonica, the immemorial memorial of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, and Saracen antiquities.

It seemed pretty ancient to the Yankee surgeon who came in an express train and took a cab to the Grand Hôtel d'Angleterre.

The hundred-and-fifty-mile journey had required only eight hours, which was not bad for Turkey, but the train would not leave the banks of the River Vardar, the doleful reminder of Uskub. It followed the winding channel inces-

santly, through mountains and hills, and through the gorge of the "Iron Gate."

Jebb sought nepenthe from his gloom in studying the Turkish grammar Hellwald had given him to keep. Hellwald and the British consul had also helped him over the important matter of his missing papers, had provided him with a substitute for his lost passport and a *teskeré*, or license to travel; had coached him in the important intricacies of Turkish machinery, and given him cordial letters to the representatives of Great Britain and Austria in Salonica.

He had bought in Uskub only a hand bag, a razor, and the necessary linen, and the customs officer found nothing to confiscate except Jebb's tip. When he left the train he was compelled to have his *teskeré* viséd by a Turkish official who took it in charge until he should leave the town again.

After he had engaged his cabman, Jebb was struck with an idea, and, hurrying back to the recorder, asked in limping Turkish:

"Will the effendi look through his papers and see if by chance he is holding another *teskeré* of mine?"

He did not fail to slip a little baksheesh under the documents on the desk. The recorder ransacked his files graciously, but was finally compelled to conclude:

"Daveet Jebb Effendi could not have passed through Salonica—at least not openly and legally."

Jebb dissipated the menace of this suggestion with a further insinuation of baksheesh and hastened to his cab. If he could have found his *teskeré*, he would have known just when and whence he had arrived in Salonica, and whether or not the child had been with him.

It was black night when his cab rumbled along the commendable pavements of Salonica, and deposited him at the Grand Hôtel d'Angleterre. A

drowsy clerk piloted him to a room, lighted candles for him, and opened one eye just wide enough to satisfy himself that his baksheesh was sufficient.

Jebb went to bed and fell asleep, weighed down by every exhaustion. He slept through the muezzin's call at dawn and halfway to the noon *eulam*. When he woke at last the air was crisp, and liquid with the songs of birds. He looked from his window across a plain of gay red roofs above latticed windows in white walls, cross-channeled with white streets where elms, mulberries, and cypress were aligned. Here and there mosque domes curved like clustered bubbles; here and there stood the tall lance of a minaret.

But there were so much sunlight and beauty in the world that despair vanished from his spirits like a sleep. He bathed and shaved and dressed with speed, hurried down to the dining room, hurried through his breakfast, and hurried out to deliver his letters of introduction and set in motion the hunt for Cynthia.

At the Austrian consulate Jebb was received with the distinction due his recommendations as a friend and a physician. And he was invited to cure the stubborn cough of the consul's daughter. He also learned that every effort to trace the missing child had ended in negation.

He visited the American mission and his ears were charmed with the familiar twang, but no good news.

At the British consulate they had much proffer of aid but no encouragement. One of the attachés, a younger son of a noble house, but smothered under the simple style and title of Cranford Banbury, Esquire, was especially courteous. He said:

"My eldest brother, who wears the title, you know, almost married an American actress once, and I was within an ace of being sent to our New York consulate, so that makes us pretty

nearly cousins or something or other, doesn't it? Besides, you Yankees have been so polite to all our friends who have gone to the States that I feel it my duty to be decent to any poor devil who has to stop off at this God-forsaken end of the world. The first man to see is the police commissioner."

He took Jebb to the office of the *polis gomiséri*, introduced him, and translated the commissioner's account of his vain efforts to find the child. Various awkward gaps in Jebb's story were bridged over by Banbury, whose official position and whose indignation at any impertinence kept the official quelled.

Banbury had many suggestions, sought many people, quizzed shopkeepers, passers-by, priests of every religion, even the Jewish bootblacks, but no one had heard of any lost child whose parents had not speedily been found.

He insisted on Jebb's dining with him and revealed all that exquisite English hospitality which is as cautious as it is complete, once it is extended.

"You're in a blue funk, old man, and you oughtn't to be alone."

"I'm always alone," said Jebb grimly.

"Well, I'll do my best to make Salonica an exception. There's not much to occupy an Anglo-Saxon in Salonica unless you're interested in politics. We rather feel we're sitting on dynamite. The Young Turks are in power, but they have an Augean stable to clean up, and the old sultan isn't dead yet."

"What have they done with him?"

"Why, haven't you heard? He's here—here in Salonica. Fact! They bundled him out of Constantinople, bag and baggage, with a reduced regiment of wives, and plounced him down in the south side of our town. He is a kind of prisoner de luxe, settled in a wonderful villa built ten years ago by an Italian for the Allatini family. He has made two or three attempts to escape, and there have been mysterious

chalk marks on the houses. People fear an explosion every moment. But let's not talk Turkish politics. I hear nothing else all day. Let's go to a *café chantant*."

"A *café chantant* in Salonica?"

"Yes, and on the very spot where St. Paul is said to have preached, by Jove! There are six other spots that claim the same glory, but none of them is probably within a mile of it. Will you come along?"

"Anything to get my mind off my troubles."

"Your troubles will only begin, my boy, when you hear the music. A stranded troupe of tenth-rate Italian opera singers is trying to earn money enough to get back to Milan. God knows I want to help them out of this town."

The admission was only two piastres or ten cents apiece.

Banbury chose a table, and the waiter brought them coffee. Banbury rejected it with horror and ordered Scotch and soda, in which Jebb begged to be excused from joining him.

The singers were not so bad as their poverty implied, and even the thin Italian harmonies had a glorious richness in Jebb's ear, sick of the dolorous squawk and squeal of the shepherds and bagpipers about Uskub.

The crowd was motley, and a few dignified Young Turkish officers made a distressing contrast with a number of drunken English sailors ashore from a cruiser.

At a table in front of him, Jebb noticed a fat neck and short, bristly poll of distinctly French extraction. Eventually their owner turned his face, glanced at Jebb, stared, turned away, turned back, looked uneasy, angry, pugnacious, puzzled.

Jebb wondered what ailed the man. He was sure he had never seen him before. At length the stranger rose and left the hall, and Jebb gave his soul to

the "Miserere" from "Il Trovatore." It had a new sound here in Macedonia, and somehow he felt that he was himself the man imprisoned and crying from the tower of his doom, and that the woman who bade him farewell was Miruma.

He was absorbed so deeply in the music that he failed to notice at first the arrival of a Turkish police officer who spoke deferentially to Banbury. Jebb turned in surprise and found the officer regarding him with a piercing scrutiny, which Jebb answered with a clear-eyed innocence of ignorance. Banbury had been melting sympathetically under the influence of Scotch and Verdi, but he was instantly filled with an Englishman's rage at any invasion of his privacy.

Jebb caught a word here and there and gleaned that the conversation had to do with a French hotelkeeper named Moosoo Carolet, some other person named Pierpont, and an unpaid bill.

Banbury grew more and more furious as he thundered Turkish with a curious British intonation. The officer grew more and more humble, and finally withdrew in confusion with much apology and many a salaam.

When he had gone Banbury said: "This is the most ghastly country in the world. What do you suppose that jackass of a policeman wanted? It would be no end funny if it weren't so disgustingly impertinent. It seems that some silly ass of a French hotelkeeper here had a guest named Pierpont who lived very royally for a few days, then skipped without stopping to pay the shot. This jackanapes sees you and thinks you are Pierpont. He goes to the police and orders your arrest.

"Fortunately you were with me or Heaven only knows what they would have done to you. You'd have spent the rest of your life in the White Tower perhaps. The officer came to me

with apologies for throwing a friend of mine into a dungeon as a common thief and I sent him about his business."

"That's mighty nice of you," said Jebb. He considered the incident closed and he returned to the music. Suddenly he gave a start, controlled himself, and puffed much smoke before he inquired idly:

"By the way, what was the name of the hotel?"

"The Grand Hotel de—something or other. I don't remember. Don't think of it again, I beg you."

But Jebb thought of it without rest. At length Banbury rose impatiently. The Scotch had made him drowsy, but he blamed the music.

"I can't stand any more of this caterwaul; can you? What do you say to our getting out? I'll drop you at your hotel, eh?"

"Thank you, I think I'll see it through. Almost any music sounds good to me now."

"Very well, I'll wait if you want to."

"Please don't let me keep you."

It took much delicate management, but Banbury was very sleepy and at last permitted Jebb to bid him good night. As soon as he was out of the building, Jebb rose and searched for the policeman. He was greeted by him with profound courtesy.

Jebb had been mulling the affair over in his head, and he was able to ask in intelligible if inelegant Turkish:

"Will you please tell me the name of the hotel kept by Musu Carolet?"

"The Grand Hôtel de l'Europe, ef-fendi. He is a dog of a fool to have suspected you."

Jebb bowed and murmured: "Good-by." And the official answered: "You are welcome."

Jebb sauntered carelessly out of the café and, calling a cab, said:

"Grand Hôtel de l'Europe."

Arriving there, he told the man to wait. He found the office alight and

Monsieur Carolet talking excitedly to a lady who was presumably Madame Carolet.

The man stared at Jebb with a dismay that seemed to expect at least a challenge to a duel.

Jebb had rehearsed his French in the cab, and he began smoothly:

"Is it not that monsieur thought I had been at his hotel?"

"It is that I was sure of it, monsieur. You have the air exactly of the miserable pig-dog of a Pierpont. I see now that you are not the man—he was much thinner and not at all like you. I apologize humbly."

"When was it that it was that Mr. Pierpont was here?"

"It was two weeks, monsieur. He arrives in state. He seems to have a little too much of the gin or the wiskee, but we others always expect that in the English and Americans, isn't it? He orders the best room in the house, the best food, and he drinks much of the wiskee. Then one day—his room is empty. He does not come back."

"How much was his bill?"

"Five pounds Turkish."

"Is it that he left of the baggage?"

"No, monsieur. Ordinarily, I should have collected in advance, but he was so magnificent that I did not dare it. He brought nothing with him. He said he expected his yacht to come for him. As for some fresh linen he bought of it here in the shops, and threw the old away."

Jebb smiled sadly. The portrait sounded familiar.

"Did Mr. Pierpont register?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"May I see the signature?"

"But yes, monsieur."

Madame Carolet whisked the little book from a drawer and Jebb recognized his own writing with a conflict of relief and shame. The name was Vanderbilt Pierpont, but the hand was the hand of Jebb.

"One more question. Did Mr. Pierpont have a child with him—a little girl?"

"No, monsieur, not one."

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly."

"What city did he come from?"

"He did not say, and he had nothing of baggage at all monsieur. He talked very little and his tongue was a little thick."

"You have no idea where he was before he came here?"

"Absolutely none, monsieur."

"I will pay his bill."

"Pardon, monsieur."

"I will pay the bill"

"*Nom de Dieu*, you will pay the bill! But why should you, monsieur?"

"It is my whim. He was an American. I am an American. I wish to pay for the honor of the country. But if you would prefer not, I will not pay the bill."

"Oh, monsieur, I do not question you. I thank you."

Jebb paid the bill and went back to the cab with his receipt. He had found at least himself. So, the devil in him had taken the name of Vanderbilt Pierpont, and talked large and lived high. He shook his head helplessly, as a father might over the crimes of an incorrigible son.

But having found his alias, how was he to retrace his route? Long after midnight he sat in his room pounding his forehead with his fist to beat out an idea. Finally one came like a spark from a smitten anvil.

"The *teskeré!*"

He could hardly endure the delay till morning, and he was waiting at the station when the recorder of passports arrived. Jebb wished him a very good morning and Allah's favor, and asked after the health of his parents, and hoped that his friends were well, and finally ventured to ask him to look through his files again and see if they

contained perhaps a *teskeré* in the name of V. Pierpont. The recorder's face changed from suspicion to affability. Baksheesh did it.

And at length after much delay he unearthed the document.

"Yes, here is the permission for V. Pierpont Effendi to travel from Constantinople into the interior. It carries the visé of Salonica in the writing of my assistant. I was absent that day."

"May I ask the date, and the name of the man who issued the *teskeré*?"

The recorder held it out for him to see, and Jebb made a mental record of the name of the official and his address in Constantinople. He wanted to ask for the document itself, but he feared that even baksheesh might not reach so far. He could hardly control his excitement as he said:

"One more question, effendi: When is the next train to Constantinople? Shall I have time to go back to my hotel before it leaves?"

"I think so, effendi," replied the Turk, "the next train to Constantinople runs three times every week, and the next train leaves to-morrow."

Another twenty-four hours of inaction! It seemed that he could not endure the delay. He was finished with Salonica, so impatient to be quit of it that he was tempted to set out for Constantinople on foot. He actually climbed the steep hillside, through the Turkish quarter, past the dreamy idlers drooling their narghilehs and sipping their coffee, past the lazy worshipers at the mosques, the yawning dogs, the veiled women dawdling the streets. Everything was indolent, and the leisurely serenity that had seemed Turkey's greatest charm at first was maddening now.

Little girls hung about the fountains filling their jugs, and Jebb saw a dozen times some profile, some little form that suggested Cynthia. But he was

all too well assured that she was not in Salonica.

Late in the afternoon he reached the southern limits of the city where houses were few and fields broad. In the distance he saw a splendid palace in a great garden surrounded by a high wall. He skirted the edges and continued on his way till it began to grow dark. Seeing that the sunset was purpling Mount Olympus and that night would soon be upon him, he turned back.

He was startled by distant cries. He saw people running here and there. Suddenly a little veiled figure came out of the twilight and the shrubbery close to him. Jebb thought that some poor Turkish wife was fleeing from murder or persecution. He determined to offer her his protection. He ran toward her, shouting in English and in breathless Turkish. As he came up, the little veiled figure drew two revolvers and fired at him.

The bullets whirred past his ears. He would have been glad to retreat, but his impetus carried him forward, and it was momentum rather than any foolhardy bravery that forced him to leap at the murderous lady and wrestle with her for her revolvers, which continued to spit fire in a very feminine way and fortunately with feminine aim.

In the highly indecorous wrestle for life, the fugitive's thick yashmak was torn loose, and Jebb saw to his infinite amazement that the little lady wore a heavy beard, and was really a little gentleman.

No longer restrained by motives of delicacy, Jebb kicked the old gentleman's heels from under him and plounced him on the turf, kneeling on his arms till he could wrest the revolvers loose.

The old man uttered violent things in a violent way, and then began to plead shrilly. But Jebb had lost his Turkish along with his breath and his patience, and he simply held his prisoner fast, till

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The old man uttered violent things in a violent way, and then began to plead shrilly. But Jebb had lost his Turkish along with his breath and his patience, and he simply held his prisoner fast, till

the pursuers arrived, and, gazing with awe at the scene, poured forth horrified sentences in which Jebb caught the word: "Padishah!"

He nearly swooned as it came over him that the little old gentleman in the disheveled ferijé and veil was no less—and no more—than Abdul Hamid II.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON TO STAMBOUL.

EACH of the breathless pursuers laid hold on the royal captive, till he looked as many-limbed as the spider he has been always called. Turning to Jebb, the Turks lifted, with such hands as were free, the imaginary dust of homage to their breasts and brows.

Then in a cloud of real dust a mounted officer thundered up. While the horse was still fighting the curb that brought it to a halt, the situation was explained to the rider in clamorous phrases.

He flung himself to the ground. Once dismounted, he peered hastily into the veils wadded about the prisoner's face, heaved a sigh of gigantic relief, and gasped:

"Elhamdulillah!"

Having thanked Allah, he turned to Jebb and poured out in perfect French an effusion of personal gritudes, and compliments, and hopes that his hearth might be all right, and that Allah might send him blessed increase of wealth, and that his parents and all his friends were alive and well. He insisted that he was the dust under Jebb's feet, and introduced himself as Behalul Bey, a cavalry major of Binbashi detailed as the guardian of the sultan.

He was trembling, and a pale sweat was on his brow, for he had galloped in pursuit of his prisoner; his heart had galloped harder, realizing not only what blame this escape would bring upon his own head but what calamities upon his people.

As for the prisoner, he was as far as possible from looking the role he played in the history and the legend of his long reign. His meager five feet of stature lost something further in his swaddling robe. The bulging brow over the vulture beak, and the large ears protruding from the swart skull, made him sinister enough. But the rouge on his high cheek bones, the stains of dye on his beard, and his female garb left him ridiculous.

Only the hysterical, senile frenzy of his struggles, his oaths, his invocations of the Allah whose shadow he had been on earth, revealed the soul that had shut itself in a silken web and sent forth spies and messengers of death along every gossamer thread. It was hard for Jebb to believe that millions of Turks should have endured for thirty-three years the despotism of this little, red-fezzed perjurer, this throttler of liberties, this massacrer of Armenians and imprisoner of patriots, exiler of philosophers, this hoarder of gold, this craven who had feared for nothing except his own bodily security. He was so ludicrously impotent now that it seemed cruel even to recall his past.

Having no other occupation but conspiracy, and knowing that there were numbers of reactionaries outside to aid his restoration for their own ends, he had made attempt after attempt to escape. Lives had been lost in frustrating them, and the walls built higher and higher about him. But evidently a new scheme had ripened, for when the sputtering prisoner was searched with as much delicacy as was due his raiment and his station, Behalul Binbashi brought to light a crumpled paper.

By the flicker of a series of matches he found it to be a letter from Albanian sympathizers promising the sultan refuge and concealment till an army could be mustered to return him to the throne.

When Behalul had finished this doc-

ument he gave a hasty order, and various followers who had come up on foaming horses set out to scour the region.

They had not beaten the thicket far when they started a human covey. Darkling figures sprang up and ran in various directions. Some had been caught, some had escaped, when, with a great cracking of whips, a carriage dashed from hiding and went flying down the road. There was a furious gallopade and the pursuit vanished beyond a hill.

Later the carriage returned under escort. It was empty of passengers but loaded with arms.

The driver dropped from the box to the sultan's feet with heartbroken cries of distress and adoration. The tyrant has yet to be found who cannot procure devotion to the last. The weapons being removed, the sultan was humbly compelled into the carriage and driven slowly back to private life instead of forward into civil war.

Major Behalul asked Jebb to walk with him, and giving his horse to a soldier to lead, trudged alongside Jebb.

When the Allatini villa was reached, and the sultan snugly restored to his nest, Behalul invited Jebb to enter the carriage with him, and returned him to his hotel in state.

That night he was called to the home of the most important men in Salonica. Other guests at dinner were a group of Young Turkish leaders. At Jebb's request Cranford Banbury was asked to attend as interpreter, though all of the Turks spoke French or German, and some of them English. The pride that Banbury took in seeing his protégé acclaimed as a savior of the nation, was recompense enough for his hospitality.

After a long and evidently flowery speech by a white-bearded Young Turk, who had spent part of his years in prison and part in exile, Banbury explained to Jebb:

"The upshot of the old gentleman's palaver is that they want you to name some reward for your wonderful et cetera, et cetera. What would you like most, my boy? The diamond star of the order of Nishani Osmanee, or a silver medal for saving life, or will you have it in cash?"

Jebb did not hesitate about his answer:

"Tell them about the lost child and ask them if they can give me any help."

Banbury drawled forth a long story, which seemed to touch the guests deeply, for when he finished they all spoke at once, and Cranford explained:

"They say that they promise you the aid of the whole nation, and that nobody in Turkey shall feel himself too high or too busy to join the search. But they want also to show you some personal favor."

While seeming to listen politely to the discourse of his hosts, and while nodding low every time he recognized his name, Jebb had been carrying forward in his imagination the consequences of this latest turn of fate. He saw his hasty act magnified into an event of wide notoriety. It would, probably, be cabled home that an American surgeon had prevented the Turkish emperor from escaping, as an American dentist had once aided a French empress in her flight. The newspapers would headline him for a few days and then drop him.

But the mother of Cynthia Thatcher would see the news and—what would she not think? Jebb had hoped that she would have given her child up as dead. Such a sorrow, bitter soever, would be less harrowing than the unendurable thought that the child was lost. He preferred that she should suffer the lesser torment until that glorious day when he should appear from the grave and place her child in her arms.

The publication of the news that Jebb

was in Salonica capturing sultans would not only tear the mother's heart open afresh, but would set the police of America on his trail. There would be cablegrams, arrests, inquisitions, checks, suspicions at every step. No, he must do his work alone.

His studies in dissection had taught him to follow the thin white thread of a nerve through all its hiding places, all its ramifications, and he felt himself as well qualified to retrace his own steps as any of the stodgy police detectives he had ever met.

One thing he felt above all things important—that his quest should not be interrupted. When, then, Cranford repeated the desire of the officials to show him some personal grace, the request was ready to his tongue:

"The greatest favor they can do me is to keep what I have done a secret, and, above all, not to let my name get into the papers."

"What is this?" gasped Cranford. "Modesty?"

"Partly," said Jebb; "not altogether."

Jebb's message was received with unexpected delight, and promises upon Turkish honor that no one should breathe Jebb's name for publication.

When the feast was finally done, and the elaborate ceremonials of parting completed, Cranford walked back to Jebb's hotel with him.

"Do you think they'll keep the thing secret?" Jebb asked anxiously.

"Never fear that they won't. They don't care to let the friends of the old spider know how near he came to getting away. If it hadn't been for a Yankee doctor happening along, he might have been in the arms of his supporters to-night, and nobody would know to-morrow whose head was safe. Trust them to keep that secret! But they can show their gratitude in no end of subterranean ways. They perfected their revolution in secret. They'll do everything for you that man can do. It

is no end lucky for you to have Salonica in your favor."

He went on to explain that Salonica was almost supreme at Constantinople since it was the khaki-clad regiments of Salonica that had forced the old sultan to restore the constitution, had quelled the mutiny he had set up among the troops that obeyed his whims, had captured the city to foil his plot to butcher the Christians, had solemnly deposed him and brought his amiable brother out of long oblivion to be the servant of the constitution and the people. It was Macedonia that went over into Constantinople to help the people, and to be in favor at Salonica was to be doubly in favor at Stamboul.

Jebb slept well that night, for he had hope to soothe his pillow.

At the station, the next day, the Young Turk leaders gathered to wave him good luck.

And so he set forth on his twenty-four-hour journey to Constantinople and puffed at his cigar with his first genuine contentment, for he shuffled in his hands a sheaf of *buyuruldus*—letters of commendation to some of the chief personages of the empire. The Jebb who left Salonica in state was not the Jebb who had stolen into the town, but it was yet a third Jebb he must stalk through Constantinople, the great chaos.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOTHER OF THE WORLD.

THE train was only six hours late, so that instead of arriving in the early morning light Jebb came in the full glow of the afternoon. Disappointment met him at once.

Constantinople has been likened to a stage spectacle; from the water front it is impressive beyond words, but behind the scenes lies cruel disillusion. Jebb came by the alleyway to the stage door. The back yard of no city is its best advertisement, and Jebb's æsthetic

faculties were less stirred than his aseptic soul was horrified. But Jebb's chief interest in Constantinople was that her police force might be modern enough to help him find the lost child or trace at least his own footsteps through the twisted streets.

Of this he had some hope, for he carried in his pocket documents that gave him freedom of the city. They had already worked magic with the customs inspector who had boarded the train. They promised great things for his other problems. When he descended from the sleeping car and fell among the riotous Kurdish porters, blue-bloused, black-belted, and swarthy-faced, fighting for his hand bag, his heart sank.

But behind a grilled inclosure he found a dragoman whose cap wore the name of the Hotel Bristol, which Cranford had recommended. He intrusted his destinies to this man, and under his guidance showed his *teskeré* to the proper official, and gave the appropriate tip to the Kolji who pretended to inspect his baggage.

The dragoman led Jebb and the porter who carried his bag out into the noisy streets, through a whirlwind of newsboys howling *gazétas* of every language, even English. A red-fezzed cabman on the box of a rickety *araba* folded his newspaper and took up the lines. The dragoman gave him the destination and salaamed to Jebb, the *hamal* salaamed his thanks for the *bak-sheesh*, and the carriage whirled from the station.

And now Jebb was once more in Constantinople among strange perspectives, peculiar architecture, and an atmosphere that is all its own. He tried to remember some scene, catch some reminder that he had passed this way before, but that room of his mind would not open.

What chiefly overwhelmed Jebb was the hugeness of the city—as large as

ten Salonicas or fifty Uskubs—as large as if Boston, San Francisco, and St. Louis faced each other in one mass.

Over its famously infamous pavements Jebb's *araba* glided, till it rumbled onto the rough boards of the Galata Bridge afloat upon the oily waters of the Golden Horn. The great pontoon was thronged with every imaginable manner of man and woman—in every imaginable costume, from the half nakedness of children to the long robes of Arabs and the black wraiths of the veiled women.

There were European hats enough in the crowd, but they were worn by foreigners. Some of the hats were so American that Jebb looked under them, counting on finding a face he knew. It seemed impossible that such a *mêlée* should not include an acquaintance.

His eyes darted here and there in the throng, as a fisher hangs over a stream with harpoon poised. He missed this face in looking for that, saw a friend at first glance, and at second glance saw not even a resemblance.

A derby hat unmistakably American caught his eye, and he turned to stare at it. At the same instant he heard a voice behind him, almost at his elbow: "Hello, old man! How's electricity?"

He whirled so quickly that he nearly sprained his neck. He caught an over-the-shoulder grin and heard a Yankee chuckle. He could not recall the face or the voice, but the race was plainly his own.

The fellow countryman moved on through the crowd. Jebb stood up to identify the man, but saw only a glimpse of red hair. He was tempted to leap out and go in search. But a porter carrying two huge barrels on his shoulders drifted between, and hid the wayfarer from sight. Jebb sank back in the *araba*, cudgeling his memory.

Who was the red-headed man?

Why did he mention electricity?

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW PLAN.

LEAVING the sonorous bridge, the *araba* rolled into ancient Galata, watched over by the high-hilled tower that has shouldered into the sky since the people of Genoa ruled here, never dreaming that one of the Genoese should open a new world to the West.

Through the streets and shops of Galata and on up the hill into the district of Pera, the horses tugged.

Though the route lay eastward the progress was westerly, for here the clubs, the shops, the hotels, the homes were mainly European. Here were the embassies of the nations, each with its flag offering sanctuary to its citizens. And it was one of these flags that brought something gushing from Jebb's heart into his throat and on into his eyes, for he saw red and white stripes billowing luxuriously and stars trembling in a blue field.

As the carriage passed the American embassy Jebb's homesick eyes drank in the beauty and meaning of the emblem. He looked back at it till the turn in the street hid it; and he was filled with a glad, sad longing, for he wondered when—if ever—he should dare return to the shelter of its folds.

With all his soul he wished that he had never left the shadow of the flag. And then with all his soul he recalled the futile wish, for he realized that without his adventure he would never have seen Miruma.

Jebb wondered where Miruma was now, what she was doing. He wondered if Fehmi Pasha were keeping his word, and how she would use her new-found freedom. He resolved to write to her; then he withdrew the resolution, fearing that his letter might embarrass her, might only awaken the regret he hoped she felt.

At length he arrived at his hotel, a porter seized his hand bag, and he dis-

missed the cab driver with his fare and sufficient baksheesh. It was most restful to be greeted in his own language and to make his wishes known without groping for Turkish, French, or German equivalents and substitutes.

His hotel was advertised as being the only one with an American elevator in place of a lift. The little soaring cage was like a touch of home. His room overlooked a cozy garden, and he sank in a chair to give himself just a moment's breathing while, before he opened his new campaign.

He ran over his letters of introduction again. He could not read the rolling arabesques running from right to left. He could read only the names and addresses, but one of them was to Shekret Pasha—the Iron Man, the Cromwell of the Revolution; others were Niazi and Enver Beys, the fiery soldiers whose photographs were everywhere—the *matinée* idols of the Turks. With such aids how could he fail?

But before all others Jebb had decided to hunt up the official who had issued to "V. Pierpont" his first *teskeré* to travel in Salonica. That was the inner end of the tangled cord he must unravel. When he inquired at his hotel where the bureau of the passports was to be found, he learned to his disgust that it was in the Zabtieh Nazareti, or ministry of police, and he must retrace all the distance he had come and more.

He picked up another *araba* and was jounced down the long hill, across the rattling bridge, and on through Stamboul to the ancient Hippodrome, which marked his journey's end. All the way he had been rehearsing Turkish phrases under his breath, while his eyes fairly rummaged the crowds.

He had a very definite hope that amiable coincidence would bring the red-headed man across his path again. But coincidences will not coincide by request, and he got only his journey for

his pains. The train's lateness and his own had brought him to the bureau after it had closed for the day.

He had the afternoon and evening to himself—very much to himself. He thought of his letters of introduction, but if it were too late for an official to be at his desk, it was too late for a stranger to call on a busy manager of a new empire. He thought of the American embassy, but he had a strong disinclination to visiting his own countrymen in his plight, at least before he had exhausted the dynamics of the new Turkish government in vain.

Impatience gadfied him into walking back to the hotel, and he could not resist the feeling that if only he walked far enough and saw people enough, he would encounter some one who would seize him and say:

"The lost child is waiting for you. Come with me."

To see and be seen was his ambition. He studied every face, started after every child. Again and again he was thrust through with joy as he heard Cynthia's little treble. But it was the cry of some Turkish or Armenian or Greek little girl. Again and again he thought he saw Cynthia disappear round a corner and he would quicken his pace almost to a run, always to find that the child was nothing like his ward, or had vanished into some of the infinite retreats.

He bought a copy of the *Levant Herald* from a newsboy and picked up a few morsels of information as to what history had been making at home during his long exile. He sat and read it over a cup of coffee at a table on the sidewalk, then paid his host and pushed on, pausing for no mosque, museum, or bazaar, picking his way over the heaps of refuse, avoiding the huddles of sleeping dogs that preempted such sidewalks as barbers did not fill—the million ownerless mangy dogs that own Constanti-

nople, foraging all day and barking all night.

Again he found himself on the Galata Bridge, a foot passenger in a swirling masquerade. He was always alert for the red-headed man who spoke of electricity, a subject of which Jebb knew as little as possible. He tried to dismiss him from his mind with the theory that the fellow had simply mistaken him for somebody else. But he could neither dismiss him nor discover him.

He dragged weary feet to his hotel, and fatigue spoiled a dinner that should have entranced him with its old-time dishes. He had an evening to kill, and Constantinople is poor in amusements of evenings.

He left the hotel and took the underground railway to the bridge, and watched the throngs again, seeking, seeking. On the surface of the Golden Horn the light caïques were darting here and there, the swallow-swift gondola canoes of this region. He resolved to indulge himself in the strange nepenthe that comes from gliding over the water.

He went to one of the landing stages and bargained with the two boatmen for an hour's stroll on the Bosphorus.

The two oarsmen bent to their work and the caïque swooped forward with an unimaginable lightness and fleetness. Jebb forgot his fezzed gondoliers and stared dreamily at the triple city in panorama before him.

As he mused upon it, his hungry heart returned more than ever to desiring Miruma. He remembered what she had said of the success he could make of his profession in Turkey, and the idea grew in his heart that the best arrangement he could make of his future was to return to Stamboul, after he had found Cynthia and given her back to her mother—to return to Stamboul and marry Miruma.

Under the benison of this reverie, the

wonderfulness of Constantinople took on such a delirium of beauty that, when the caïque had returned him to shore, he rather floated than walked to his hotel, and never once thought of the red-headed man. He could have brushed elbows with him without seeing him, could have heard that quizzical voice again and never heeded it.

CHAPTER XXII.

UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES.

THE next morning Jebb repeated the pilgrimage from his hotel in Pera to the ministry of police in Stamboul. He arrived betimes, but again he found the bureau closed.

He demanded an explanation from a black-coated policeman with a fez for a helmet, and was answered in amazed Turkish:

"But it is *Jouma'a*, to-day."

"Friday! Oh, of course!"

"It is the sabbath of the Faithful."

"I understand. Pardon me."

"There are three sabbaths a week here, effendi. To-morrow is the sabbath of the Jews, and a bootblack will not touch your shoes that day. The day after that is the sabbath of the Christians."

Jebb wished him well with Allah and turned away. This Constantinople was getting on his nerves. How was he ever to find whence he had come on his first visit here? He faced another long ennui of waiting for another day and night to pass.

He thought of his letters of introduction. Then his spirits fell again. If the day were too sacred for the *teskeré* office to be open, the great men of the empire would be in no mood to receive a troublesome visitor. He must sulk in his tent once more.

There was the American embassy, of course. He had hoped to track himself through the town and out of it without taking his own people into his confi-

dence. But he felt that it would be criminally selfish to wait longer. Every day put Cynthia farther out of his reach.

Instead of visiting the embassy, he decided to try the consulate. Perhaps some trace of him or of her had been found. Perhaps his other self, V. Pierpont, had sauntered in, talked like a new millionaire, and made himself obnoxious enough to be remembered.

When he reached the consulate that, also, was deserted. He was tempted to forswear his allegiance and become another man without a country. But there was a gorgeous *kavass* at the door who explained that the whole staff had gone to see Selamlik.

"And who is Selamlik?"

The *kavass* cast his eyes upward in dismay at such ignorance.

"Selamlik is the visit the padishah—whom Allah preserve—makes to the mosque every Friday to pray. It is the most glorious of ceremonies. Every *Amériqali* in Stamboul is there who can get the permect."

"And I suppose that to-morrow there will be some Jewish ceremony and the consul will go to the synagogue, and the next day you will be closed because he has to go to the Episcopal church. What's the matter with the other days of the week?"

The *kavass* could not understand the American's sarcasm or his impatience. But then Americans were always in a hurry. With splendid condescension he said:

"Thees afternoon comes back one of the officers, Meester Rosen Effendi. He has some work to be did. If you are here again three-four o'clock you find him, I thenk."

To kill time Jebb went on along the Grande Rue de Pera to Janni's restaurant, dawdled through his luncheon, and strolled about through its gardens, blurring with puffs of impatient smoke the view spread out before him; Bos-

porus, Marmora, the cornucopia of the Golden Horn, and all the piled-up splendors on their shores.

He tried to remember the unforgettable scene. He knew he had been here—perhaps in this spot. Perhaps he had tossed a gold piece to one of these waiters in place of a copper baksheesh. Why did none of them show his recognition?

If any did remember Jebb, the discretion which is part of a waiter's equipment kept him silent. And no guest nodded to him or asked him about electricity.

Arriving at last before the consulate, Jebb was greeted by the *kavass* with the deference of expectancy and with palm open for baksheesh. Mr. Rosen was at his desk, preparing some trade reports, but he consented to see Jebb.

To Jebb's eyes the man was utterly a stranger, but Mr. Rosen no sooner saw Jebb than a smile began to quirk his mouth corners. And his greeting was:

"What's the trouble this time?"

"Why do you say this time?"

"Because it isn't the other time——"

"Oh, you refer to the time I was here before?"

"Naturally."

Jebb stood in embarrassment. Everybody could remember him but himself. He wanted to ask flatfootedly what had brought him there before, but chagrin held him, and, besides, he had learned that silence is so odious to most people that wherever two are met, if one can only keep quiet a little while, the other will begin to talk.

Rosen noted Jebb's confused reticence and set it down to another cause. "You haven't lost your passport again, have you?"

"I'm afraid I have."

"Well, it hasn't been found. If it turned up the police would have forwarded it to us. Say, you must be as rich as you say, for you pay fines just for the fun of it."

While Jebb was trying to think of a remark at the same time elusive and luring, Rosen began to grope:

"Where have you been all this while, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Are you trying to say 'Pierpont'?"

"That's it, Mr. Vanderbilt Pierpont, eh?"

Jebb nodded. "Tell me, Mr. Rosen, did I have a little child with me the time you saw me?"

"A child? No. You had no child with you when I saw you."

"You're sure?"

"Perfectly. I'll not soon forget the first picture I had of you. Word came here that some Yankee was in trouble with the customshouse. It's a common occurrence. Americans are forever bouncing into Turkey without the indispensable passport. The consul sent me down as usual to get our fellow countryman out of hock. I can see you sitting there now. You were very haughty. I thought at the time that perhaps you had been indulging a little in magnificent water. You sat there hugging a Gladstone bag and threatening to report the customs inspector to your particular friend, the sultan."

"I had a Gladstone bag with me?"

"Yes, and the fellow had found some suspicious-looking documents in it. Everything looked suspicious in the days of the old sultan. You said you had come to Turkey to buy something—I don't remember just what. So many Americans come here to buy things. Anyway, you didn't have a passport and the inspector wanted to fine you. You said: 'Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute.' I remember that. I calmed you down and persuaded the customs people to accept a consular guaranty and give you a new passport. And then you went your way. Now you've lost it again, eh?"

"You're sure I had a Gladstone bag with me?"

"Perfectly. It was full of blue prints

and specifications and other dangerous-looking papers."

"Where had I come from?"

"You got off an Austria-Hungarian Lloyd steamer."

"Where did I get on it?"

"How in—how should I know? Those boats makes several ports."

"And you can't tell me where I got on?"

"Look here, my friend, are you stringing me? Asking *me* questions about *you*? What's this new game, anyway? A prize contest for the nearest correct guess? Lord help us, I thought I'd heard about all the fool questions a consul could be asked, but this is a new line. Why don't you cable to your friends in America and say: 'Who am I? Where was I? Where am I? Answer prepaid.'"

It seemed inadvisable for Jebb to keep his secret from his angering countryman. The map of the United States on the wall gave him a feeling that he was safe here, and that it was time to enlist the aid of the republic in the cause of its little ward. Cynthia Thatcher belonged to Uncle Sam and it was his duty to find her.

Seeing that there was no one else about, Jebb hitched his chair close to Mr. Rosen's desk and unbosomed his story.

Strange delight of confession! Just giving voice to his old secret was an immense relief. It was like taking the Old Man of the Sea off his chest. He could breathe with unobstructed lungs. When he had finished a brief autobiography, Rosen shook his head with the sympathy most Americans feel for the clients of Mr. Barleycorn.

"Too bad, old man," he said. "I'm rather fond of the liquid fuel myself, but I take it in sips. I had a friend, though, a judge in Philadelphia, who left his chambers one day for a stroll and woke up in a berth on a steamer just coming into Honolulu. Then I

knew a grocer in Philadelphia—an awfully nice man, too—with grown-up children; he used to vanish at odd intervals and turn up in the strangest places. Once he found himself on a farm in Illinois; he had worked there for weeks under another name. I knew a surgeon in New York who sometimes performed operations when he didn't know his own name. He patched up a friend of mine on the street once, and didn't know it. It's an awful affliction, old man——"

"Don't waste time sympathizing with me," Jebb broke in. "Think of the child."

"Do you know we've heard of her from another source?"

Jebb leaped to his feet.

"You have! You mean she's found?"

"No, we've just heard that she was lost. We got a circular note from the American consul in Vienna. He had had word from the Austrian police."

"My friend Von Hellwald put them on the track. Have they heard anything?"

"Oh, no. They've just begun to pretend to look."

"Just begun?"

"It takes a long time for these big empires to budge, especially to hunt for a little unknown waif. Now, if she were an anarchist who had taken a pot shot at an emperor, or a Russian professor who had become a tame anarchist, or a dissipated prince who had gone off on a splurge, they'd turn the world upside down to find him. I'm really surprised at their paying any attention at all to a mere child. But they did. And here's the circular."

He took from a pigeonhole a sheet of paper.

"You see, it says: 'Wanted information of Cecilia Baxter.'"

"It isn't Baxter—it's Thatcher," Jebb insisted. "And not Cecilia, but Cynthia."

Rosen tossed the circular to Jebb.

"It says Baxter here."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" Jebb groaned. "They've misspelled the name." He looked further. "And got the description wrong! She doesn't look a bit like that! The search has been useless, useless."

Rosen answered cynically:

"I doubt if there's been any search. You know that what is everybody's business is nobody's business. Some overworked clerk has had this thing shoved on to him; he's scratched off the circular and hasn't had time to read the proof—all foreign names look alike to foreigners anyway—and there you are."

Wringing his hands, Jebb sat crushed once more with the vision of the lost ghost-child roving homeless, unable to tell who she was or whence, and flung aside or driven off perhaps by the very policemen who should have been searching for her.

Suddenly Rosen was startled by a new idea.

"You say the child's real name was not Baxter, but Thatcher."

"Yes, Thatcher."

"Any relation to"—he put his hand out to another pigeonhole for a card—"to John Thatcher, of Berlin?"

"That's her father."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. How did you get his name?"

"It was like this: A few weeks ago a Turk who keeps a little inn in the outskirts of town came in here with a Gladstone bag."

"A Gladstone bag?"

"Yes, same style as the one you carried, now that I come to think of it. But then everybody carries them. The Turk went to America as a wrestler once. He can speak and read English a little. He came here with a Gladstone bag full of papers. He told a long cock-and-bull yarn about some American gentleman who had left them with him and never came back. The Turk

came here to see about it. He wouldn't leave the bag, but he let us look through it. There were a lot of blue prints and mechanical drawings with the name of John Thatcher on them. And a bundle of clippings and letters. I made a note of the name and promised to keep it in mind. Where is this John Thatcher?"

"He's dead. I was on my way to America, taking his child to his widow, and the drawings for his invention, and some documents to prove his innocence of an odious charge. And this Turk has the papers? Thank God for a small mercy, anyway! Where can I find the fellow?"

"I'll send for him. Have him here to-morrow."

"No, I'll go to him."

"All he wants is a liberal baksheesh. But he lives a long way off."

"I don't care. I can't wait to see him. Where is he to be found?"

"His name is Hafiz Mustafa, and he keeps a little inn out near the Adrianople gate close to the Mosque of Mirima."

"Mirima!" The word smote Jebb's ear like a chord of music.

Rosen did not hear that music; he went on in prose:

"It's an old mosque built in the sixteenth century, and nearly destroyed in the big earthquake of eighteen ninety-four. Odd sort of story. This Mirima was the daughter of Roxalana, the Russian captive who became a slave, then the wife of the old Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Rather pretty name, isn't it?"

"Isn't it?" Jebb echoed, suffocated with all the word meant to him. "Good-by, I must get out to the inn of Hafiz Mustafa before it grows dark."

"Better go to the foot of the bridge and take one of the Golden Horn steamers; they run every fifteen minutes; get off at Aivan Serai this side of Eyub, and then go west through the

Greek quarter. While you're up there, I want to see that Turkish wrestler with you ought to see the wonderful cemetery of Eyub and the old land wall." the Gladstone bag. Good afternoon." And he was hurrying downhill toward the boat landing.

"I don't want to see any cemeteries."

To be continued in the next issue of THE THRILL BOOK.



BLIND AND LAME

By E. C. Beckwith

A BLIND man and a cripple, both old and in rags, were nearing the outskirts of a vast city. They walked slowly, the blind man guided by the cripple, who, having lost both his legs, moved on two wooden stumps strapped to his knees.

"How far now, friend?" asked the sightless one. "We must be near."

"Not far, brother; not far. I can see the houses. We'll be there before dark. The sun's going down, and perhaps, if you had your eyes, you would say some fine things about it."

"Tut—about a sunset? Leave that to poets and other knaves. I am too old and sane for such nonsense, though I, too, when I was young and had my sight, did my share of rhyming. No more—no more. It got me nothing."

"What, your sight?" asked the cripple, whom the other knew to be stupid.

"No, rhyming. I was rich then. What wealth I had! All left me by my father. And when I squandered it among rogues and women I got no thanks."

"Had I been born rich, like you, I would not now be begging in my old age for bread," the cripple mused sadly.

"When they had taken all I had, and I offered them my rhymes for sale, they left me penniless. Then my sight, too, left me, and ever since I have been begging. But what things I have seen, even without my eyes!"

"What, without your eyes? As if one could see at all without his eyes!"

"I have seen, I have seen," the blind man repeated firmly. "I have seen even in the darkness. When young a poet, when old a philosopher. Friend, have you always been a fool?"

"Nay, brother, though when young I was, before I lost my legs. In those days I toiled for my sustenance from dawn to dusk for a few farthings—not an atom of my worth. But when my legs were taken I made my vow to work no more. For I found that folk would give me far more without my legs and for begging than they would if I kept on slaving. Something for nothing, brother, is the desire of all the world. We are to be envied, you and I, if they but knew."

"You are not such a fool as I thought," muttered the blind man in surprise.

"No," agreed the cripple. "Though naturally you would think so, being blind. It is said that this is a city of great wealth, and that few of our calling have yet been here."

"We should have good takings, then. How far now, friend?"

"Not far, brother; a mile or two."

But at night the blind man and the cripple were no nearer than they had ever been to that magical city, with its fabulous riches waiting like a glowing dream beneath the cold glitter of the stars.

The Mystery of the Timber Tract

By
Francis Metcalfe



THIS story is set down as Johnson told it to me one night when we had forgathered in a dak bungalow on the far side of the world, as nearly in his own words as I can recollect them. I shall preface it only by the statement that Johnson is an unimaginative man, a keen observer, and not given to romancing. He is the eyes and ears of capitalists in many large enterprises; sent by them to report upon properties which are submitted as possible investments, and his hard common sense and absolute integrity make his reports more valued than those of many technical experts. I may add, further, that I know the region where the events which he tells of took place, and I am acquainted with many of the surviving characters. Johnson was unaware of this; but I recognized them from his description of their peculiar manner of speech and mode of life, as will any reader who has visited this isolated community where clan loyalty and traditions are stronger than the statute law.

"My business takes me to all parts of the world, and I have many curious experiences which are not mentioned in

the official reports to my employers," he remarked after he had sealed a fat envelope and addressed it to a man whose name in New York is synonymous with millions. "I am sent to get the rock-bottom facts about properties which may be too glowingly described by enthusiastic promoters; but the men who employ me care only for such information as deals with dollars and cents, and I have never been employed to solve a psychological problem. I incidentally ran across one, however, the last time I was employed by the man who sent me out here; and I'll tell you the facts and let you draw your own conclusions."

The native "boy" brought us tepid beer. Johnson lighted a long, black Burmese cheroot, settled himself comfortably in the ratian lounge chair, and went on with his narrative.

About five years ago I was asked to report upon a large tract of timberland in—well, within easy distance of New York. It had escaped the ax because a special and expensive line of railway would be necessary to develop it; but the tremendous advance in the

price of lumber brought it to notice as a possibly profitable investment. I was instructed to go over it thoroughly, estimate the amount of standing timber, and see if there was sufficient water power to operate sawmills. Knowing that it would be a tremendous task to get over twenty thousand acres of primeval forest by dipping into it from its borders, I took along my camp outfit, intending to live in the woods.

The livery-stable proprietor in the nearest village on the railroad arranged to drive the rig which I hired to carry me and my belongings to the property; but when I told him that I wished to be taken as far as possible into the tract, and that he would probably have to remain overnight, he declared that he could not accompany me. Two or three of the loafers who make a country livery stable their lounging place also refused the job on various pretexts, and he finally had to put the team in charge of a stolid-looking Swede, a new arrival in the country, who understood only about ten words of English.

"Jake don't know none too much about this part of the country; but you can't lose your way, an' he ain't none afeerd of ghosts," he said as I climbed in. "Jest keep a-turnin' to the right at every fork of the roads, an' about fifteen miles up you'll come to Jerry's cabin. It's built of logs an' stands on the right-hand side. That's jest at the edge of the woods, an' mebbe he'll guide you in."

I couldn't figure out what a fear of ghosts had to do with the proposition; but, knowing the tendency of villagers on the edge of wild territory to have fun with city dwellers, I only nodded my head in reply as we drove off.

Jake's limited vocabulary made it impossible to get enlightenment from him, and save for the queer guttural sounds which he made to encourage the horses on a road which was not fit

for a goat to clamber over our journey was a silent one. I had come from an unusually long spell of desk work and I found compensation in the fresh, crisp air and the beauty of the brilliant forest coloring. It was almost a steady climb through a wild country, and we passed less than a dozen houses before pulling up in front of Jerry's, where we were welcomed by a pack of yelping mongrel hounds, and as it was already growing dusk I determined to ask for a night's lodging.

Jerry himself proved to be a typical mountaineer, such a type as one would expect to find in the Blue Ridge; tall and thin, but apparently all bone and sinew. A bad figure of a man to have a mix-up with, and evidently, in spite of his courteous but laconic greeting, suspicious of strangers.

The cabin was comfortable and scrupulously clean, and after that drive I was hungry enough to have eaten the horses which drew me; but the supper left nothing to be desired. The mutton tasted suspiciously like venison and the alleged chicken had the flavor of partridge, while a rack of rifles and shotguns over the fireplace strengthened my suspicions that the meat came from neither sheepfold nor hencoop.

There was little conversation during the meal. Jerry was taciturn by nature, and his wife and children were overcome by shyness; but he rather reluctantly admitted that the shooting was good and that in the season he occasionally killed a deer. I made up my mind that he took me for a State game warden and frankly stated my errand.

"Can you act as guide for me for the next week?" I asked after I had explained things. "I intend to make a thorough inspection of the property, and it would be a great help to have some one who knows the country."

He refused a very liberal offer of compensation almost curtly.

"This yere is a wild country, it is," he said, shaking his head. "We as lives into it likes to get home nights to our families, we do, an' I don't reckon as how you'll find any one who'll lie out nights with you. Some of the boys 'll likely be here to-night, an' you can ask 'em yourself, you can."

This was the longest speech I had heard from Jerry in our brief acquaintance, and it had to content me until the arrival of "the boys."

Great, strapping mountaineers they were, and unless it was to look me over, I could hardly see the object of their coming, for there was nothing of sociability in the call. They all bore a certain family resemblance to Jerry and possessed the same habit of taciturnity; for after a curt "Evenin'," on arrival each took a seat on the fence and silently whittled a pine stick. The pile of shavings which littered the roadside indicated that this was a favorite meeting place, and they were so absorbed in their occupation that it was impossible to keep up a sustained conversation.

"This yere stranger wants a guide fer a week in the Langthorn tract, he does," remarked Jerry after his keen knife had reduced a large pine stick to splinters. "Be any of you boys han-kerin' fer the job?"

"Four-fifty a day and all found," I added quickly; but there was no response and no interruption of the whittling.

Jerry glanced at me and shook his head; my face must have expressed my disappointment, for he volunteered to act as my guide by day, stipulating only that he should leave me in time to reach home by nightfall.

The others glanced at me curiously and, I thought, with disapproval when I announced that in that case I should carry a light shelter tent and camp alone, exploring in the immediate vicinity after he left and before he rejoined me in the mornings.

Wilderness dwellers are, as a rule, men of few words; but with innate courtesy each of them clumsily expressed regret that the timidity of the womenfolks stood in the way of my wishes.

On the opposite side of the road, between us and the forest, was a narrow cleared space, and in the bright moonlight the stumps and underbrush could be plainly distinguished. The nondescript collection of dogs owned by the different men was nosing about in the brush, and suddenly one of them gave tongue and was joined by all the others, yapping and barking on the trail of some animal. It excited a languid interest in the crowd for a few minutes, just so long as the hounds circled about; but when they settled on a straight line which led to the forest the shower of shavings again commenced to fall.

I was surprised at their indifference, for the yelping pack seemed to be getting down to business; but the dogs had no sooner disappeared in the woods than their yapping changed to howls of fear, and they came slinking back across the clearing, the hair on their backs erect and their tails between their legs. They seemed to want the protection of human companionship; but their owners paid little attention to them and looked at each other furtively when I suggested that the curs had found more than they bargained for.

Jerry volunteered the information that "There's b'ars, an' sich trash in them woods, there be," and the arrival of another man interrupted further surmise as to the reason of their strange behavior.

The newcomer resembled the others in build and costume, but in the bright moonlight he appeared to be a much older man, for the long hair which fell to his shoulders from under the soft felt hat was as white as snow. He carried a double-barreled shotgun and

was followed by a good-looking hound, and I noticed that the others did not raise their eyes to his as they responded to his "Evenin', boys."

"Has any of you seen Lon?" he asked, peering anxiously from one to the other, and each in turn shook his head and appeared uncomfortable under the searching gaze. The old man gave an exclamation of disappointment and looked hopelessly toward the woods.

"I reckon I'd better be steppin' along then, I had," he said slowly. "I must sure find Lon to-night, fer Jinny's gettin' powerful oneasy about him."

The eternal whittling went on without interruption and no one said anything as he turned and walked toward the forest; but he had no sooner entered its shadows than the melancholy howl of a dog in fear came to our ears and the hound which had followed him came slinking back as the others had done, crawling on its belly to Jerry's feet. He reached down and petted it, and the other men, as if the return of the hound were a signal, closed their jackknives and, with a short "Night, Jerry. Night, Mr. Johnson," departed for their respective homes.

I followed Jerry to the house, where he tied the hound to a pillar of the porch, although his own half dozen mongrels were left at liberty.

"There seems to be one man in this community who is able to be away from home at night," I said. "Is Lon his boy?"

"Lon is dead these five years, he is, Mr. Johnson," answered Jerry, looking at me gravely. "Him an' poor Joe there, was cousins, they was, an' Joe hasn't been quite right in his head since Lon died. Every night in the year he searches the woods fer him, he does. I tell you this because you might run across him in the woods an' harm him. We are pretty much all kin up here, an' they was both my cousins, too."

This last statement seemed to be a hint to me to cease intruding upon a purely family affair; so I took the tallow dip which he gave me and went to my room.

I don't think that I am unduly imaginative, and usually only physical discomfort will cause me to lie awake o' nights; but the thought of that poor old white-haired mountaineer searching the lonesome woods for a man who had been moldering in his grave for five years got on my nerves, and I couldn't sleep.

Finally I dozed off, and it seemed to me that I had hardly closed my eyes when I was awakened by the joyful barking of the hound. I tumbled into my clothes and went out, just as the day was breaking, and in the gray dawn I saw the night wanderer coming slowly across the clearing.

"I can't find any trace of Lon, I can't," he complained wearily as he came up to where Jerry was untying the hound. "All night long I've looked, I have, an' I've no news to carry back to Jinny. It's cold in the snow, too, it is; but you boys'll look fer him to-day, won't you, Jerry?"

"Yes, Joe, we'll look, we will; but you'd better stop an' have a cup of coffee," answered Jerry pleasantly.

"No, thankin' you kindly; I must be steppin' back to Jinny, I must," he replied wistfully and turned away, the hound jumping at him and whimpering its welcome. In the daylight I saw that his face belied his hair, and although it was seamed and weather-beaten, it was that of a young man.

"Twenty-eight, he is," said Jerry laconically when I spoke of it; and as he was evidently unwilling to volunteer further information, I refrained from asking questions.

I found Jerry a capital woodsman and an ideal guide. The tract had been spared by the fires which do so much damage in timberlands, and the trees

were in fine condition. Game was as plentiful as in a carefully guarded preserve; partridges and woodcock whirred from the bushes as we passed, and the banks of the streams were cut up by the tracks of many deer which had come for water during the night.

When Jerry discovered that I was no novice in the woods, he became more communicative, telling me where the largest trout were to be caught and pointing out the swamps where the deer lay during the day; but the burden of his conversation was the repeated assertion that I could accomplish my task most easily by sleeping at his house and carrying a luncheon with me on my daily excursions. He was so insistent that I finally concluded to spend at least one more night there, and I found the second evening a repetition of the first.

The same crowd of men gathered on the fence in the moonlight, the dogs acted in the same way as the night before, Joe appeared at the whittling bee at the same time, and, after an almost identical conversation, disappeared in the forest; while his hound's return to Jerry was the signal for the dispersal of the party.

It was so exactly like the night before that it seemed like the second performance of a carefully rehearsed play and, although I could see no reason for an attempt to hoodwink me, I went to my room with the suspicion that it was all arranged for my special benefit.

Again I lay awake thinking of the poor lunatic on his hopeless quest and the weirdness of his night-wandering in the forest; but the memory of the moonlight suggested a solution of the mystery.

"Moonlight! Moonshine!" I exclaimed, sitting up in bed, and I laughed as I lay down again at the thought of the elaborate plan which the apparently guileless mountaineers had prepared to keep me out of the woods

at night so that their illicit still might not be intruded upon.

Having explained things to my own satisfaction, I slept soundly, and when I was awakened by the hound in the morning, I did not go out, but watched through a hole in the shutters.

Joe came from the woods as before and, after the same exchange of words with Jerry, disappeared up the road with his hound. I mentally complimented the gang on its attention to detail, but determined that I would get to the bottom of the thing.

Although Jerry's disapproval was evident, he wasted few of his precious words in trying to dissuade me when I insisted upon carrying my small tent and cooking outfit with me that morning. He was more reticent during the day, and we were a good eight miles from his cabin when he left me to my own devices. I went about my camp preparations methodically, cut a good supply of wood, and pitched my tent near a small stream from which ten minutes' fishing gave me the trout for my supper. I determined to do a little exploring on my own account, but I was not hopeful of finding anything, for Jerry had readily acquiesced in my choice of a camping place, while he had persistently led me away from the southern part of the tract where I concluded the still was located.

My investigations were fruitless. There was not the slightest suspicion of smoke in the clear, sharp air to suggest a fire under a retort, and somehow the impression that I was not alone, that I was under observation from the dark shadows as I walked through the woods, gave me an uncomfortable feeling, and I soon returned to my tent.

I like human companionship, but I am always glad to be alone in the woods, especially at night. It is a relief to change the hum of the city for the night sounds of the forest, and

under their influence my eyes are usually shut fast in dreamless sleep as soon as I draw the blankets to my chin; but slumber did not come readily that first night in the Langthorn tract. I heard only the familiar noises; the croaking of frogs, the humming of insects, the chirping of the tree toads, and the rasping of the katykids; nevertheless, I felt that I was not alone; that from the deep thicket about the camp, eyes which belonged to no forest creature were watching my tent.

But a long day in the open air and miles of tramping through thick woods had brought a fatigue which was not to be denied, and at last I slept, to awaken as the sun was rising. I tried to roll over for another nap; but the desire to see if a vivid dream which had come to me the night before had foundation in fact was irresistible, and I poked my head out of the tent.

In my dream I was camping in the woods and had been awakened by a shout, followed by the report of a gun and a scream of pain. I dreamed that the ground was covered so deep with snow that I was unable to leave the camp to investigate, and the rest of it was only a confused memory. But the first part was so vivid that I was much relieved to find that in reality the grass was still green, that the autumn leaves were slowly falling as the branches swayed in the dawn breeze, and a faint blue spiral of smoke was rising from the embers of my camp fire.

The dream had slipped from my mind by the time I had caught the trout for my breakfast, made my coffee, and packed up the camp outfit; but the impression that I had been followed and watched during the night was still strong, and when Jerry joined me, I asked him if any of the boys had been in the woods.

"No one was into 'em but Joe, there wasn't," he replied uneasily, and I noticed that his eyes avoided mine. "He

generally keeps more to the south, he does, an' I don't reckon as how he was into this part last night, fer I ain't seen not none of his tracks."

He looked with disapproval at the packed outfit, and I knew that he had counted upon my making my headquarters at this ideal camping spot.

We had harder work that day, for I was inspecting the swamp timber and we were for many hours up to our knees in mire and water. When we finally got on firm ground, I selected the first likely spot I came across to pitch my tent. Jerry raised all sorts of objections to it—the brook near by did not contain as good trout as one he could show me a couple of miles farther on; it was so near the swamp that mosquitoes would bother me, and that part of the tract was considered unwholesome and a breeder of "break-bone fever," and so on; but I was obdurate, and he finally gave in and cut the poles for my tent. His opposition convinced me that I was getting "warm," and after I had resisted his final appeal to move, he looked at me doubtfully and spoke slowly, as if the delivery of each word hurt him.

"This yere ain't reckoned a healthy place, Mr. Johnson, it ain't; but I guess you can take care of yourself. All sorts of trash comes from the swamp at night, there does, an' I don't reckon as how you'll have pleasant dreams yere. I know you wouldn't go fer to hurt poor Joe; but he might come blunderin' in yere at night an' startle you, he might. Won't you be keerful an' if you hear him jest keep in your bed? An' he won't bother you not none at all, he won't."

I laughed at the idea of being frightened and assured him that I would be careful; but Jerry shook his head doubtfully, and I knew that he left me regretfully and that his mind was filled with misgiving as he started for home.

After supper I stretched out in front of the fire waiting for the moon to rise, and I suppose the fatigue of the day asserted itself; for I dozed off. When I awakened, I rubbed my eyes in astonishment for, although it was only early autumn, the ground was covered with a deep layer of snow. The summer noises of the forest which had lulled me to sleep were stilled, but I could hear the wind in the leafless branches, and on the opposite side of the fire, paying absolutely no attention to me as he warmed his hands at the blaze, stood a man whom I had never seen before.

In build he was of the mountaineer type; but his clothes were not those of a woodsman. He seemed spurious, if you can understand what I mean; a backwoodsman trying to masquerade in the attire of civilization. The result was not pleasing, although his face was handsome after the coarse, animal type. Instead of the usual ragged beard of the mountaineer, he wore only a mustache which he had attempted to curl at the ends. His expression was unpleasant, a nasty leer trying to conceal a craven fear which his shifty, restless eyes and listening attitude betrayed; such an expression as I have seen upon the faces of criminals arraigned before the bar for sentence. His lips were moving, but no sound came from them, and when I spoke to him I realized that my own voice was unnatural.

He paid no attention to my greeting, and the longer I looked at him, the more unreal he seemed; for his face was colorless with the pallor of death and his eyes looked straight at me, apparently without seeing me.

Suddenly the sound for which he had been listening floated to his ears, and I, too, heard it, a faint hail of "Lon, ohe, Lon!" from the north.

With a movement of his lips which I knew indicated a curse, although no sound came from them, he turned and fled into the woods.

I seemed incapable of moving; but as the sound of the calling came nearer, I watched for the appearance of Joe; for Joe I knew it must be. In a few minutes he came wading through the snow, guided by the firelight; but it was not the Joe whom I had seen at Jerry's cabin.

His hair was as black as jet, his figure erect, and his eyes were flashing; while the hound which had refused to enter the forest with him was close at his heels. He paid no attention to me as he came up to the fire; but when he saw the stranger's footprints in the snow he took up the line of flight like a hound on a fresh scent and disappeared among the trees.

Still I could not move; but when a few minutes later I heard a shout, the report of a gun, and a scream of pain—just as I had heard them in my dream the night before—I struggled to my feet and tried to follow; but I tripped and fell headlong. I was conscious that I had hurt my arm in the fall, and when I rolled over and sat up, I could hardly believe my eyes.

It was broad daylight, there was no snow on the ground, and the trees still retained their autumn foliage! My fire had burned out, my right arm was asleep from lying on it, and I was chilled to the bone; but it was not entirely the cold which made me shiver as I cursed my carelessness for having gone to sleep in that way; and so vivid was the impression of my dream that I could hardly convince myself it was not midwinter as I stamped and swung my arms to restore my circulation.

I suppose that I appeared a bit seedy when Jerry came, for he looked at me curiously; but I explained it by telling him that I had fallen asleep in the open and got chilled. He seemed surprised when I told him that I should spend another night in the same camp; but uncanny dreams in the woods were a new sensation for me, and I deter-

mined to stick it out to see if the locality induced them.

He left me before I reached camp that evening, and after I had made things snug for the night, I waited for the moon to rise; but I took no chance of spending the night without shelter and stretched out under the tent.

Again I dozed off and again I awakened to find the ground covered with snow and the same stranger in front of my fire, only his demeanor was different; for while he listened as anxiously for any sound from the woods, there was an expression of triumph on his face as he circled around the fire and looked up at the sky.

I watched him closely, and when his body came between me and the fire I gave a start of horror; for in the left side of his chest, in the place where his heart should have been, there was a hole which I could have put my fist in! It extended clean through the chest, and through it I could see the firelight as plainly as I can see your face!

It seemed as if each separate hair on my head was rising and that a strip of ice was replacing my backbone; for no man could be alive with an injury like that. I could not take my eyes from him as he moved to the other side of the fire; but suddenly it seemed as if a ton of dynamite had exploded close to me, and I found myself sitting bolt upright, staring through the end of the tent at the figure before me. The whole scene had changed, the snow had disappeared, and rain was falling in torrents, while lightning zigzagged across the sky and the peals of thunder seemed to rip the forest to pieces.

An audible cry of relief came from the lips of my spectral visitor and then he gradually faded away.

I think that I must have fainted from sheer terror; but I was quickly revived by the thorough soaking which I received, for there was no illusion about the thunderstorm. Daylight

found me a drenched and uncomfortable mortal and thoroughly upset by the vision; for I could no longer call it a dream. Jerry was heartily welcome where he arrived soon after daybreak, holding in leash Joe's hound, which was barking excitedly.

"Have you seen anything of Joe?" he asked anxiously, and I saw that he was greatly disappointed when I shook my head. "Fer five years, rain or shine, winter or summer, he has come to my house every mornin' at daylight, he has," he said slowly. "The hound has learned to wait patiently; but he howled all the night, he did, an' I know some harm has come to Joe."

I didn't wait to prepare breakfast; but together we left the camp, following where the unleashed hound had disappeared among the trees, and guided by its mournful baying. We found Joe—lying under a great oak at the edge of a small clearing, the hound on the ground beside him whimpering and licking his cold hands.

The shattered top and scorched trunk of the tree told the story; but Joe's face as it was turned to the bright sunshine which succeeded the storm was not disfigured; the wistfulness had left the eyes, and there was a placid smile on his lips. The lightning had done its work mercifully, and I recalled the thunderclap which had awakened me and preceded the final disappearance of my ghost.

"Which one of us shall carry the news to Jinny?" I asked, and Jerry looked up at me after he had tenderly closed Joe's eyes.

"There ain't been no Jinny these five years back, there ain't, except in poor Joe's crazy head," he said sadly.

As we sat beside the body in the clearing awaiting the arrival of other searchers, the gates of silence were opened, and in a low voice, to the accompaniment of the hound's whimpering, Jerry related the pitiful history.

In a homely guise it was the same old story which has brought so much misery into the world—the story of two men and a woman.

Lon was the black sheep of their clan; a reckless stripling, a frequenter of the taverns in the neighboring villages, and a terror to the local constables and game wardens. Joe, the weaker vessel, was his firm friend and admirer, helping him out of scrapes and sticking to him steadfastly through good and evil report. Jinny, for whom Joe had prepared a home, to her sorrow also loved and admired the ne'er-do-weel, who heartlessly betrayed them both. His promises were light as air, and when she begged him to make the only possible reparation, he jeeringly refused, and taking his gun departed for the woods.

An hour later Joe heard the story faltered out by a shamed, heartbroken heap of misery on the floor, and followed him, after promising Jinny that he would bring him back to make things right; but when he returned he was alone, the right barrel of his gun was empty, and he went to his room without speaking.

They found Lon, his black heart torn out by a charge of buckshot, lying under the very tree which the lightning had just shattered. Jinny mercifully died the same night, and when Joe came downstairs the next morning he had lost all memory of his wrongs and the double tragedy. His

hair had turned white in the night, and as the shadows lengthened he took his gun and started for the woods to find Lon, whom he imagined to be lost.

The mountaineers, all of them kin to the actors in the tragedy, kept the thing quiet—not a difficult thing to do in that isolated community in winter—and for five long years they watched Joe depart each night on his quest, guarding among themselves the secret of his crime.

The hound would never again enter the woods with him, and he returned for it each morning to Jerry's cabin, always hurrying home to the Jinny whom he imagined to be waiting.

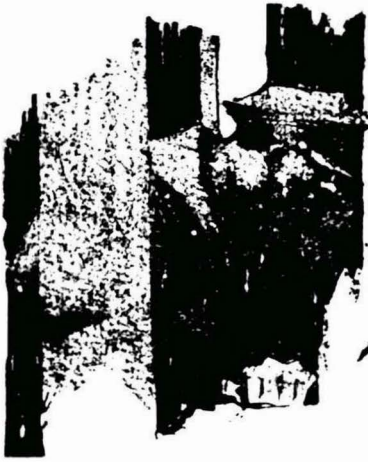
"An' I reckon as how he's found both of 'em now, I do," concluded Jerry simply, as he looked at Joe's peaceful face. "They say as how Lon's ghost walked the forest at night, always keepin' away from him; but no dog of our'n, nor any of our kin, would come into these woods after sunset, an' hunters always left the region sudden after the first night in camp, they did."

When the others came we carried the body to Joe's cabin, the house he had prepared for Jinny. When we entered the parlor my attention was attracted by a tintype over the crude mantel. It represented a group of three; Joe as he must have looked before the tragedy, a sweet-faced country girl, and the other—the man who had twice been an unbidden guest at my camp fire.



TORTURE BY DISLOCATION

A FAVORITE medieval torture was that of dislocation. The victim's arms were tied behind his back and he was suspended by them from a pulley. Heavy weights were attached to his feet. After being raised in the air and allowed to hang until his joints were well stretched, he was dropped suddenly and brought up with a jerk before his feet touched the ground. This was repeated till the joints were dislocated. In many cases flogging added to the agony.



Like Princes

by Eugene A.
O'Clancy

IT is no longer visible in these modern days, but if you had taken a trip down the harbor some years ago or crossed the East River you would undoubtedly have seen it interfering with navigation and battling with the tide.

The name painted on it in big, golden letters was *Queen of Dreams*, and in the catalogue of ships it was down as a tug. Looking at it for the first time, you would not realize that it was really a tug, but the knowledge would come to you by degrees.

The rivermen never spoke of it by its baptismal name. Since time out of mind it was known as the *Bothways*. It gained this popular and apt designation the first day that Captain Hexameter proudly sailed it into the East River and set all the watery world by the ears with the marvel of it.

You see, Captain Hexameter was an original man, and it had been built to his order along lines thought out entirely by himself. The pilots of other craft were unable to discover whether the *Queen* was going or coming.

Later they learned to decide this vital question by observing which way the vikinglike Hexameter was facing, as he stood grim and erect in the pilot house. If he was facing the way he ought to be heading, and his face wore a far-away expression, they knew the *Queen* was holding her own against the

tide, and all they had to do was to keep out of the way. But if his back was in evidence and he was bellowing language into the lower regions they knew the *Queen* was sportively imitating a crab and going backward. To avoid sinking its tug, the tow would have to cast off, and would soon be well in the lead, with the *Queen* puffing frantically to catch up and Captain Hexameter yelling for them to stand by.

Naturally, the *Bothways* was used only by the old-timers, who were frightened by the high prices of the big modern tugs. Though the risk was sometimes fearful, many were willing to take it, so small were Captain Hexameter's charges.

The captain knew all this, and was reckless and overbearing accordingly. If he got into more than ordinary difficulties in the river, he got out of them by the simple process of casting off his tow and heading for the nearest dock, from which he would calmly telephone the owners somewhat as follows:

"Gentlemen, I regret to report that our line parted just below the bridge, and the *Amelia Ann* is now, I believe, involuntarily clearing for the open sea. Better call up the wrecking people."

The *Bothways'* crew consisted of one man, Mr. Glum. Mr. Glum was at once mate, able seaman, engineer, stoker, and purser. Owing to the small size of the

ship, he could perform all his duties without moving from his usual post before the furnace. Mr. Glum was very short and fat and altogether bald, and he had wall eyes. He was probably the most sad and lugubrious man who ever sailed the sea. Always was Mr. Glum bemoaning his sad fate and shedding tears into the fire.

Mr. Glum's affliction was an unrequited love. It seems that every Thursday, for many years, a small boy delivered to the *Bothways* a basket of snowy linen, the washable effects of himself and Captain Hexameter. From a weekly contemplation of the basket, Mr. Glum's thoughts had gradually risen to speculation as to what must be the virtues and attractions of the unknown female who could work such wonders, such snowiness. He thought so deeply on it that speculation finally ripened into romance—into love.

When he realized his condition he one day obtained the necessary directions from the small boy; took his courage in hand and called on the lady—only to be repulsed. To be precise and to state the plain, unpoetic truth, Mr. Glum was repulsed by a flatiron. But having seen the lady, he was not to be deterred by flatirons. His heart yearned for her—yearned to bestow on her the name of Glum. He called again, and yet again.

On the last occasion, however, the lady added a policeman to the flatiron. Love can resist flatirons, but not policemen, so Mr. Glum gave up in despair and retired to the *Bothways* to moan and shed tears into the fire.

Mr. Glum moaned so much more than usual that Captain Hexameter was forced to take official notice of his crew's condition, and he wondered what could be the trouble. He was well used to the wails that arose from below, but now they became so incessant that he began to fear they might have a bad effect on the boiler.

"Something's wrong with Glum," he said to himself in the privacy of the pilot house. "His engines are racing. I'll have to look into it."

At the moment when Captain Hexameter reached this decision the *Bothways* happened to be directly in the path of an outgoing liner, but he rang off the engine there and then, and, leaning idly out of the port window, fell into a brown study of Mr. Glum's case—totally oblivious to the whistle of the liner and the yells from her bridge.

"Glum," the captain mused, "is an infant when it comes to mind. Mentally, he doesn't draw two feet—no ballast, no cargo in him— What do you mean, you big lubber! Can't you see I'm heaved to?"

This last was shouted at the liner, which now loomed right over the captain's head. The second officer, purple with rage, was standing on the end of the bridge, breathing deep curses. Captain Hexameter merely glared at him ferociously and returned epithet for epithet, while Mr. Glum, according to his custom in such emergencies, came on deck and waved a shovel menacingly. When it seemed only a matter of seconds, the big ship's propellers actually reversed full speed; her bow sheered off, and the *Bothways* gently bumped along her side.

The *Bothways* had won. Captain Hexameter stroked his militant goatee triumphantly, and his face assumed a serene expression. He gave battle to ferryboats and excursion boats all day long, and it was child's play, but he seldom had the joy of entering the nautical lists with a real ocean liner. He was so tickled with himself that he forthwith ordered Mr. Glum up into the sacred pilot house and produced a black bottle.

The captain became festive. "Glum," he said, "we'll cut out business to-day and take a pleasure trip up the Hudson, and this evening you'll come and

have dinner with me. There's something the matter with you, Mr. Glum. You're low in the water—intellectual barnacles—seaweed on the brain. I'm going to put you into dry dock and scrape you, Mr. Glum."

This was unheard of and terrifying. Mr. Glum's wall eyes became fixed with the fear of the unknown. He had a sublime faith in the dignity and greatness of Hexameter and had never even thought of mingling with him socially in all the years he had been a crew. Every evening, when the *Bothways* tied up for the night, the crew went his way and the captain went his—presumably to a mythical club; in reality to a boarding house.

But Mr. Glum believed in that club; he pictured Captain Hexameter as sitting in some glittering palace, surrounded by other captains of marine industry and being wined and dined by the entire shipping world. Consequently he could imagine no ordeal more awful than being mentally scraped by such a man.

The scraping began immediately. Every ten minutes or so, as they went up the river, the engine was rung off, Mr. Glum was summoned into the pilot house and put through a cunning third degree. Mr. Glum kept his secret close, however, and the only satisfaction the captain got was to the effect that his crew's "insides was wrong."

The captain gave it up after a while and decided to lie in wait for Mr. Glum and catch him off his guard. The great Hexameter became gay and carefree. He indulged in song and waved his hat joyously to ladies on passing excursion boats. Opposite Yonkers, Mr. Glum was again summoned into the pilot house and forced, on pain of being brought up on charges of mutiny, to join in a duet.

They tied up at a dock, and Mr. Glum was sent ashore to forage for lunch. He came back with an oyster fry and

a sausage. The captain, who always maintained discipline, even in small matters, ate the oyster fry in the pilot house, while Mr. Glum sat humbly behind the boiler and thoughtfully consumed the sausage. The captain was quiet for so long that Mr. Glum fell into a doze, from which he was awakened by sounds of cheering from the dock. Looking out, he beheld the cause. Captain Hexameter, silently but skillfully, was performing a solitary dance on the deck. Mr. Glum was horrified; he retired in shame to the engine room.

"Cap'n," he finally murmured, "ain't we better cast off?"

The captain paused in the middle of a difficult step and considered. "All right, Glum," he said, after a thoughtful silence. "Let us away. It is meet that we should go!" And he stalked with great dignity into the pilot house and rang the bell in an absent way about a dozen times.

When the *Bothways'* nose was again pointed down the river the captain was seized with a sudden and overwhelming passion for speed.

"Let her out!" he roared. "Jam her up, Glum, make her jump like a rabbit. We're going to clean up the river."

Mr. Glum jammed her up until his hair, if he had had any, would have been on end, but the captain was insatiable and continued to roar for action.

"Can't do no more, cap'n," Mr. Glum wailed in desperation. "The b'iler'll bust!"

"Let her bust then!" screamed the captain. "We'll buy another."

With one eye on the steam gauge and the other on eternity, which seemed to be swooping directly down upon him, Mr. Glum shoveled and sweated and moaned until the unreasonable demands for speed suddenly ceased. Mr. Glum thought that the captain was at last satisfied. He was, in a way, for

he was fast asleep, with the wheel in his hands and a smile of peace on his face. Mr. Glum only discovered this condition of affairs when a steamer seemed to fly past close to his left ear. With due deference and respect, he went into the pilot house and awoke the captain—and then went swiftly out, in deadly fear lest his act might be one of the numerous things designated as “mutiny.” But he had not resumed his usual post ten minutes when a barge seemed to actually graze his chin.

The captain was asleep again, reclining on the pilot-house bench and his feet on the window sill. Mr. Glum was in an agony of indecision; the choice between a watery grave and the horrors of mutiny. The difficulty was solved by the captain suddenly becoming broad awake and roaring:

“Mr. Glum, sir, what do you mean by coming into the pilot house without orders? Why are you not at your post of duty, sir? I’ll put you in irons, Mr. Glum; that’s what I’ll do!”

“But I was afeared, cap’n,” murmured Glum, “that bein’ asleep——”

“Asleep!” gasped the captain. “Asleep, were you? Well, don’t let me catch you at it! Suppose this ship were lost at sea and I should have to report that my engineer was asleep—
asleep, Mr. Glum? Go below, sir!”

Mr. Glum never speaks of the rest of that trip. The captain continued to take cat naps all down the river, and every time he was awakened he made a written note of it for future reference when Mr. Glum should be “brought up on charges.” They reached the pier at last, however, and Mr. Glum was led in captivity to a restaurant on West Street.

But the captain became morose. As the meal progressed he showed an increasing distaste for Mr. Glum’s society. Over a piece of lemon pie he gave his crew to understand that he, Glum, as a dinner companion, was about as

entertaining as a “South African mummy.” Finally he remembered an important engagement at the club, and took himself off.

Mr. Glum was sitting thoughtfully over a pipe when he became aware of a dark-skinned, secretive individual who had slipped into the vacant seat opposite.

“Señor,” he heard the secretive individual saying, “it is that you are of the *Queen of Dreams* tigger, yes?”

Mr. Glum carefully removed his pipe. He was feeling very comfortable and could think of no valid reason for denial.

“I is,” he replied.

“Ah!” went on the Secret One, leaning across the table. “You see that I know you—though I to you am not! *El Capitan*, too, do I know—but he is the great one—the powerful—he would not hear! But you—you are like me—with feelings! Then it is that I ask you to help me, Señor Glum, and you are glad and say yes—is it not so, amigo Glum?”

Amigo Glum stared at the stranger reproachfully, hopelessly. On top of his awful day’s work, this was too much.

“Mister, you ain’t beknown to me,” he wailed in despair, “and there ain’t anything I done what I should help you and be aggrewated—nor I ain’t any money!”

“Money!” exclaimed the Secret One. “Señor Glum, what I ask is itself nothing—and you shall have for it fifty dollars! Look you, I shall make you now a friend. I shall to you declare myself of everything. I see in your eye of honesty that you will not be an inform!”

The Secret One glanced around the room, and, leaning close to the eye of honesty, continued:

“Señor Glum, it is that I am the glorious revolution in Mexico—I am *la*

junta! But look you, the glorious revolution is there in Mexico—and I am here! Thus it is that to-night there is a sail ship down the harbor—a barker. It wait for me, and if I am not—it is gone! I am watched. But a friend speak of the *Queen of Dreams* tugger, and I say—it is the idea—with Señor Glum longing in his heart to help! Look you, señor, in one short hour it is over. You make me on the barker and you have the beautiful fifty dollars! *Como?* Ah, yes—it is the bargain! Even now my friend waits by the corner. You will have need of him. He is what you call a steerer—he turns the wheel and makes the *Queen of Dreams* tugger go rightly into the barker while you put yourself into the engines and make the coalings and steams and only in one hour it is all over and for fifty dollars!”

During its delivery this speech had about as much effect on Mr. Glum's brain as a gentle breeze on a stone wall. But after an exposure of ten or fifteen minutes it made a sufficiently deep impression for him to grasp the general idea.

Somebody, he told himself, wanted to be put aboard a ship down the bay and was going to pay him fifty dollars for it. As the proposition continued to develop in his brain, the fifty-dollar part of it stood out in bold relief; so much so that the thing began to look quite simple.

Then, too, the adventurous aspect appealed to him. Mr. Glum had never had a real adventure, and here was a splendid chance! If he could go to Captain Hexameter, narrate an adventure, and pose as a man who had been mysteriously connected with revolutions, it would take the captain down a peg.

Then there floated across Mr. Glum's brain a vision of the Lady of the Linen, and his mind evolved a thought that stunned him. Why, if he went to her

with fifty dollars in his pocket, she might lay aside the flatiron. It might take the starch out of her disposition and turn the laundry into a bower of love. With this mental picture before him, Mr. Glum's eye of honesty actually blinked with human expression.

“You ain't got the fifty dollars with you?” he asked.

The Secret One produced a wallet and laid a bill on the table. Mr. Glum gazed at it, and as he gazed the restaurant seemed to expand and be transformed into a beautiful garden with splashing fountains, soft music, and shady bowers—in one of which, conversing in the language of love, sat two people, the Lady of the Linen and Mr. Glum.

The Secret One slowly picked up the bill and put it back in the wallet, Mr. Glum's eyes following it until it disappeared.

“The tide's about right now,” said Mr. Glum, “so we'd better be movin' and get your friend.”

As the Secret One had intimated, the steerer was waiting around the corner, and proved to be another dark-skinned gentleman who was also a revolution. The two revolutions did not seem to make any attempt to avoid the public gaze, but Mr. Glum, considering it the proper thing to do when engaged in an adventure, turned up his coat collar, pulled his hat over his eyes, and chose all the dark streets he could find, frequently stopping at alleys to ask if “they was all clear.”

It was characteristic of Mr. Glum that he made no inquiries as to the marine abilities of the steerer. To his mind, a gentleman who was a revolution and was also in the confidence of another gentleman who was visibly connected with fifty dollars, would have no difficulty in such a small matter as piloting a tug—even one which required most delicate handling. But no sooner was the *Bothways*—under way than Mr.

Glum was rudely made aware that the steerer was of the bunko variety.

Instead of heading down the river, the dark-skinned pilot, with a skill worthy of Hexameter himself, jammed the *Bothways* into the first ferry slip he came to. Mr. Glum came up on deck and swore all around the horizon; the ferry men jeered, and the two revolutions fell into each other's arms and wept, crying that now indeed they were lost.

But Mr. Glum rose to the occasion. Starting the engine, he rushed into the pilot house and gradually worked the *Bothways* free and out into the river again. Then he gave the steerer a five-minute elementary course in navigation.

"Just head her where you're goin', an' when something's in the way go abaft her," he said, and ran back to the boiler.

Mr. Glum never exercised so much in his life. He was kept running all the time from the boiler to the pilot house and back again, for the steerer showed a total inability to obey instructions and made involuntary visits to every possible port of call in the harbor.

Mr. Glum's first intimation that they had reached the end of the journey came in the nature of a shock—the steerer had literally made the *Bothways* "go into the barker." He had rammed it head on, and the big schooner, lying quietly in the dark, became a bedlam of Latin shrieks and yells. Mr. Glum also became excited. He shut off the engine, ran on deck, and added his own voice and gestures to the uproar. Waving his trusty weapon, a shovel, he threatened to split the heads of any and all revolutions if he was not immediately given the sum of fifty dollars according to contract.

The Secret One slipped the bill into his hand and jumped aboard the schooner, closely followed by the steerer. The two boats drifted apart, and Mr. Glum, the shovel in one hand

and the bill in the other, suddenly realized that he was alone—that the steerer had basely deserted and that he must get the *Bothways* back by himself. It is not known how Mr. Glum accomplished the feat—perhaps the fifty dollars inspired him with some sort of marine magic—but an hour later the *Bothways* tied up at the pier and Mr. Glum walked away.

He walked fast, did Mr. Glum, and he walked toward the home of the Lady of the Linen. He could not wait; his bosom ached with a longing to try the effect of the fifty dollars at once. Reaching the house, he walked boldly up to the sacred second floor, pushed aside a small boy and girl who tried to intervene, and strode in the direction of the front room, where he already heard her ravishing voice, raised in merry laughter. Then Mr. Glum pushed open the door and beheld her, sitting on a sofa, laughing, her hand being gently patted by—Captain Hexameter!

Immovable and staring, with the stolidity of a Shinto idol, Mr. Glum stood there. The lady shrieked. Slowly and with awful dignity, the captain arose.

"Mr. Glum," he said, speaking very distinctly and watching the progress of a fly on the opposite wall, "when you are quite at ease we should like to hear to just what, at the present moment, we owe the pleasure of your always delightful company?"

Mr. Glum's throat quivered, but no words came forth. He fell to staring so hard at the lady that she shrieked again, and the captain furiously demanded an instant explanation.

"I—I had a adventure," Mr. Glum finally said in a strange voice. "I didn't know as you knew her, cap'n. I had a adventure an' I was coming to tell her. You see, cap'n——"

"Well?" roared the captain. "What was this 'adventure,' and what might it have to do with this lady?"

"I—I just took down the bay two gents what is revolutions and what is going to Mexico, and they——"

"What!" screamed the lady. "What's that? Two gents as was going to Mexico! Was they Spanyolds?"

Mr. Glum actually did manage to give a fairly accurate description of the Secret One and the steerer.

The effect on the lady was electric. She bounced down on the sofa in hysterics, and then bounced up again with a torrent of words.

"My two star boarders," she wailed, "what have been paying me like princes for their top-floor rooms and—and never cared what I give them to eat. They gone away—and you took 'em!"

The small boy and girl came running in and bore away the limp and despairing form of the Lady of the Linen.

Strange to say, Captain Hexameter paid not the slightest attention to her. He had been eying Mr. Glum with a steady glare, and now suddenly he took that unhappy mortal by the throat and silently choked him for the space of two minutes. At last he let Mr. Glum sink exhausted on the sofa.

"Why did you do it?" roared the captain.

"I done it for fifty dollars," wailed Mr. Glum, taking out the bill. "An', seein' how things has come out, I give it to you freely, cap'n, if it'll help any!"

The captain looked at the bill and then at Mr. Glum—and then collapsed into a chair. Tears of real anguish rolled down his cheeks. "Oh, Glum, Glum!" he exclaimed, in a voice of lugubrious anguish as he slammed the

precious bill on the table. "Do you know what this is?"

Mr. Glum's wall eyes went slowly from the bill to Hexameter's damp visage. "It's a lot of money, cap'n," he replied, "but I don't see as I didn't earn it honest. It ain't my fault that them two gents wanted to leave this lovely home an'——"

"Shut up!" roared the captain. "I'll tell you what this is, Mr. Glum!" He pounded the bill with his fist. "It's bogus, Mr. Glum. You've been bamboozled, Mr. Glum! You're an infant, Mr. Glum—and I'm another damned infant for having such a fool in my employ!"

"You mean—it ain't any good, sir?" Mr. Glum asked, trembling all over.

"It's counterfeit!" roared the captain. "There's just a few little things you didn't know about me, Mr. Glum. For instance, you didn't know that I have the honor of being a government agent and that I never told you because I might just as well have put an ad in the papers about it. And you didn't know that I was on the trail of those two Mexicans. You didn't know—and here, right under my nose and with my own boat, you help 'em to get clear away!"

The captain made a ferocious lunge for the sofa, but Mr. Glum was already gone. Mr. Glum went very fast and did not stand on the order of his going.

The next day the *Bothways* was out of commission. To those who made any inquiry, Captain Hexameter gave the following graphic explanation:

"My crew, sir, is laid up. In fact, sir, he is devoting the day to rum—and I trust it poisons him!"



The Heads of Cerberus

Francis Stevens



SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Through the magic powers of the Dust of Purgatory which they have inhaled from a silver vial ornamented with the heads of Cerberus, the three-headed dog of mythology, Terence Trenmore, his sister Viola, and their friend Drayton pass through Ulithia, the phantom borderland of life, and are transported over the barriers of time to the Philadelphia of A. D. 2118. The old city hall with the historic statue of William Penn still stands, but the system of government is entirely different. The chief ruler of the city is a very old man known as Justice Supreme. Under him are privileged classes known as the Servants and the Superlatives. The whole governmental system is called the Penn Service. The masses of the people are kept in abject subjection, and are known as the Numbers, each individual wearing a button with his number on it.

The visitors from the Twentieth Century are joined by a burglar, who calls himself Arnold Bertram, and who has the Cerberus vial in his possession. The more important personages under the Penn Service are given names indicating abstract qualities, as Courage, Kindness, Power, Contentment, Love, et cetera. The Superlatives are those who possess these qualities in the highest degree. Their fitness is determined by election. The visitors are invited by the lady known as Loveliest, and the man, Cleverest, nephew of Justice Supreme, to witness the election, and they go to the temple for that purpose. Candidates who aspire to supplant the Superlatives and fail are cast into a place of punishment, known as the Pit of the Past. The visitors are placed under arrest because Drayton has entered the library and read some of the secret books, thus acquiring knowledge that is usually denied to the Numbers. At sundown, the chief of police, known as Quickest, summons the prisoners to the presence of Mr. Justice Supreme.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SWORD AND THE BELL.

IT was with a dull feeling of despair that Drayton, recovering from the first momentary shock, heard Trenmore accept the chief's condition for the freedom of their limbs.

"We'll go with you quietly, chief, to the very door of your bloody slaughterhouse. You've the word of Terence Trenmore for every one of us."

And then Trenmore had looked from one to the other of his friends with a fiery glance that commanded their obedience. He was first to leave the cell, not even taking Viola's hand,

which she stretched out like a small child, brave but knowing its own helplessness.

Drayton went to her, and then, in the face of such near death, he did what he would not have permitted himself to do had fate been more kind. He remembered that look in her eyes, before Terry had flung Cleverest across the cell, and putting his arm about the little sister of Trenmore, he drew her to him.

"Viola," he said, very softly and with a great, quiet tenderness, "I love you, dear, so much that death with you is mere happiness!"

And she answered; "You are my

world, Bobby Drayton! If death was needful to show us this love, then death can never rob us of it!"

"Skidoo," said Bertram the burglar to the young lady he designated by that name. "I guess our numbers are up. I meant right by you, kid, and I'm darned sorry!"

"It ain't your fault," retorted Miss Skidoo, of the solemn, childlike eyes. "I guess I got a right to die with a good, straight guy like you!"

With ironical politeness, the chief of police broke in. "His Supremity might be willing to wait if he knew how much sad romance is going on here, but my own time is valuable. Two abreast, please—that's right. You can continue your farewells as you walk. I guess I can stand it! Twenty-nine, turn out that light before you close the door."

In front, between two of the rifle-bearing guards, marched Terence Trenmore. His dark, heavy face was sullen. His lids drooped over narrowed, fire-blue eyes. When his guards brushed against him in a narrow passage, he shuddered away from them as one in mortal fear. They laughed, and one of them murmured: "The bigger they are the harder they fall, eh, Forty-nine?"

Having passed through two steel-lined corridors, the party of guards and prisoners came presently to a stair, ascended one flight and so reached the red marble passage of the administrative offices on the southern side. Tramping along this, they passed the open door of Mr. Virtue's darkened "courtroom," and came to the southern entrance of the Hall of Justice.

Quickest, who was now in the lead, laid his hand on the door to push it open. As he did so Trenmore, standing between his guards, spoke for the first time since leaving the cell. "Chief, before we go in I've a word for your ear alone."

The chief shook his head, smiling.

"Sorry, but I have no time to listen, my man." And he pushed at the door so that it opened a trifle.

"I'll say it aloud, then!" snapped Trenmore. "You can listen or not as you please. I gave my promise just now that I'd come unresisting to the very door of your slaughter pen. There is the door and here am I—to take my word back again!"

For all his bulk, Trenmore had the speed of a springing tiger. He was on the chief before any one realized that he had begun to move. He had swung that startled official before him with one arm about his chest. His right hand dragged from the holster at his captive's side a revolver of pleasantly efficient caliber. He clapped the muzzle to the chief's head, behind the ear.

"Shoot now and be damned to you, you scum of the earth!" Trenmore roared. "But the first finger that crooks at a trigger, I'll scatter this scut's brains the way he'll be dead before any of us!"

Twelve astonished and dismayed guards stood agape, with rifles half raised. After a moment two of them turned their weapons on Drayton and Bertram. The other prisoners, however, as much taken by surprise as the guards, were quiet enough.

The chief was quiet, too. He was helpless as in the grip of a gorilla, and he could feel the cold nose of his own weapon nuzzling behind his ear. He was not smiling now.

"You've a grain of sense after all," observed Trenmore approvingly. "And now the chief and myself will be taking a bit of a walk. Just don't interfere. And don't you harm the hair of a head of one of my friends there—mind that now!"

He began sidling along the wall, still holding his human shield before him. In a moment more he had regained the red corridor and begun backing down it. After him came the guards. One

of them, on a sudden thought, dashed back to the golden door and through it.

"Your friend's gone for help," said Trenmore to the chief conversationally. "He's a bright lad and I'd counsel you to advance him. You need help the way you'd sell your mouse of a soul to get it; don't you, my fine policeman? Don't you? Answer me, you scum!"

"Y-yes!" gasped the chief.

The breath was half squeezed out of him, and his feet stumbled and dragged as he backed with his relentless captor along the corridor. And still the guards followed, step for step, rifles half raised, and in their midst the prisoners.

A minute and Trenmore had reached a break in the red wall. Beyond it was a short flight of stairs. Terry backed around the corner. With a little rush, the pursuing guard came after. They found him halfway up the flight, still dragging their reluctant chief. He had reached the landing at the top. Behind it was an arched doorway, of which the heavy bronze doors stood open, fastened back flat to the wall.

Feeling with his foot for the floor catch, Trenmore found it and trod down. The door, released, swung out a trifle. Standing to one side and again feeling backward with his foot, Terry caught the edge with his toe and gave the door a pull. It moved easily on well-oiled hinges. Next instant, without once having turned his back on the guard, he was able to get his shoulder behind the door and push it to. The other door he treated in the same way, leaving an aperture between.

Then, without warning and with lightning speed, he lowered the gun, stooped, picked the chief up by the ankles and collar, gave him one mighty swing and pitched him headlong down upon his allies.

The hurtling body struck two of the

foremost, knocking them backward. There were shouts, and somebody's rifle exploded accidentally. Another guard fired intentionally toward the stair head. But the space there was empty. The bullet splashed on the innocent bronze nose of a cupid in bas-relief, flying across a door shut tight and already bolted from the inside.

Trenmore, panting on the little balcony of the Threat of Penn, congratulated himself that earlier in the day he had observed those doors and those strangely placed inner bolts. Already men were banging and shouting outside; but Trenmore only chuckled.

"They'll need dynamite for that little job," he murmured happily. "I'm thinking the Servants put those doors there for just the purpose they're now serving. Sword, you were made for the hand of a man, not the grip of this cold metal thing!"

He was examining the bronze fist that held the great sword upright. Though the heavy door shook and clanged to the besiegers' futile blows, he was cool as if alone in the temple. He had not yet even glanced down into the Hall of Justice.

Across the knuckles of the Hand of Penn ran a tiny line, green-edged with verdigris. It was a flaw, a crack in the age-old bronze.

His inspection completed, Trenmore sprang into action with the sudden wholeheartedness which was a disconcerting factor in his make-up. Throwing off his coat he removed a large handkerchief from the pocket, wadded it in his right hand and grasped the blade high up. Seizing the pommel in his left hand; slowly but with gathering force, he twisted at the sword. It did not move. His white shirt stood out in bulging lumps over his laboring shoulders. His face went dark red. The purple veins rose and throbbled on a forehead beaded with great drops of perspiration. He did not jerk or heave

at the thing. He merely twisted—and the leverage was terrific.

There came a loud crack, like the report of a pistol. Within the wall something dropped clanging, and the sword gave way so suddenly that Trenmore was hurled to the floor. Picking himself up, he calmly resumed his coat and stooped for the famous weapon. Not only had the bronze hand fallen in two pieces, freeing the grip, but the whole wrist had broken loose from the wall, leaving only a blank black hole.

Trenmore was not concerned for the mechanism so ruthlessly shattered. He cared only for the shining prisoner he had released. He raised it with both hands to the roughened grip. As he did so the yellow light from the dome slid flamelike down the long blade. It was a weight for any two ordinary men to carry; but the Irishman swung it up and over his shoulder with hardly an effort.

"You're a heavy one, my beauty, and no mistake," he muttered. "Even Terence Trenmore would not care to swing you many times together. But that which you struck would never strike back, I'm thinking."

And then at last, with the sword on his shoulder, he went and looked down from the railing. The blows on the door had ceased. He now perceived the reason. Midway across the hall, with upturned faces and raised rifles, waited every man of the prison guard he had so successfully eluded. Trenmore's appearance was greeted with shouts and a scattering volley. Unhurt but considerably startled, he skipped back.

"Powers o' darkness!" he gasped. "I'm a fool or I'd have expected it. And now what am I to do, will you tell me that, Sword of Battle?"

But the sword was silent.

He was safe where he now stood, for the balcony was high enough and

deep enough to be out of range from any place on the floor. And it was made of metal too heavy for bullets to penetrate.

"They'll not use those machine guns," reflected Trenmore, "for they couldn't and not hit the bell. But if they've the brains of a rat—and they have just about that—they'll send riflemen up where the guns are placed and pick me off like a cat on a wall. Before they do that, we'll rush it, Sword o' Beauty. And if they fire on us after—well, they'll hit their own bell, and that's a thing I don't think they'll want. Now, then!"

Balancing the sword on his shoulder, he dashed at the rail and vaulted to the narrow plank bridge left by the electricians. Though it bent and swayed sickeningly under the double weight of Trenmore and the huge sword, he ran its length as if it were a brick causeway. A moment later he brought up clinging to the scaffold about the bell. His speed had not averted another volley, but all the harm done was to the golden carvings on the wall around the balcony.

"You're but poor marksmen," growled Trenmore between his teeth. "You've a beautiful target now, though. The question is, will you dare shoot at it?"

The guard scattered and spread out. Several men aimed at Trenmore on the bell, but a sharp command caused them to lower their weapons. The word came from none other than the chief himself, who now walked to a place whence he could look up at Trenmore and Trenmore down at him. If the chief's fall had injured him he showed no signs of it.

"Praise Heaven, your neck wasn't broke at all, chief," called the Irishman cheerfully. "I was afeared for you the way I could scarce do my work; but I got me a pretty plaything for all that!"

That the chief might see, he raised the sword and balanced it in his hands. "Where— How—did you—get—that?"

"From the Hand of Penn," came the Irishman's gay reply. "Sure, for all he was a Quaker, Penn's the kind-hearted old gentleman that would never withhold a weapon from a lad in a tight place!"

And he swung the sword about his head till it glittered like a wheel of fire. "'Twill make a world o' noise when it strikes the bell. Eh, my little policeman?"

"You must not—you dare not!" shrieked Quickest. The last shred of his composure had dropped off like a torn cloak. He at least seemed to share the superstition of the Numbers with regard to the old Threat of Penn.

Trenmore, however, felt that he had given the police sufficient attention. He was casting for bigger fish than they. Why had his bait not yet been taken? The bell, scaffolding and all, swung alarmingly against the electricians' tethering ropes; but Trenmore cautiously made his way a step or so along the planking.

There was the dais, and before it yawned the pit, open again and glaring upward like a red eye set in the milk-white floor. Close by, under guard, stood his four companions watching the bell with anxious eyes.

Drayton and Viola greeted Terry's appearance with a cheer and waved their hands encouragingly. In response Terry raised the sword, called a hearty greeting, and looked at the dais.

On the throne sat that decrepit, hateful figure, Mr. Justice Supreme. There sat also every one of the Servants who had witnessed the examinations, earlier in the day, including Mr. Mercy, looking depressed but interested. Cleverest was there, too, standing beside his uncle.

Then Trenmore spoke, with the great voice of an Angel of Doom.

"You devils below there!" he shouted. "Take heed to my words! I've a warning to give you."

There came a deafening roar behind him. Glancing over his shoulder he saw a billowing, greenish cloud issuing from the balcony. It cleared slowly, revealing a pair of explosion-shattered doors, sagging from their hinges. A crowd of his enemies poured through the aperture and on to the balcony. At the rail, however, they paused, glaring across at Trenmore.

"Sword o' Battle," he murmured softly, "do you not wish they may try to cross on our bridge? Do you not hope it, little sword?"

Between his men the Quickest pushed his way to the railing. He had got him another revolver and he leveled it at Trenmore. "Surrender, my man, or you'll be shot where you stand!" came his terse command.

"Surrender is it? And why don't you shoot me, then? Sure, am I not a condemned man, chief, darling?"

"His Supremity has instructed me to grant you a reprieve if you will surrender. There has already been damage enough done."

Said Trenmore, "I'll wager my life against your markmanship, chief. Shoot now! And see if you can kill Terence Trenmore before he can strike the bell!" Once more he heaved up the sword.

The chief turned pale and lowered his own weapon. "You are a madman!" he shouted. "Strike that bell and your friends and you will perish with the rest of us!"

"A quick death and a happy one! In dying we'll rid the earth of its worst scum, if all they say is true. No, no, little man. I'll not come over to you. And if you shoot, you'll strike the bell yourself in a small way—or cause me to do it in earnest. I've no time to be exchanging pleasantries. I'll just guard my back and go on with my business."

He brought the sword crashing down on the frail bridge. With a splintering sound it broke loose. Trenmore's end fell to the floor, carrying with it some of the scaffolding. Trenmore barely saved himself from going down. Regaining his footing neatly, he waved a hand at the furious chief and climbed around the bell to a place where it partly shielded him from the balcony. Thence he could face his more important enemies on the dais.

"You'll pardon me," he shouted. "There was a small interruption. Now, tell me, you old scoundrel on the throne there, have I the upper hand, or have I not?"

CHAPTER XIX.

TRENMORE STRIKES.

IT was Cleverest who replied, scornfully and with no sign of fear.

"You fool," he cried, "strike the bell if you like. Do you think we care for that? We are waiting for you to be brought down here to die with these other vermin!"

"And is that the way you regard it?" inquired Trenmore with a laugh, but his heart sank. He was bluffing on a large and glorious scale, and if the bluff was to be called, he might as well leap from his place and be done with it. However, the Irishman was a firm believer in the motto: Fight to a finish whatever the odds! "Then I'll strike and settle the matter," he added defiantly.

Just beyond where he stood, the Red Bell was naked of scaffolding. He swung up the sword for a great blow. But there was at least one man in the hall whose faith was equal to that of the Numbers themselves. That man was Mr. Justice Supreme, High Servant of Penn.

As the sword flashed up, the old man leaped from his chair. With galvanic energy and upraised, clawlike hands, he stumbled to the edge of the dais.

"No, no, no!" he shrieked. "Don't strike! For mercy's sake don't strike the bell; don't strike——"

The words died on his lips. The yellow claws clutched at his heart and he flung back his head, mouth open. As his knees sagged under him, Cleverest barely saved his uncle from falling to the pavement below. Holding the limp form in his arms, he felt for the old man's heart. Then he laid him down on the dais and turned to the Servants.

"Gentlemen," he said very solemnly. "Mr. Justice Supreme has passed to the arms of Penn!"

Every man on the platform rose and gravely removed his high hat; then, with the utmost tranquillity, rescated himself. Full tribute to the dead having been rendered, business might proceed as before. That, at least, was the impression received by Drayton, though probably the apparent indifference was only part of their queer, archaic and at the same time ultra-modern ceremonial.

Cleverest turned again and shook his fist at Trenmore. "It is you who have done this!" he cried. "It is you who shall pay for it! Gentlemen"—he whirled to his seated fellows—"have you any objection—any fear of this world or the next—which causes you to dread the striking of that bell?"

They all smiled. One or two laughed outright. Mr. Pity arose in his place. "Mr. Justice Supreme," he said, "Pardon me if I forestall your ordination under that title, but this is an uncommon emergency. Your Supremity, I am sure I speak for all of us when I say that the gentleman on the bell is welcome to hammer at it all night, if that will relieve his feelings. He gives us credit for an uncommonly large slice of his own superstition!"

"You hear?" yelled Cleverest at the Irishman. "Strike if you please! For every stroke you will see one of your

friends here dropped screaming down the pit!"

This was checkmate with a vengeance. Trenmore hesitated, feeling suddenly rather foolish. If he struck, they would throw Viola in first. Already she had been dragged to the very edge by a burly tiger of a pit guard. A dozen men had their hands on the other prisoners. If he did not strike, they would still be thrown in. This was the end.

A sickening weariness replaced the exaltation which had upheld Trenmore till this moment. He let the sword sink slowly, until its point rested on the edge of the Red Bell.

Cleverest smiled sneeringly and half turned. He meant to seat himself on the throne and thenceforward give his orders from the place he had long coveted. Then an earnest, ringing voice arose from the group below him.

"Terry—Terry! For the love of Heaven, don't give up! That man is wrong! They are all wrong! Only that old man knew the truth. Strike that bell and no man in all the city will be alive one moment after! Strike, I say! Kill us and avenge us with one blow!"

"Stop that man's mouth!" cut in Cleverest savagely. "Proceed with the executions!"

But now his fellow Servants intervened. Perhaps they remembered that for all their pride they were only mortal men; or perhaps they were merely curious. At least, several of them rose in open protest.

"No! Wait a minute, Clever—beg pardon, Your Supremity, I should say. Let's hear what the fellow has to say."

"Wait!" This from Mr. Courage, the former High Priest's lieutenant. He was a dignified man with cold gray eyes and features which indicated a character of considerable determination. "Remember, sir, that until the ordination, the Council of Twelve holds power. Let the man speak!"

"Let him speak!"

The chorus was too unanimous for even Cleverest to overlook. With a scowl he stalked to the throne. "Very well, gentleman," he snapped. "Have your way, but no good will come of it. Bring that man up here!"

Leaning on the sword, Trenmore looked on with renewed hope in his optimistic soul. "I wonder," thought he, "does the boy know some real secret about this red thing here? Or is he bluffing? If he is, good luck and a power of invention to the tongue of him!"

Drayton was escorted around to the dais steps by two blue-clad policemen. When he stood before the throne, Cleverest gestured impatiently.

"I have no wish to question this man. Gentlemen, since you have taken the matter on yourselves, will you kindly conclude it?"

"We will." The imperturbable Mr. Courage turned to Drayton. "Young man, what is it that you know about the Threat of Penn which we, the Servants of Penn, do not already know?"

"Its history," retorted Drayton boldly. He spoke up loudly, so that Trenmore also might hear. "To be convincing I must go back a long way in the history of Philadelphia—back to the very beginning of her isolation from the rest of the United States. You know nothing of that?"

Leaning from his throne, Cleverest whispered in the ear of Mr. Courage. The latter nodded.

"Stick to the bell itself, please," he said sternly. "We are not interested in the history of Philadelphia."

"I'll try to—but you won't understand. Well, then, in that distant age there was a certain group of men practically, though not openly in control of this city. They were called 'grafters,' 'the contractor gang,' and 'the gang.' Those were titles of high honor then—like Servants and Superlatives, you know."

Here, Trenmore, on the bell, almost dropped the sword for sheer delight.

"These grafters," continued Drayton, "got hold of a man who had made a certain discovery. He was professor of physics in a university here. You know—or rather probably you don't know—that all matter, in its atomic structure vibrates, and that different sorts of energy waves can affect that vibration. I am no physicist myself, and I can't tell you this in scientific terms. As I understood it, however, he discovered a combination of metals which, when treated in a certain way, would give off sound waves of the exact length of the vibration not of atoms, but of the corpuscles of atoms, the electrons. That is to say——"

"This is madness," broke in Cleverest impatiently. "It is a jargon of senseless words!"

"Tell us about the bell," seconded Mr. Courage, and "Yes, the bell—the bell!" came from half a dozen other Servants.

"I *am* telling you of the bell," protested Drayton. "But you are too ignorant to grasp even a simple idea of it. Perhaps you can understand if I put it another way. This man—this professor had discovered a secret power by which metal, reverberating to a blow, might destroy not only other metal but human flesh, clothes, wood, marble, the very air you breathe! And these grafters, of whom you yourselves are the lineal descendants, forced the man to use his discovery for their benefit.

"With refined irony they took the old Liberty Bell. They had it recast. They made this professor recast the Liberty Bell itself, with other metal and in his new secret way—recast it as a much larger bell. It came out red as blood. Then they built this dome. They said Philadelphia should have the most glorious city hall in the world. They hung the bell there and they put the sword

there. And then they set guards at the doors, and guns behind those panels. They invited the leading citizens to a demonstration. They forced the professor to play showman to his discovery, but they betrayed him so that his precautions for his own safety were annulled at the critical moment. Before the citizens' horrified eyes the professor, and the little gong he used for the experiment, and all the solid matter around it dissolved, disintegrated, vanished. He stood right there, where your pit yawns now. When he was gone there was a hole in the pavement as if made by a great explosion.

"And they—the grafters—set themselves up as masters of the city under threat of its complete destruction. They called themselves the Servants of Penn. They curtailed the education of the people as needless and too expensive. When the people complained, they placated them by abolishing all grades above the primary and turning the schools into dance halls and free moving-picture theaters. City hall they remodeled into a luxurious clubhouse where they themselves lived and reveled.

"Two generations later—generations of unschooled, iron-ruled citizens—and Penn had become a god. The poor, good old Quaker! His Servants made him the god of Lust, of Vice, of Drunkenness, of every sort of foul debauchery. The Servants were his priests and this his temple. In mockery they named themselves for the cardinal virtues—Mercy, Pity, Justice, Love. But they were tyrants without mercy, revelers in vice——"

"Stop!"

The command came from a livid and furious Cleverest, and the hand of a policeman cut off Drayton's flow of eloquence effectively. Cleverest was not the only angry man present. Drayton faced eight Servants who would have cheerfully torn him to pieces.

"Mr. Courage," Cleverest turned whitely to his uncle's lieutenant, "are you satisfied now, or do you desire further insult from this—this lying dog who would blacken the name of Penn and of Penn Service?"

"You were right, sir," conceded Courage. "I had not supposed that the brain of a human being could compass such a tissue of lies and blasphemy! We cannot be too quickly rid of the whole sacrilegious horde!"

Now was Cleverest's hour of triumph. With sickening certainty, Drayton realized that he had carried his tirade too far. He had not convinced; only enraged. Nothing but death remained. He wrenched his face away from the officer's hand.

"Strike, Terry!" he shouted. "I have spoken only the truth! Strike!"

Then did Terence Trenmore raise the Sword of Penn in good earnest. The fury that had been in him this hour past rose in his heart like boiling lava. Though he believed, no more than the Servants, he must strike at something. He could reach nothing human. There was the Red Bell!

As the sword swung up, even the disbelieving Servants stared fascinated. The police and pit guards dropped their prisoners and raised one beastlike wail of fear.

Up whirled the sword and descended, a yellow flash of flame. It rose again.

A strange reverberation shook the air. It was not like the note of a bell, nor of a gong, nor of any man-made thing. It was more than sound—worse than sound. It was a feeling; an emotion; the sickening pang of a spirit wrenching itself from a body racked with pain.

Every living being in that great place save one dropped where he was, and lay writhing feebly beneath the awful, echoing dome.

But Trenmore, standing against the bell itself, did not fall. Perhaps he was

too close to be affected. Perhaps the scaffolding which pressed on the bell, preventing its full reverberation, broke the sound waves for him. At least he still stood, and now he was "seeing red," as the phrase goes. Though after that first blow he might have brought even Penn Service to terms, he cared not to temporize. He cared only to destroy. Again he brought down the sword with all his terrible strength.

His foothold sagged beneath him. Looking upward he beheld an awe-inspiring thing. The golden Dome of Justice was sinking; crumpling inward. It was growing transparent, like a sheet of gold leaf beaten too thin. A moment later and he could see through it on upward.

He saw the high, gray-white tower, with its illuminated clock face, and still above that the circle of white lights about the feet of Penn. He saw the huge statue sway and stagger like a drunken man. Beneath it the tower began to bend like a tallow candle set in an oven thrice heated.

A warning quiver shot through the scaffold. With one yell of sheer, savage delight, Trenmore heaved up the sword. For the third and last time it smote the blood-red Threat of Penn!

Then the air was sucked out of his lungs; sight was wiped from his eyes. His muscles relaxed and he lost all power to feel; but he *knew* in the deathless soul of him that his body was falling and that the created world had dissolved, disintegrated into formless, gaseous chaos!

CHAPTER XX.

TRANSFERRED HOME.

TRENMORE fell—but not into the empty void created when the Red Bell dissolved itself, its temple and its world.

He struck feet first on some kind of hard surface, jarred in every bone and

nerve by the impact. As light flashed up all around him, he staggered against a man.

The next incident can only be explained by the fact that Trenmore was still "seeing red." The fight had been by no means knocked out of him by the recent catastrophe. He grasped one fact and one only. The man against whom he had stumbled wore a black coat and a silk hat, accursed insignia of Penn Service. Promptly grappling with this individual, they went to the pavement together. While Terry reached for his adversary's throat, the latter let out yell after yell of terror and dismay.

It was fortunate that the Irishman had been so thoroughly shaken by his fall that his customary efficiency was somewhat impaired. Two scandalized policemen dashing upon the struggling pair were able to pull him off before he could inflict more than a bad fright upon his victim.

Dragged to his knees, Trenmore shook his head like an angry bull of the wild Irish breed. He got his feet under him and rose so suddenly that the policemen lost their grip, thrown off like a couple of terriers.

Then would bloody battle have raged indeed in the very precincts of law and order, had not a new figure rushed up and fairly flung itself into Trenmore's arms. It was a small figure to quell so huge an adversary. Even the maddest of Irishmen, however, could hardly go on fighting while a pair of slim arms reached for his neck, a soft cheek pressed against his coat, and a loved voice cried softly:

"Look about you! Terry, oh, Terry! Look about you!"

Folding an arm about Viola, Trenmore dashed a hand across his eyes and at last did look. On four sides rose the gray, irregular, many-windowed walls of a huge building. Beneath his feet lay a pavement of uneven gray cement.

The place was bright with the white glare of electrics. Where had been the four doors of the temple, he saw through open archways to the streets beyond.

Above was no golden dome, but the open starlit sky. Up toward it pointed a high, gray tower, almost white in the rays of a searchlight somewhere on the lower walls. The tower was surmounted by the foreshortened but identifiable statue of William Penn, not falling but very solid and majestically beneficent as usual. Then Trenmore became aware of a nasal, high-pitched voice.

"I tell you I've got to catch my train!" it wailed. "Arrest that lunatic or let him go, just as you please. But if you make me miss that train, you'll regret it! Your own men there will testify that I did nothing. I was simply hurrying through the public buildings on my way to Broad Street Station. Then that wild man jumped on me from behind. Chief Hannigan is my brother-in-law. If you make me miss that last train I'll get your stripes for it, or I'm a Dutchman!"

Viewing the speaker with new eyes, Trenmore perceived him to be a tall, thin man, who had already rescued his hat from where it had rolled, and retrieved a small black suit case. He was handing his card to the sergeant. That officer promptly capitulated.

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Flynn. Meant no offense, I'm sure. Trying to catch the ten-five? You can get it yet!"

Making no reply, the man fled so precipitately toward Broad Street Station that his coat tails stood out behind.

"That's Mr. Charles Flynn, the undertaker," observed the sergeant to a group of four or five policemen who had now gathered and were regarding Trenmore with mingled wonder and menace. "He lives out at Media. Now, my man, you come along quietly. What

were you trying to do—provide Mr. Flynn as a corpse for one of his own funerals?"

The jest brought a laugh from his subordinates. Trenmore was silent. He had lost all desire to fight, and the smallest policeman there could have led him by one hand into durance vile. But Viola's quick wits again saved the situation. Releasing herself gently from her brother's arm, she addressed the sergeant with quiet dignity.

"Officer, this gentleman is my brother. He is subject to epileptic seizures. Just now he became separated from me and from his—his attendant. The fit came on him and he fell against the other gentleman. He is ill, and all he needs is to be taken home and put to bed. Mr. Drayton, here, is his nurse. Please, sergeant! You wouldn't arrest my poor brother?"

Trenmore perceived that Drayton had indeed taken his place at his other side. Over the heads of the police he saw Arnold Bertram and—Miss Skidoo!

Feeling remarkably foolish, he began to wonder if what Viola was saying might not be actual fact. Could it be that he had been ill—mad—and had dreamed that whole wild vision of the year 2118?

Fortunately Viola's pleadings, in which Drayton presently joined, proved effective. With a number of good-natured warnings that she "keep her crazy brother at home, or at least under better restraint," the sergeant wrote down the name and address and called off his myrmidons.

Robert Drayton and the two Trenmores were free at last to walk quietly out of the southern entrance into Broad Street. They hastened to do so. They had, in fact, seen quite enough of Philadelphia city hall, in any century. Behind followed Bertram and his companion.

It was then a little after ten, and the

SBThrill

street was by no means crowded. Nevertheless, as Drayton and Trenmore were hatless and the latter more than a little disheveled, the party were glad to turn off from brightly lighted Broad into the comparative emptiness and gloom of Sansom Street.

Just before they did so, Drayton paused for one glance backward at the enormous pile of gray masonry terminating the short vista of Broad Street. Had they really, as he hopefully surmised, returned into the safe protection of their own day and age?

High above, like a white ghost in the searchlight, brooded the giant figure of that old Quaker, his stony hand outstretched in petrified blessing. And below him, across the face of the yellow-lighted clock, a wraith of vapor drifted, obscuring the figures. What difference was there between it all as he saw it now and as he had seen it—that very morning, as it seemed to him? The difference stared him in the face.

There was still an emblem above the southern arch. That morning it had been the ominous, sword-crossed Red Bell. Now it was a shield with the city colors, pale yellow and blue; above it glowed a huge "Welcome" and the letters "A. A. M. W.;" beneath it the one word "TRUTH."

"Associated Advertising Men of the World," he muttered half aloud, "and their convention was here—I mean *is* here. Yes, we're back in our own century again."

Half a square farther they all walked, in the silence of prisoners too suddenly released to believe their own good fortune. Then Trenmore abruptly halted. Bertram and Miss Skidoo coming up, they all stood grouped in the friendly shadow of an awning.

"Viola," exclaimed Trenmore, "tell me the facts and don't spare me! Was that thing you said to the policemen back there—was it really so?"

Her eyes opened wide. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that if I've been crazy, dreaming——"

"Then we've all been dreaming together," broke in Drayton soberly. "I was never more astounded in my life than when that gorgeous temple suddenly dissolved, melted, and reformed as the old familiar public buildings. It's lucky for us that there were only a few people passing through at the time. We must have dropped into the scene like figures in one of these faked movie reels. It's a wonder no one noticed!"

"An' me," put in Bertram. "I've been talkin' my head off tryin' to explain to the kid here how she's got back about two hundred years before she was born. I know it by that 'Welcome Advertising Men' thing over the city hall entrance. 'Truth,' it says under it. Gee, it's mighty hard to make some folks believe the truth!"

"Miss Skidoo!" ejaculated Terence. Again he brushed his eyes with his hand, staring blankly at that bewildered but defiant young lady.

"Yes," she retorted sharply, "and you can't string me, neither! Sump'n certainly happened, but it couldn't be what Bert said. Why, I know this place where we're standing like it was my own kitchen!"

There she stood, certainly, green hat, silk sweater, and all. The yellow button, insignia of the enslaved Numbers of a future age, glared like a nightmare eye from her lapel. Yet how, granting that all the rest was so—that they had actually lived through some forty-eight hours in a century yet unborn—how had she survived the oblivion which had swallowed her fellow citizens? Servants, Superlatives, police, Numbers, and all had dissolved and vanished. But No. 23000 had made the two-century jump unscathed. Could it be that future, past, and present were all

one, as he had once read in some book, tossed aside after ten minutes of incredulous attention?

"Let's get home," exclaimed Trenmore abruptly. "I feel my reason is slipping. And let's walk, for it's not far and 'tis agreeable to be loose in a sane world again. At least," Terry corrected himself after a moment's sober reflection, "a comparatively sane world. Yes, let's be moving, friends, for I'm thinking we need a good meal and a night's sleep to save our own sanity!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE GRAY DUST.

AT ten-thirty, five tired and hungry people ascended the steps of No. 17—Walnut Street and rang the bell. It was not immediately answered. Then Drayton noticed that the door was not latched. They all entered and became aware that in the library on the right something unusual was going on. A gurgling, choking noise was punctuated by several thumps, followed by the crash of furniture violently overthrown.

Trenmore was first at the door. He flung it open and rushed inside. The room seemed empty. As the noises continued, however, Trenmore passed around the big reading table and stooping over plucked his man, Martin, from the prostrate body of an unknown antagonist. He did it with the air of one who separates his bull pup from the mangled corpse of the neighbor's Pomeranian. With a sad, disgusted face Terry glanced from the pugnacious one to the figure on the floor.

"Ah, now, boy," he demanded, "are you not ashamed to be choking at a man old enough to be your own grand-dad?" Then he dropped Martin, with an exclamation. "Sure, 'tis my old friend, the little collector man!"

"Mr. Trenmore," began Martin in excited self-defense, "he come in here and he——"

"Never mind what he did till I count what's left of the pieces, boy. I take back what I said, though. Be he alive or dead, the old rascal's got no more than was coming to him."

Kneeling down, while the rest gathered in an interested group, he put his hand to the man's heart. He was an elderly, smooth-shaven, gray-haired person, with sharp, clean-cut features. The forehead was high and sloping, the mouth thin and tight-pressed even in unconsciousness. He was well dressed, and a gold pince-nez lay on the floor near by, miraculously unbroken.

"He's all right," announced Trenmore. "Martin, a drop of liquor now and we'll have the old scoundrel up and able for an explanation."

His prophecy proved correct. Five minutes later the gray-haired collector sat in an armchair, shaken but able to talk and be talked to.

"And now," said Trenmore, "I'll ask you, Martin, to tell your share in this, and then you'll go out and you'll get everything in the house that is eatable and you'll set it out in the dining room, for it's starved to death we are, every one of us."

"Yes, Mr. Trenmore, I'll tend to it. This old party here he come in on me about half an hour ago. He asks for you, sir. I told him you'd been out since this morning——"

"This morning!" The exclamation broke from three pairs of lips simultaneously. Martin stared.

"Never mind, boy," said Terry hastily. "I'd been out since this morning. And then?"

"He wanted to know where you was. I says I didn't know, as you didn't say nothing to me. And then we got talking like, and—I'm sorry, sir—but I let out that it seemed mighty queer, your going that way. And then he asked me questions about where I'd last saw you and all that. I told him about finding this here gray stuff—it's wrapped

up in that newspaper on the table, sir—and not knowing what it was or whether you wanted it kep' or throwed out.

"And then—honest, I don't know how he done it, but he got me to show it to him. I brung it in here. And then he says I ain't never going to see you no more, and would I sell him the stuff. I says no, of course. Then he pulls a gun on me—here it is—and I jumps for him—and then you come in. I didn't go to hurt the old guy none, but he got me wild and——"

"That's all right, Martin. You did very well, but don't ever be doing any of it again. Now hurry up that supper. What's coming next would likely strain your poor brain to listen to. Get along with you."

Reluctantly, Martin vanished kitchenward. The rest of the company pulled up chairs and made themselves comfortable. For a time they found the captive of Martin's prowess inclined to an attitude of silent defiance. Upon Terry's threat, however, to turn him over to the police on charges of house-breaking, he expressed a willingness to listen to reason. Bertram's presence had a very chastening effect. He knew the burglar for one of the men he had hired to steal the Cerberus, and realized that should his former accomplice go on the stand, his testimony, together with the attack on Martin, would mean penitentiary stripes for himself.

"By the way," Drayton broke in, picking up the newspaper package which contained the Dust of Purgatory and weighing it in his hand, "did you ever ask Bertram, Terry, if he knew what had become of the vial this was in?"

The burglar started and flushed. "Say, I done a mean trick then. I didn't mean to keep the thing, but you left it laying on your bureau that day at the Belleclaire, Mr. Trenmore, and I—well, I took it along. I give it to Skidoo here for a keepsake. I didn't

have nothin' else pretty to give her. But she's a straight girl and I hadn't oughta done it. Skidoo, have you got that bottle I give you for smellin' salts?"

"Sure." No. 23000 promptly produced it from her sweater pocket. "Why, Bert, wasn't it your'n?"

Bertram admitted that it was not. With a reproachful glance for Bertram, she extended the Cerberus vial to Trenmore. Trenmore reached for it and took it in his hand. In the flash of an eye the space before him was empty. Miss Skidoo had vanished more abruptly than he had himself disappeared, upon his first experience with the dust!

With a startled yell, Terence leaped to his feet and flung the Cerberus across the room. His feelings were shared by all present, save the old collector, who put up a thin, protesting hand.

"Now, don't—I beg of you, don't become excited! Mr. Trenmore, my nerves are not in shape to stand this sort of thing. There is no harm done—unless the beautiful little curio is broken, which would be a pity. Tell me, did that violently costumed young lady come here from—well, from the place you have been in since this morning?"

"She did that!"

"Then she has simply returned there," announced the collector and he settled placidly back in his chair.

But Bertram, who had been stricken temporarily dumb and paralyzed by the abrupt vanishment of his beloved "kid," gave vent to one anguished cry of grief and rage. Springing upon Drayton, he wrenched from him the newspaper packet.

"What the deuce are you about?" exclaimed the lawyer, snatching at it.

"You lemme alone!" panted the burglar, backing away. "I want a dose of this yere dust, that's what. I'm goin' after Skidoo, I am!"

"You are not!"

Trenmore pounced on him and recovered the dangerous package. "You poor little maniac," he said. "Do you think that I rang the Red Bell in that temple for nothing? Don't you realize that the place where we were *isn't anywhere now*, wherever it was before?"

A moment the burglar stood cogitating this puzzling statement, his face the picture of woe. Then he sank slowly into a chair and dropped his head in his hands.

"The brightest kid!" he muttered despairingly. "The best kid—and now she ain't nothing no more! Hell—beg pardon, lady, but ain't that fierce on a fellow? I don't care what happens now!"

They all sincerely pitied him. As, however, there is no known remedy for the loss of a sweetheart who has melted into the circumambient atmosphere, and as he repulsed their sympathy with almost savage impatience, they once more turned their attention to the gray-haired collector.

Trenmore began by asking his name.

The old fellow fumbled in his pockets a moment. "I find I have left my card case," he said, "but I am Phineas Dodd Scarboro. By profession I am an oculist. I am willing to tell you the history and nature of that dust. In order that I may do so intelligently, however, I must ask that you first relate your own experience with it."

There seemed nothing unreasonable in this request. Beginning with the first uncapping of the vial, they unfolded their remarkable narrative. Long before that tale was done, Martin had announced supper. The collector adjourned with them to the dining room. Bertram, however, declined, saying that he had no appetite and preferred to stay where he was. So he was left alone, hunched over in his chair, a figure of sorrow inconsolable. Trenmore took the precaution of bringing the packet

of dust into the dining room. It was not good company for Bertram.

"And so," concluded Trenmore over the coffee cups, "we got back to our own day again, and a very good job it was. I'd sooner put up with any hardships of our own time, than live out my life in the year 2118!"

Phineas Scarboro sniffed scornfully at Terry's last remark.

"The year fiddlesticks!" he exclaimed impatiently. "You might, if you had used that powder intelligently, have reached a plane where the vibration was so rapid that a year there was the equivalent of one day here. That, however, is the only form of trick you could play with time. To talk of time as a dimension through which one might travel is the merest nonsense. Time is—not a dimension. It is a sequence, or rather a comparative sequence, of vibrations."

Trenmore threw up his hand. "Man, man, don't confuse us that way; we'll be worse off than we are now!"

"The sun rose and set at least twice while we were there," said Drayton.

"And if it was not the year 2118, then what was it and where were we?" This from Viola.

Scarboro placed his fingers together, tip to tip. He contemplated them for a moment without replying.

"Perhaps," he said at last, "I had best begin where your adventures began—with the Dust of Purgatory. In 1884 I entered my freshman year at Harvard. In that same year I made the acquaintance of a young man destined to influence my life in a very remarkable manner. His name was Andrew Power. You appear startled. That was the name, was it not, which you, Mr. Drayton, encountered in the temple library as the man who had carried out the scheme for state isolation? The appearance of that name is one of those inexplicable circumstances which in my own investigations have

often obtruded themselves. When you have heard all, you will be at least as well able as myself to explain its occurrence there.

"Andrew Power, then, was a young man of very unusual abilities. He was, in fact, a theorist along lines so novel that he became *persona non grata* to more than one member of the faculty. In those days they were convinced that science had achieved her ultimate victories. Any one who pointed out new worlds to conquer was a heretic or worse. Finding no sympathy in his instructors, Power brought his theories to me and to Thaddeus B. Crane, who was then my roommate. The three of us struck up one of those intense friendships of boyhood. On many a night we argued and wrangled into the small hours over subjects of whose very existence Thaddeus and I would scarcely have been aware, save for Andrew Power. The involutions of his reasoning were so intricate that I doubt if any man alive even to-day could have followed him, though science has made giant strides since then.

"His chief interest lay in the fields of the occult, which he approached from the angle of sheer materialism. To expound his theories even in brief would require more time than you, I am sure, would care to expend in listening. Enough that he was deeply interested in the Eastern religions—he was born in India, by the way, and had studied under some of their greatest pundits—and contended that their mysticism was founded on scientifically demonstrable facts."

In spite of himself, Trenmore yawned. Was the man never going to reach the dust?

"In his own words," continued Scarboro, "Power believed it possible to 'reduce psychic experiences to a material basis.' You smile"—They hadn't—"but Andrew Power, whom we secretly considered a mad theorist, proved himself

far more practical than Crane and I, who merely talked. The faculty objected to experiments along any line not in the regular curriculum. Power, however, had set up for himself a small private laboratory.

"One night he came to us ablaze with excitement. In his hand was a glass specimen jar, half filled with this gray, powdery stuff. 'Fellows,' he said, 'I've done the thing at last. I've precipitated it!' Though we hadn't the vaguest idea what he was talking about, we managed not to give ourselves away. We led him on to explanation. This powder, he said, was of a substance more magical than the fabled philosopher's stone, which could at most but transmute one element into another. Taken into the system of a living creature this substance so altered the vibrations of the electrons—he called them atomic corpuscles, but electrons is the modern term—of not only the body but of any other matter within the immediate radius of its magnetism that these vibrations were modified to function on an entirely different plane from this with which we are familiar from birth. This other world, or rather these worlds, lie within or in the same place as our own. The old axiom, that two bodies cannot exist simultaneously in the same place, was, according to Power, an axiom no more. Two bodies, a hundred bodies, could by intervibration exist in precisely the same place. And therein lay the explanation of every materialization, every 'miracle,' every 'supernatural' wonder since the world began. Mediums, clairvoyants, prophets, and yogis, all had their occasional spiritual glimpses of these hidden planes or worlds. What Power desired—what he had accomplished—was the actual physical entry.

"Needless to say, we scoffed. We angered Power to the point where he was ready to actually demonstrate. Later we learned from his notes that

he had only translated an unlucky cat or so to these secret realms, and was personally inexperienced. Driven, however, by our laughter, Power took about ten grains of the powder and placed it on his tongue. He disappeared. From that day to this no one, not even I, who have many times gone the same road and returned, has ever seen Andrew Power.

"We two escaped arrest only because our unfortunate friend had not been seen coming to our rooms that night. There was a great fuss made over his supposed murder, and the country for miles around was searched for days. Thaddeus and I, two frightened boys, kept still. The first day or so we had access to his laboratory, where we read his notes in the hope of being able to reverse his disastrous experiment on himself. Then everything was locked up and later his effects were shipped to his only living relative, an uncle in Delhi. But the formula for the dust was not among them. That, before my eyes and in the face of my frantic protest, Thaddeus Crane had destroyed!

"He would have destroyed the powder also, had I not persuaded him that it was our moral duty to hold it in case of Andrew Power's return. He was always a bit afraid of Andrew. In the face of that contingency he suddenly saw his arbitrary act with the formula in its true light. So Crane and I divided the powder between us, promising each other to hold it in case Power should ever return.

"But Crane had had enough and more than enough. He would never afterward discuss even with me the theories which had cost humanity that great and daring mind. I think Crane privately considered that the devil had taken his own. He became very religious, a rigid church member, and died, I am told, in a firm conviction of grace.

"But I was of different stuff. Pow-

er's notes had given me a few ideas of my own. For fifteen years, though I followed the profession for which I had trained myself, I worked, studied, and experimented. At last I felt that I, too, had solved a problem, not of this dust, the secret of which passed with its creator, but of a means to recover the original vibratory rhythm after it had been altered by the dust, that is, a means to return to our own world.

"I am proud to say that I had the courage to make the trial. I, too, have wandered across the wide Ulithian plain. I, too, have passed the Gateway of the Moon into places and amid peoples more strange than even you can dream. The thought of those wanderings became to me an obsession. I was like a drug fiend, who can neither rest nor sleep unless he knows that the means are at hand to rebuild his dream castles—reanimate his wondrous and seductive houris.

"But the time came when my share of the dust was at last exhausted. Naturally I went to Crane. I think I hinted to you that he was a superstitious fool. He had bought that vial, the Cerberus, and he dumped out the absurdly impossible relic of Dante, replacing it with Power's stuff. 'Dust from the Rocks of Purgatory' appealed to him, I suppose, as better applicable to this powder than to the very earthy dust the vial had before contained.

"Well, I found Crane utterly unapproachable on the subject. I begged, pleaded, threatened, offered him all in my power to give; but he would not let me have it. At his death I was wild with rage when I learned of its sale to a mere collector of curios. You know the rest of that episode. Can you blame me now?

"To-day science herself is steadily approaching the magic boundaries of those realms which were once my familiar playground. Soon she can no longer ignore the actual, material ex-

istence of the 'astral plane,' as it has been misnamed by investigators who only recognize it as a psychical possibility.

"But I—in the flesh, I have known such adventures as only you in all the world would credit! There, ever changing, continually forming, are born the nuclei of events, conditions, inventions, ideas, which later 'break through' as it were and recreate this more stable world to which we are born. The inspiration of the poet, the philosopher, or the inventor, is no more than a flicker from that swifter, different vibration within our own.

"And those lands have their monsters—devils, even. The spirit can at times attune itself and in our world a prophet arises. But let him beware! They are wild realms which he glimpses, neither good nor bad, but alive with their own never-ceasing, half-aimless, half-purposeful activities. I know them as no other man save Andrew Power alone. Many times have I sought him there. Many times has his name come up in some such fantastic connection as it came to you. I have seen, as it were, the shadow of his thought sketched in the tangible phantasmagoria which surrounded me. But either he eludes me purposely, or he is dead, and only his mind endures as an invisible force. But if he still lives and we meet, he can make this stuff that I can't make; I can show him the way back to our own world; and after that the door will be open for all to pass!

"Think of the discoveries that will be hastened—the miracles that may be wrought by knowledge acquired at first hand across that threshold! I could almost kill myself for sheer rage when I think how I was used to waste glorious opportunities in the pursuit of mere unprofitable adventure! Why, you yourselves brought back at least one idea—the idea of matter-destroy-

ing sound waves. Had it been Andrew Power or I, we would have searched those archives until we found the formula by which the Red Bell was made. We would have brought that back, instead of the bare and useless idea!"

"And a fine lot of good that would have been to the world!" exploded Trenmore. "I'd as soon give the matches to a child and bid it go play in the nice powder mill, as turn loose the men of this world in that one we've come from, if all you say is true. This dust here I'll toss in the river, the way no man shall go that road again. 'Tis not right not decent, Mr. Scarboro, that one should so thrust oneself into the very workshop of the Almighty!"

By the gleam in Scarboro's eye hostilities threatened.

Drayton intervened. "Before we discuss the ultimate fate of the dust, Mr. Scarboro, won't you run over our own experience and explain a few little things? Now, in the first place you say that Andrew Power 'placed the powder on his tongue and disappeared.' I am sure none of us even tried to taste the stuff."

"I said," corrected Scarboro, "that it must 'enter the system of a living creature.' It is equally effective when breathed into the lungs. That is the way every one of you went. As to what you found, Ulithia is a place, or rather a condition, which is the one invariable prelude to every adventure I have had. Its phantasmagoria are well-nigh as fixed in their nature as what we please to call 'reality.' But of the character of its inhabitants or of the laws which govern its various phenomena, I can tell you but little.

"After living in this commonplace world of ours so many thousand centuries, mankind stands blank-faced before its greater mysteries. How can I, then, who have but one lifetime, and of that have spent but a small proportion in this other world, be expected to

explain Ulithia? It is there. Every one present has seen it. We have seen its starry sky that is like our own sky; its sun that is not our sun; its moon that is a mystic gateway. While in our world the sun set once, you passed three days and two whole nights in Ulithia and the next inner world. Our astronomy is not theirs, however much it may resemble it in appearance. And we have all talked with Ulithia's ghostly, phantasmal inhabitants. Spirits? Demons? Elves? I do not know. That they are more familiar with our nature than we with theirs is certain. In Ulithia they recognize our alien passing. As the whim pleases them, they speed or hinder us. But, just as happened to all of you, one always does finally pass through there.

"What lies beyond varies. Those worlds are real. Their matter is solid—while it lasts. But the form passes. 'The hills are shadows and they flow from form to form and nothing stands. They melt like mists, the solid lands; like clouds they shape themselves and go!' That was written of earth as we know it. How much better it applies to those inner, wilder realms!

"To one who knows the conditions, who has power to go and come at will, their perils are negligible; their wonder and delight inexhaustible. But 'woe to the stranger in the Hollow Lands!' You people were singularly fortunate. By a millionth chance, when the great Red Bell dissolved the astral vibrations, you were restored to your own. The distance which you had moved through space, even the direction was the same. In traversing Ulithia you actually traversed Philadelphia. When you went through the moon gate, you turned inward upon another plane and came back through the false city as if it were the real one. Thus, because your temple occupied the same space as the real city hall, it was there you finally found yourselves.

"That girl who returned with you came because she was temporarily in contact with a thing of this world—the Cerberus. When contact with that particular object ceased—she went. I say 'she,' but she was nothing—a phantasm—the materialized figment of a dream. All those phantasmagoria which you met, touched, which might and would have slain you had not the Red Bell been one of them—they were the changing forms of a world which may be created and recreated in a single day.

"A prophecy of the actual future of this city and nation? Perhaps. More likely some one of the forces that rule there, for its own sardonic amusement, twisted the fluent astral matter into a distorted and mocking reflection of the real city. Oh, yes, there are forces there, as here, at whose nature we can only guess. Matter does not form or vivify itself, either in those worlds or in this.

"As to the general moral tone of your Philadelphia in the year A. D. 2118—pardon me—but that moral tone seems to have been a distinct reflection of your own. At least, you met guile with treachery, and the inference is not hard to draw!"

At this gratuitous and unexpected insult, Drayton flushed uncomfortably, Viola drew herself up with great dignity, and Trenmore rose from the table so violently that his chair crashed over.

"You old scalawag——"

Just here the door was flung open. There stood Martin, panting and stammering incoherently.

"What is it now?" demanded his employer.

"Is it—Mr. Bertram, Martin?" queried Viola, turning quite pale. A vision had flashed up of the disconsolate burglar, lying in a pool of blood, slain by his own hand in excessive grief for the loss of his phantasmal sweetheart.

"Y-yes, ma'am! At least, I guess so. Was Mr. Bertram that other party that didn't want no supper?"

By now Viola's fears had communicated themselves to her brother and Drayton. Without pausing, all three pushed past Martin and reached the library. Bertram's chair was empty. His body was nowhere in sight.

Trenmore turned on Martin. "Where is he, then?"

"I don't know, sir. I ain't saying nothing against a guest of yours, Mr. Trenmore, but all I knows is he went upstairs a while back an' I just now went to your room, sir, to lay out your pajamas, and—and the safe's open, sir—and——"

But Trenmore waited for no more. He bounded up the stairs three steps at a time. Martin's tale proved only too true. The silk curtain was pushed back, the steel door in the wall swung wide, and the floor was as littered as that of the third-floor bedroom upon Drayton's first awakening in this much-burglarized house.

"The money," moaned Martin, wringing his hands. "All the money I seen you put in there yesterday—it's gone!"

Trenmore was rapidly running over the leather boxes, trays, and the like which were scattered about. He rose with a sigh of relief. "At least, he's taken nothing else. The money was only a couple of hundred that I can spare; but these trinkets of mine I could not easily replace."

"I don't believe it was Bertram," broke in Viola, with the eager loyalty of youth for one who has been, if not a friend, at least a companion. "He couldn't rob you, Terry, after all we've been through together!"

"What's this?" Drayton had picked up a folded scrap of paper from the dresser. "Why it's addressed to you, Terry!"

The Irishman took the paper, hastily opened it, and read:

Dear Mr. Trenmore, I herd what Mr. Skarboro said. Skidoo wasnt anything. Then I aint anything neither. I was goin to go strate but whats the use. I need this kale worse then you so Ive took it and bete it. Goodby. B.

To the astonishment of all present, Trenmore's face suddenly cleared and with a whoop of joy he rushed toward the door.

"Moral tone, is it? Wait till I show this to the old scalawag below there. Now whom will he blame for the moral tone, when he reads this letter? And I never thought of Bertram, the thievin' little crook!"

Waving the missive triumphantly, he thundered down the stairs. Viola burst into almost hysterical laughter and Drayton was forced to laugh with her. "That shot of Scarboro's rankled," he said. "Let's go down and hear them argue it out."

In the dining room, however, yet another surprise awaited them. Terry was there, a picture of chagrin, but no Scarboro.

"The old villain skipped out," he said disgustedly, "while we were tearing about after the other scoundrel! And what's worse, he took the dust with him! Well, I'd not chase after either of them if 'twas to win me a kingdom."

Very thoughtfully the three took their way to the library. Drayton picked up the crystal vial which Trenmore had flung away. One of its silver heads was dented to a yet more savage expression. Otherwise the Cerberus was unharmed. He offered it to Trenmore, but his friend waved the vial aside.

"I don't want it," he said grimly. "Sure, Bobby my lad, I think I'll just give the thing to yourself and Viola for a wedding present—if you fear no ill luck from it.

"A wedding present!" stammered

Drayton. "See here, Terry, I—Viola, child, I love you too well to marry you! You don't know of the disgrace into which I have fallen, nor, far worse, of the infamy of which I discovered myself capable. On the edge of death and in those strange surroundings, it didn't seem to matter so much; but we are back in a real world again and—and by heaven! I think for me the other was the better place!"

Viola went to him and with her two hands on his arm looked up into his face. "Bobby," she said, "I know what you mean. My brother told me of your sorrows and griefs, while we stood waiting for the examinations to begin, in the Green Room of the temple. He told me everything. Do you think I love you the less that you have suffered?"

"You don't understand!" he said hoarsely. Somehow he held himself from taking her in his arms. He looked to Trenmore, but that large, discreet gentleman had wandered over to the window and was staring out into the night. Drayton choked. "You might as well marry—that thief—Bertram!" he forced out.

"Marry Bertram!" She laughed softly and hid the flush of her cheek against his coat. "Why, but so I would marry Bertram—did I love him as I love you, Bobby, darling!"

No attempt to persuade him of his own moral innocence could have had the least effect. That last naive assertion, however, was too much for Drayton. His arms swept about her.

Trenmore, looking over his shoulder, grinned and hastily resumed his scrutiny of the empty pavement outside.

"And so," he murmured, "we'll just take our worlds as we find them, Bobby, my lad! And we'll see what can be done out there in Cincinnati. The scoundrels that downed him have gold. But I've gold myself. We'll give them a chance to down a fighting Irishman.

And maybe—who knows?—there's a Red Bell hung for them, too, in the Dome of Justice. Aye, we'll go spy out the land and think well and then strike—hard! The way they'll be wishing they'd crept in their holes and stayed there."

And with a smile of pleased anticipation for that Olympian battle he sniffed afar, Trenmore turned to the immediate and more difficult task of exerting his Celtic wit and eloquence to persuade Robert Drayton to let him undertake it.

THE END.



A BALLADE OF MORGAN

By William Van Wyck

BLACK is my ship that sails the sea,
 And black my flag with crossbones white,
 My surly crew drink noisily,
 Deep in their cups they pass the night.
 I love the Caribbean days,
 Scudding before the hurricane,
 Or sheltered in empurpled bays
 Along the rainbow Spanish Main.

There is no craft too swift for me.
 The boldest ones may try a flight.
 Lord! What a royal butchery!
 Sometimes the corpses will affright,
 But fear a weakling moment stays,
 And soon am I myself again.
 Dear are my wind-torn waterways
 Along the rainbow Spanish Main.

The rover life is short and free.
 We harry, pillage, shoot on sight.
 The merchant ship—a coward she—
 Ever will run before a fight.
 I know her tricks ere she belays
 And salve my wounded, sink my slain,
 Lurking behind a friendly haze,
 Along the rainbow Spanish Main.

L'Envoi.

My merchant princes, no delays!
 The plank is but a moment's pain.
 Odds nails! A pirate's life repays—
 Along the rainbow Spanish Main!

Figure Nine

★ Horatio
Winslow



WHEN the revelation came to Stace, he was sprawling awkwardly on the floor. But had you been a sharer of the little, narrow-windowed attic room you would not have seen what Stace saw, nor would you have heard what Stace heard. For, you see, Stace was not at all the man he had been a month before.

Often a great misfortune like his sets the poor fellow it hits more desperately than ever in his old ruts; but sometimes it throws him clean off his mental balance, tortures his brain till it snaps, and then chains him to strange hallucinations. That is what happened to Stace. He was not crazy, not insane, except on one point—the matter of the Figure Nine.

The Figure Nine, detached from its white ledger-paper background, followed him all about. And now it was the Figure Nine, a bloated digit poisoning in mid-air, that had revealed to Stace what it was necessary for him to know.

As Stace sprang to his feet with his true mission in the world spread plain before him, who should open the door but the merry medical student himself? He stunk vilely from carbolic acid, for all day long he had been in the dissecting room, cutting up dead bodies into little pieces. And surely Stace had decided, it is a shame and an abomination

that men and women, who have lived and walked, should be laid on a table and cut to tatters in order that the curious may see how they are made. Yet continually the student laughed and jeered at these horrors, and, even now, his lips were set for that senseless jingle which he whistled and sang from morning till midnight.

"Hello, you," he called, as he stamped in, "how you makin' out? Any luck to-day?"

With an effort Stace held himself back, and answered calmly:

"Yes, I had luck to-day—a little luck—enough luck so that I can sleep soundly to-night."

"Well, you need the sleep, all right. Gee! I need it myself, but I've got an exam to-morrow, so me and Billy Bones'll have to plug anatomy. See you later."

So the young man withdrew, whistling, and, as the door slammed, Stace sprang to his feet with the soul in him shouting for joy. At last, for the first time in six weeks his cares were vanished, and all those things which had been hidden lay clear and untangled in the open.

He crept up to the hole in the wall which the Figure Nine had commanded him to make, and peeped cautiously into the next room. As he had been warned,

the skull rested on the table facing the student who occasionally leaned across to pat it or stare at its top, or peer up into its attic through the opening below. All this was torment to Stace, and he could barely refrain from bursting in and doing at once what had to be done.

But "Wait! Get all the dope!" That was the command of the Figure Nine; so he looked on at the sacrilege for an hour or more, till the student picked up a book, and, tossing on his hat, left the house, whistling. At this he knew his vigil was over for the night, so he undressed, and, his mind being now quite free from its great anxiety, he fell asleep, chuckling into the bedclothes.

Believe me or not, the Figure Nine had come strangely into Stace's life. Stace was a bookkeeper drudging out the years in Mr. Sinaiko's gloomy office. Every hour in the day Mr. Sinaiko would rush in with some new account, and refer it to Stace with his one piece of English slang: "Get all the dope on that!" The expression in itself, to say nothing of Mr. Sinaiko's way of pronouncing it, irritated Stace extremely.

Still, life did not seem such a bad job, because each night when he came home his wife ran downstairs to meet him and kiss him, and then made him happy with the most savory dinner that ever was cooked. And Stace and his wife were the best friends and lovers in the world. They laughed at the same jokes; they wept at the same plays; they thrilled at the same music; and they were happy in a sense that most people never know.

Then one night there sprang up between them one of those little tiffs that now and then disturb the most harmonious couples. It was really nothing at all, but it ended with Stace sticking his hands into his pockets, and going out to buy a cigar.

When he came back his wife was gone.

She was not in the kitchen or in the bedroom or the little parlor; she was not visiting Mrs. Smeeding, across the hall; neither were her hat or coat anywhere to be seen. He waited for her one hour—two hours—three hours; then he went out to search.

"But how ridiculous!" you say. "A woman could not be absolutely swallowed up, even in a big city; and if it were a matter of choice for her to disappear, in spite of every precaution, she would be sure to leave some clew."

But her disappearance was a fact, and to Stace a cruel and appalling fact. She had gone—vanished utterly, leaving behind no trace. And it was the stranger because she could have no money with her unless it was the single dime which had lain on the mantel. Stace was sure of this, because he found the week's savings in a drawer of the bureau.

When he told his story to the police at the station they bestowed on the case only a languid interest. "Run off with some guy," commented the police sergeant, when he thought Stace was out of hearing. But Stace caught the bitter words and ground his teeth because he knew they were untrue.

After that he trusted mostly to himself, for there was no strong hand reached out to help him. Even the newspapers had other things to talk about, for a big political campaign was reaching its climax. They needed their columns for bigger matters. So night after night Stace walked the city streets to see if by some chance he might not glimpse her; hospitals he went through, and morgues, and all the grisly places where a man must seek his lost ones. But whether she had run away for adventure, or been burned by lightning, or carried off by slavers, one thing was certain—she came back no more to the four-roomed home.

And night after night he made his expeditions, and every morning found

him regularly at work, for a married man with the flat furniture not yet paid for cannot throw up a job too thoughtlessly. Accordingly he untangled long rows of figures during all his working hours, while Mr. Sinaiko said and resaid: "Get all the dope on that."

II.

SO it chanced that one morning, after a week of agonizing nights, Stace found himself—for some reason—quite unable to do anything with the Figure Nine.

If he were adding up a column which had reached, say, twenty-four, and to which he must add nine—try as he might he was bound to fail. Even when he worked forward step by step, saying, "Twenty-four and six is thirty; twenty-four and seven is thirty-one; twenty-four and eight is thirty-two," when he came to twenty-four and nine, he no more knew the total than he knew the number of bricks in the Great Pyramid.

To work such a problem he had to add six to the sum, and then an alien three to that. Even then, unless he could convince himself that he was adding the three independently, and not as a part of the nine, he was very apt to fail.

After a little of this, as you may imagine for yourself, the Figure Nine began to weigh heavily on Stace. And he became additionally worried when he discovered that, except for a slight stoutness, Mr. Sinaiko resembled the Figure Nine as brother resembles brother. Also, if looks counted for anything, the woman who swept out the office was at least a second cousin to the Figure Nine.

Moreover, twisted in wall patterns, wound in stone carvings, tangled in shifting shadows, the digit leered at Stace wherever he went.

He had just begun to be a little awestruck by its omnipresence, when, one morning, he discovered that he could

not add nine even by dividing it into its smallest parts. At the end of that morning Mr. Sinaiko called him into the private office.

"Mister Stace," he said, "you got something the matter of you. You ain't no good any more. You go away somewheres—that's the dope—go away, and get well, and then maybe we can use you again. Understand me what I say?"

And with much confusion Stace stumbled out into the sunlight.

He had spent much money in his search; the installments on the furniture had fallen behind; the rent was due; so he left the little flat, and on the other side of the city moved into an attic room next door to the merry medical student. But he did not leave the Figure Nine behind, for that night, lying on his bed, he saw the thing, for the first time a defiant entity, floating just out of range of the gas jet. It was thin and glittering, as though it had been bent from an enormous needle, and its single eye glared unwinkingly.

"Get all the dope! Get all the dope!" it croaked, plagiarizing Mr. Sinaiko's favorite saying; and, having uttered this profound thought, it faded gradually away. Every night for a week it did this, and then, one evening when Stace came back from his search—for now he sought by day and night both—a new and much taller Figure Nine appeared.

"You ain't no good any more," said the Figure Nine suddenly. "Why don't you get the dope—get all the dope? Your wife is gone, and here you sit like a fool. Understand me what I say? How about that medical student next door? He whistles all day; he laughs so you won't suspect him; but listen here."

Thus, while the Figure Nine floated calmly back and forth across his vision, it told him everything, couching its message in the diction of Mr. Sinaiko.

"That's the dope," it concluded. "That's what you gotta do. That's what you was born for—that's the dope for you."

So it happened that Stace saw the purpose of his existence, and was glad, and rejoiced, even although each night after that he had to torture himself by watching the merry medical student as he whistled and fondled the skull on the table. Still he kept himself well in hand until he had prepared all things as the Figure Nine had commanded.

III.

IT was a pleasant, brisk night of early fall. The air outside, crisp and chilly, blew an invitation to pedestrians, and this was wind for Stace's sails. He knew the time had come, so he did not wait for the student to knock at his door—he reversed the process, and was smiling broadly as he entered.

The student looked up. "What's the matter? Hit a job?"

"Yes," said Stace, "I have found a job—the greatest job of my life, and now all I want is for you to come and take a walk with me."

"If that'll make you happy—me for it. I couldn't plug to-night if I wanted to, could I, Billy Bones?" he said to the skull. "Where we going to walk?"

"I saw an interesting house to-day," said Stace, as cunningly he slipped the bag from his pocket into his hand. "I want to show it to you—very much."

As the student worried on his coat, Stace turned off the light suddenly, and, while it was too dark for the student to notice him, got what he had been sent to get.

"That's the dope! That's the dope!" said the voice of the Figure Nine. "Nine times, remember, and at the ninth you got him. Understand me what I say?"

"What's in the bag?" asked the student, noting it for the first time as they left the house.

"Oh, I'm just carrying it," said Stace clumsily. "I'm just carrying it."

Together the two strode down the street, the student whistling his jig of a tune, as though his heart were as clean as a saint's.

"You'll stop whistling soon enough," said Stace to himself.

Without seeming to guide, he directed their course toward the spot which the Figure Nine had chosen to be honored, and as he walked along, he was gratified to see the needle-eyed Figure Nine appear for a moment in the glass of each street lamp. But the dull eyes of the student were blind to this.

"Suppose," said Stace suddenly, "suppose you were looking for houses numbered nine or ninety-nine, or nine hundred and ninety-nine——"

"Why should I do any such fool thing?"

"But suppose you did—which would you say was the best house to choose?"

"What have numbers got to do with it? If you're going to rent a house, get one with plenty of sunlight and good plumbing, and——"

Stace gestured impatiently.

"There is a magic in numbers," he said. "Nine is the most perfect of all numbers."

"You're going crazy," remarked the student pleasantly.

Stace controlled himself. "Nine is the most perfect of all numbers—but which is the best of the three: one nine, or two nines, or three nines?"

"It's bad for a man to mess with truck like that," said the student, "but if you want to know my opinion, why, give me three of a kind any day in the week." And he chuckled over his little joke.

But Stace was much gratified, for, in this matter, the Figure Nine had left him free choice, and he had chosen a house whose number was three nines. He looked at his watch, and slackened

their pace as though something depended on their rate of progress. They left the lighted streets, and, passing bare, blank walls of warehouses, came to one of the older residence districts. Once this street might have been fashionable, but now it was too commonplace for the rich, and too dear or too out of the way for the poor. But the doctors and the dentists had found it; their signs stared like price tickets at a bargain sale.

Suddenly Stace stopped before a dark, mansionlike place. From the front door, a flight of steps, bordered by a low balustrade, ran down to the sidewalk. He caught the student by the arm.

"Look—above the door. Do you see the numbers?"

"H'm! Nine ninety-nine. I see. By the way, Mr. Stace, there's a good many other houses in town with that number. You don't want to think too much along that line of rot, or you'll go bug-house."

But Stace did not lose control of himself. "Come to the top of the steps—because I ask you to—just to oblige me. There! Now count the steps. How many are there?"

"One, two, three— H'm! Nine steps. What's the point, old man? I tell you you've been sitting up too late."

"Look at my watch."

"Nine minutes to nine. You seem to run to nines to-night. Hadn't we better start back? You've got too much white around the eyes for me."

"Wait," said Stace. "See this." He opened the black bag, and drew out the skull. "Do you know this?"

"Do I know it! Why, it's old Billy Bones! It's mine!"

And at this Stace's anger found vent.

"Yours! You think it is yours because you have touched it with your dirty fingers. Suppose this is the skull of a man? Does it stop being his because he is dead? Suppose it is the

skull of a woman? Does it become yours because she is dead? What about her friends? What about her husband? Do you think he would stand by and smile to see you rubbing it with your foul hands?"

"You're off!" said the merry medical student. "If this was a man, he doesn't care now; if it was some man's wife, she wouldn't have come our way if her husband hadn't forgotten about her."

"Forgotten!" cried Stace, white, and shaking with rage. "You lie! I never forgot. Night and day I looked for her—that's the dope—till I found this on your table. And you call it yours! What I do now I do not for myself, but for the world. You shall never steal any other man's wife to cut her up into little pieces and put her head on your table. You shall die now, and burn in hell forever! Murderer! Thief!"

And swinging the skull, Stace sprang at the student, who, not anticipating such a climax, had been listening with an amused and patronizing interest. But if Stace had meant to strike the student nine times, and so send him rolling down the nine steps to the sidewalk, he was destined to be disappointed. As the skull went crashing at his head, the student guarded it off with a quick forearm, and grappled Stace around the neck. Choking and straining, they pushed back and forth, till, by a sudden jerk, the student found himself released, and thereupon sprawled down the nine steps to the cement below. But he could not have been much hurt, for at once he jumped to his feet, and ran shouting around the corner.

IV.

THE next sound that groped to Stace's consciousness was a deep, reassuring: "Drink this.

"Keep quiet," the voice continued. "You're all right. I heard the row and carried you in."

"Doctor," said some one—and at the clear, vibrant tones Stace thrilled curiously—"are you going to take a stitch in that cut? Shall I get you the new needles?"

Needles!

With the word Stace experienced a spasm of contrition. For no reason at all he said in a shamed voice: "Good heavens!"

"Hush!" said the doctor. "Don't talk." And to the woman: "He needs court-plaster more than stitches—still, you might bring them."

Stace opened his eyes, and lay looking dully at the painted, pearl-colored walls of the little, bare room, illumined by a low-burning gas jet. In its flickering light nine Figure Nines grouped and regrouped themselves against the wall in a steplike conformation. The tones of the woman's voice rang hauntingly through his mind. Then he heard her speak again to some one outside his door.

She said, a little sharply: "Did you get the needles?"

Again Stace experienced the sensation of contrition, this time so keenly that he struggled into a sitting posture against the doctor's restraining hand. He knew what he ought to say in answer, but there was no one to say it to. Consequently he waited, his eyes on the door, until the nurse entered the room. Then he said penitently: "I meant to, but I forgot the number."

"Doctor," began she, "I—he is my husband," she finished inconsequently. Then she shrieked: "He is my husband!" and stumbled forward, falling on her knees beside Stace's bed.

Later his mind was able to follow vaguely the explanation of it all; the

injury of his wife by the doctor's wild auto; the removal to the doctor's private hospital; the long siege of unconsciousness; the slow recovery; the fruitless search for himself; and, finally, with the doctor's aid, the new life that would be open to both of them.

"But why——" began Stace, and stopped.

"What?" cooed his wife tenderly.

"Nothing," he answered, for an inner something told him it could not be that his wife's pretty hair was held up by innumerable Figure Nines.

"Darling!" she murmured, as if in answer to something.

"Why did you leave me?" he asked pathetically.

"Oh, that is what has almost killed me," she cried. "It was so foolish. I could have got on without them, but when you forgot them the third time—— So, after you left, I made up my mind I'd go out and get them myself."

"Get what?" asked Stace.

"The needles. Don't you remember? We had a real quarrel about it, and you went off half angry?" The weight of all he must have suffered through her whim suddenly bore down upon her. She hid her face against his breast, and burst into tears. "And I caused all this trouble to you over a silly package of Number Nine needles!"

And promptly those portentous digits in his wife's hair resolved themselves into plain celluloid hairpins.

At this identical moment the merry medical student was telling his troubles for the ninth time to an incredulous police station.

But of course that was nothing but coincidence.





A Recruit for the Lambs

L. R. Ridge

A RED moon hung bald, blazing over the little Sulu village. It struck a cold fire from the squat hulk of the gunboat outside, and made landmarks of the white surveying flags that showed above the cogon grass. The heat was pitiless, crushing. The pores of the air seemed to be clogged with it, so that no wind could filter through.

Sergeant Harvey wiped his trickling face and moved to a cooler spot on the rug.

"Hanged if I can make out Leroy," he said. "There isn't another man in the Philippines who could hold his job down and keep this bunch together. He takes the scum of the islands and knocks them into soldiers—*his* soldiers, mind you—little the Lambs ud care what side they fought for as long as *he* led them! Leroy's the sort of man who makes revolutions possible."

Close by, a group of men, black, white, yellow, and brown, were sprawling on the grass. The journalist looked them over. "He's got an assortment, all right," he said.

The sergeant grinned. "There ain't a color, or any other line in Leroy's Lambs. See that little peon? He was a runaway sailor who'd bashed a mate with a belaying pin. He got that stripe on his arm for bravery at Bayand.

That chap with the bandaged head's a bit o' white flotsam from God's-forgot-where. *He* got an ear sliced off with a barong, balking the rush of a Juramentado last week."

"What is a Juramentado, anyhow?"

"A lunatic, as near as I can get it. Those damned native priests—panditas, as they call themselves—take one of the tribe, shave his head, and pull his eyelashes. Then they fill him up with psalms and dope and cut him loose with his little barong to kill an enemy they have condemned to death."

The journalist aimed the butt of his cigar at a scorpion tickling along a nipa leaf. "Don't any of 'em ever fall down on it?"

"Never! They fight till they're dead—not wounded, mind you, but *dead*. Guess the priests would get 'em anyhow if they went back without killing their man," He shot an uneasy glance at the distant village, where the white-washed houses shone like pebbles in the moonlight. "Time the chief was back. He's no right to go alone while there's such a feeling against him—didn't even take an orderly." He got up. "Think I'll walk over to the village and meet him."

"I'll go with you." The journalist rose from the rug where he had been

trying to fan himself with a palm leaf. The exertion brought beads of moisture to his face. He cursed weakly. "Suffering Moses! What a climate!"

The sergeant lifted a parched yellow face and grinned. "You're only here a week—wait till you've had a year of it."

A hundred yards from the village they met the captain. He came toward them with an easy, loping stride, his head thrust a little in advance of his body. There was a peculiar luster in his eyes. They looked yellow in the moonlight. He gave them no greeting except a short nod as they turned and went with him to the camp.

"Moon seems to throw off heat tonight," the journalist remarked conversationally.

Leroy did not seem to hear, but the sergeant grunted acquiescence. "There won't be any let-up of the cholera while this spell lasts."

The captain began to speak as though continuing a conversation. "That fool Datto wants me to yank those flags out." He indicated a surveying flag a few yards away. "Priests have told the people they're causing the cholera." He laughed shortly. "Needn't repeat what I told him!"

The sergeant glanced obliquely at his superior. "Juramentado'll be getting busy again."

"The Juramentado!" The captain spat an oath at the row of rickety houses. "If they cut up any more of the boys, I'll wipe out their damned city."

"Listen!" The journalist halted, staring at the mosque some fifty yards away. Through the high bamboo fence around it came a flare of torches, mixing weirdly with the moonlight. A low, monotonous chanting rose through the torpid air. "Rather effective—that. Good thing for a stage setting."

The captain swung his lean head to the sound. "It's the hymn of the Ju-

ramentado," he said grimly. "They've sentenced some one to death." The chant swelled in volume, and the movement became fierce and rapid. "That's the stuff for a cavalry charge—gets into a fellow's blood. I can see how these chaps have no fear—they're hypnotized."

The sergeant nodded somberly. "There was the fellow who sliced up Bruce last week——" He turned to the journalist. "You didn't see that? Bruce would have dropped him all right—he had him covered when the beggar grabbed the muzzle of the gun between his teeth. Bruce wavered a second—I guess he just couldn't shoot. Next thing I saw the blood spurtin' from his throat, an' the Sulu atop of him. Oh, man, how that fellow fought! When I'd got him skewered on the end of my bayonet he forced the point through to the other side, clawin' to get at me."

"He was the makings of a soldier," the captain said regretfully.

The journalist touched his arm, pointing to a clump of bamboos a few yards away. "Something's moving there," he said. "Something shining. Now—the moon's on it!"

The sergeant stooped, and, picking up a stone, flung it into the cane. There was a scattering sound, and a huge bat rose, flapping heavily away.

The journalist laughed weakly. "A bat!" he said, relaxing. "I could have sworn it was a man's head—a shaven head." But from time to time he looked behind.

"What's the matter?" the sergeant asked. "Lost anything?"

"No. I think some one's trailing us."

"Nerves! No one'd have energy to trail a moving bank note in this heat."

The journalist looked away to where the smooth dome of Mount Babu showed like a shaven skull in the moonlight. "I guess this Juramentado business has got on my nerves a bit," he admitted.

As they neared the camp a sound of stamping mingled with a sputtering of furious profanity issued from a white-washed building topped by a corrugated-iron roof.

"That's Hogan," the sergeant said to Leroy. "He got a skinful of rum and went mad again just after you'd left. Took four men to get him into the guardhouse."

"Send him to me—I'll put him on sentry duty to-night instead of King."

"I don't think he's fit——" the sergeant began.

"Send him out," said the captain.

Harvey turned silently to the guardhouse, the journalist at his heels. The next moment a huge-bodied, red-bearded man stumbled into the moonlight, glaring about him furiously.

"Looks like a bull I saw once in the ring in Mexico," the journalist muttered to Harvey.

Just then Hogan saw the captain. He straightened and staggered over to him, lifting an unsteady hand in salute. A few minutes later he was pacing unevenly up and down the little wooden veranda, hiccupping, but subdued.

"Isn't the captain taking chances?" the journalist asked later, as he stretched himself out under the hot rubberoid roof of the sergeant's quarters.

"Everybody takes chances in the Philippines," the sergeant growled. "Gimme the quinine."

One by one, the lights blinked out in the little military camp, and the sweltering night wore on. It was very still. Now and then a bird screeched or a bat flapped heavily through the teakwood.

In the long grass on the rim of the jungle, a man was squatting. He was resting easily in the native fashion, with haunches on his heels. His eyes, staring through bald eyelids, were fixed on the captain's bungalow. From time to

time he raised his head and looked at the moon, drooping like a great orange flower over the sky line. The light struck oddly on his shaven skull, and caught the hilt of the ugly barong swung by his side.

An hour passed—two hours. The stride of the sentry had become a wobble. Presently he sat down. The bobbing head lurched sideways; almost imperceptibly the big shoulders subsided—the glistening, feline eyes peering through the spear grass watched unblinkingly.

Another hour passed. The sentry had not moved. The watcher in the jungle placed his finger tips to the ground, and brought up standing. His supple, tigerish body looked like a brown sapling in the darkness. He glanced at the sky line and grunted. The gorgeous orange flower had dwindled to a fiery bud. Crouching, he glided into the open, and gained the veranda.

Hogan was lying supinely; the Sulu's bare foot brushed his rifle as he crept past him through the open door of the bungalow.

The captain was lying on a cot under the open window. His eyes were closed, his hands locked together behind his head. A lighted kerosene lamp projected from the wall near by. A varied assortment of winged things hummed droningly about its glass funnel.

Gathering himself together, the Sulu drew his barong, and swung it upward. Just then the captain opened his eyes. He looked at the native steadily, without panic, in the manner of a man who is used to strange awakenings.

The Sulu found himself looking into a pair of eyes, hard, shining, merciless as those of the pandita—only yellow, like white mica when the sun shines on it. A quiver went through his supple brown body; then it stood motionless. External objects blurred, and a gray film

closed about him. In the slow brain something had suddenly clouded over. His mind groped stupidly. There was something—a great purpose.

Out of the vagueness came a voice, authoritative, cool, emotionless. "What do you want?" it asked in halting Filipino.

"To kill you," some automatic part of him made answer.

"Why don't you do it?" There was a touch of cold curiosity in the tone.

The Sulu saw two shining eyes rise, expand, till they flamed into his own—felt his wrist seized. Slowly the film dissolved itself. He saw the captain standing, the barong in his hand, a cold smile on his lips. Like the roar of a dammed-up sea, the chant of the panditas rushed back into his ears; mocking, inexorable—a hymn of vengeance. A great despair fell upon him. He flung out his arms.

"Kill me!" he said. His head sank upon his chest, he waited for the stroke, but none fell. "Why do you not kill me?" There was no reply, and he lifted his hairless lids.

The captain was staring at him thoughtfully. "I have a better use for you," he said curtly. "Come out here."

He stepped without. The Sulu followed, walking unsteadily. Hogan's

big body was sprawling across the veranda. He was snoring gently. The captain lifted his foot—once, twice, thrice. With a choking oath, the man sat up, clawing for his rifle.

"Get up," the captain commanded. White-faced, stuttering, the sentry stumbled to his feet. "Get into the guardhouse. Leave your rifle here." Hogan slunk away, his legs tottering. Leroy picked up the rifle, and handed it to the Sulu. "Take this man's place and see that you keep it better than he did."

Without more words, he turned within, and flung himself back upon the cot.

The next morning the sergeant was petrified to see a half-naked Sulu with a shaven skull and oiled body glistening in the yellow dawn, pacing somberly up and down before the captain's bungalow. Clearing the intervening space by a few bounds, he reached the veranda, but the muzzle of the rifle swung toward him, and he stopped. The captain thrust his head through the door.

"Hey! Salute, you dog! That's your officer." Then he turned to the dazed sergeant. "Relieve this man, and take him to the quarters. He's the latest recruit for the Lambs."



THE FALSE APEGA

NABIS, tyrant of Sparta, invented a new form of punishment. He had constructed an automaton, Apega, called after his wife, and resembling her in appearance. This false Apega, magnificently dressed, was seated in a chair. Its arms and bosom were studded with sharp blades, hidden by the garments.

When the tyrant failed to get what he wanted from that subject whom he solicited, he used to say calmly that he was sure Apega could persuade him. Then Nabis took the figure by the hand, putting in action some internal mechanism which caused it to rise and advance to the victim. Embracing him, it put its arms about the victim and drew him upon the blades of its bosom. Death followed.

Hands Invisible

William
H. Kofoed



CHAPTER I.

A MINUTE OF DARKNESS.

IT wasn't long—perhaps a year or two—after Oro Bamba won her independence from Bolivia in 1907, that weird stories of tropic madness, of mystery and sudden death came out of the new-born republic, resulting in a vague national uneasiness bordering on positive fear. At first, numbers of foreigners had flocked there, carrying with them an era of expansion and business development unequalled in any other portion of South America. For Oro Bamba had been much heralded by the newspapers of the world as a rich country, and a warm, beautiful, fragrant one. Oro Bambian boosters called their country "the land of unclouded skies," but the title fell short of permanency with the publication of the first of those dreadful tales.

In the earlier days, a dozen toylike cities, laid out in squares of broad, palm-bordered streets, had sprung into being. The last of these—Carmabal—was in process of construction when the great fear descended upon Oro Bamba, and many workers fled. Development came to a standstill.

Outside Carmabal lay a superb villa which, although not entirely completed,

was furnished according to the best Oro Bambian standards, and occupied by Señor Dagh, a gentleman high in official circles, who scoffed at tales that caused others to shudder and labeled the situation "like the Dark Ages."

One hot and ominously quiet evening in September, Dagh was seated in a willow chair on his spacious veranda. Beside him stood a tall, sleek, rapacious-featured individual examining a fire-arm. The deepening twilight of the tropics threw a hazy mantle over them, adding a touch of unreality to the scene.

"The country is going to the dogs," Dagh said in English, "as you Northern people express it. Only to-day the papers carried a story of a man who had strangled and died while at work in an open field, as though an unseen hand had reached down out of nothingness and finished him. The natives are growing wild-eyed, señor. Property here is diminishing in value. If this madness continues, it is my prediction that, within the year, titles to land in Oro Bamba will sell for the price of old paper. We must conclude our contract before it is too late, eh?"

The rapacious individual nodded absently, his eyes still on the weapon.

Dagh paused and looked at him. "It is good? It has you worried, señor?"

"I loaded it this morning and made a test," replied the other with noticeable dissatisfaction. "It is, I must admit, the best I have seen. Unless we can forestall him, Steele will land the contract with your government on the strength of his product alone."

"Patience, Señor Noyes. He is coming to-night. I have sent for him. We shall see if we cannot perhaps——" The Oro Bambian rolled his eyes significantly.

"And the old man—the Basch Company's man, Vantine—you have arranged it with *him*?"

"Not yet. He, also, has promised to come. I think he will give us little difficulty, señor. But of Steele, I am not so sure; he is so ambitious. He seeks achievement rather than money. Señor Vantine, on the other hand, is not a young man. He is compelled to look to his finances. I have heard it said that failure to get the order for his firm will what you call finish him with them. Ten thousand American dollars would—ah—about reimburse him for his downfall. Not?"

"How does it happen that you know so much about Vantine?" asked Noyes uneasily.

"Espionage is not unknown in Oro Bamba," said Dagh, placidly toying with his square-cut beard.

"You know, then, that Vantine has a daughter?"

"I know that and more. Steele is in love with Vantine's daughter. Odd, romantic, is it not? And duty, plus an abominable desire for achievement, compels him to oust the old fellow from a lifetime position—all because he happens to represent a bigger and better firm."

"Gad! That's an argument to use on Steele," cried Noyes.

"Not so, señor. It has already been used. The little lady herself has used it. She has promised to hate him eternally if he seizes the contract from her

parent's hand. But even then would he surrender? No, no. His sense of duty is all but celestial, señor. He suffers. He laments; but he will not betray his employers. You see with whom we have to deal."

"Perhaps a wad of real money, thrust at him——"

"Assuredly cash in hand is worth much idle talk," admitted Dagh. "It is our great hope, I admit."

"You're quite marvelous to know all these things," said Noyes enthusiastically, but there was a hint of sarcasm in his voice. "With such splendid assistance, I should surely win this arms contract—and you your divvy!"

"What a vulgar term—*divvy*!" commented the Oro Bambian smilingly.

Noyes suddenly cautioned him to silence with a gesture. A hazy figure was approaching through the purple half-light.

Dagh arose. "Good evening, Señor Steele," he called, and bowed his short, corpulent form with considerable grace for a man of his dimensions. "With the blood-chilling stories that are current, señor, it would seem advisable, as a matter of self-protection, to announce oneself as far off as possible. But no matter. Welcome to the Villa Dagh!"

Steele took the stone steps to the veranda two at a time and grasped Dagh's outstretched hand.

"Good evening," he said quietly.

Dagh winced away from his tightening grip, and called immediate attention to Noyes. "Meet Señor N——" he began.

Steele interrupted with: "I have met him several times in the course of my business. How are you, Noyes? Still with the Consolidated?" He knew that the sleek fellow had obtained his position by mail and cable through the influence of Señor Dagh and not through any activity of his own. He knew, too, that such men do not last long in good jobs.

"Have a seat, Señor Steele," said Dagh. "But no. Perhaps we had better go within. It is growing dark, and we cannot talk business in the dark. We become preoccupied with the mysterious. Ah, these tales, these tales!" The Oro Bambian led his guests indoors. "You must pardon the appearance, gentlemen," he apologized. "We are not yet what you call fixed. The electric wires were strung only to-day—strung by a handful of workmen brave enough to ridicule the silly things one hears. Notice they are but carried along the wall. A temporary job. However, we are fortunate to have the light. Not?"

"Quite so," Steele agreed.

The room was large and high-ceilinged, with cloth-shrouded furniture rearing upward like motionless ghosts in the gloom.

Dagh touched a button and the electric current coursed into the bulbs of an immense rose-tinted chandelier.

Noyes went to a table beneath the lights and tossed the automatic revolver upon it. It was a defiant act; and Douglas Steele, recognizing the make of the weapon, frowned.

"With your permission, Señor Steele, we will get down to business," said Dagh suddenly. "You know, and I know, that this is not merely a social gathering. Three North American firms are striving for a big arms contract from the Oro Bambian government. I am in a position to influence the placing of this order; and for various reasons—among them that I like best of all the Consolidated Company's products—I have agreed to lend my support to Señor Noyes. But there is opposition. Some of my contemporaries who do not understand my country's needs as well as I, prefer your firm. To forestall an error on the part of these enthusiasts, I am willing to hand you ten thousand dollars now—to-night—provided you promise to cease

your efforts in this line, and leave Oro Bamba! What say you?"

Steele did not attempt to conceal his disgust. "And you're a man intrusted with serious public missions!" he exclaimed. "Well——"

The small patch of cheek visible above Dagh's heavy, black beard grew livid. His fingers clenched menacingly, and the observing Steele prepared for conflict. But Dagh crushed down his fiery temper and shortly managed to coax another smile to his face. "Ten thousand dollars," he repeated, reaching into an inner pocket of his coat. "What say you, señor?"

The señor laughed without mirth. "No, Dagh," he said, simulating sweetness. "I'll lose more than a roll of yellowbacks if I land this contract—and believe me, I'm going to land it!"

Noyes and the Oro Bambian exchanged glances; but the situation, which had steadily grown more tense and disagreeable, was suddenly relieved when a bell tinkled somewhere and a turbaned servant glided, snakelike, through the hall to the front door.

"Vantine!" muttered Noyes.

The servant reappeared. "Señor and Señorita Vantine!" he announced, and a white-haired, mild-eyed, kindly appearing gentleman entered the room, followed by an extraordinarily pretty young lady, who had paused in the hall to allow the servant to remove her mantilla.

"Phyllis!" cried Steele, advancing with outstretched hand.

"Good evening, Mr. Steele," greeted the little lady coolly.

Noyes smothered a chuckle and, observing Phyllis Vantine's quickly disapproving eyes upon him, bowed low, in imitation of Dagh. Douglas Steele went disgustedly to a window and stared out into the darkness.

"Welcome! Welcome to the Villa Dagh!" cried the Oro Bambian, pretending great enthusiasm. Then, ap-

proaching Phyllis, he added: "It is a delight, Señorita Vantine, to find you here to-night——"

Old man Vantine had drawn toward the table under the rose-tinted chandelier. The new-model automatic caught his eye. He took it into his hands and examined it.

"Why, it's loaded!" he exclaimed. "Testing, eh, Señor Dagh? Well, I——"

Without warning the lights in the chandelier faded. The room was plunged into absolute darkness. There was a hasty stirring, a muttered ejaculation from Vantine, followed by a blaze of fire through the void—and a revolver's detonation reverberating from wall to wall.

Somewhere—near the hall door, it seemed—a body crashed to the floor.

Douglas Steele heard Phyllis cry out in alarm. He rushed across the room, arms extended in search of her. Dagh was calling loudly and excitedly for his servant to bring lights. There was a flutter of something white through one of the open windows. A voice kept repeating a number over and over again. The place was in seething turmoil.

"What the devil does this mean?" shouted Steele. "Phyllis! Phyllis! Where are you? If that girl is harmed, Dagh, I'll hold you personally responsible."

"Please don't scream so, Douglas." Steele felt the girl's quivering hand laid on his arm, and a sigh of relief escaped him. "What—why—— Oh, I am so frightened!"

A light projected itself down the hall. Dagh's turbaned servant appeared at the door, an oil lamp in hand. The flickering rays, weakened and threatened to extinction though they were by huge leaping, grotesque shadows, proved sufficiently strong to outline a figure lying very quietly on the floor.

Wide-eyed, the little group stared

down at a strange, altogether unknown face.

The revolver old man Vantine had held in his hands was on the floor near the body. Dagh stooped and picked it up.

From a corner of the room came Noyes' voice at the telephone. "If this is police headquarters," he was saying in the native tongue, "if this is police headquarters, send a detachment of gendarmes to the Dagh villa immediately!" He hung up, and came slowly over to the white-faced group. "Well, here's another gruesome story for the newspapers," he mumbled.

CHAPTER II.

THE FINGER OF SUSPICION.

STEELE, kneeling by the body, looked up at a circle of horrified faces. "This is odd," he said quietly. "There isn't a letter or paper, or any other identifying mark upon him. None of you know him? You—Mr. Vantine?"

"Why I, more than the rest of you?" sputtered the white-haired old gentleman. "No, I never met him before. I never saw him before. I haven't the faintest idea who he is. I repeat, as soon as the lights went out, I felt the gun torn from my hands——"

"You—Dagh?"

The Oro Bambian wagged his square-cut black beard decisively from side to side. "Gladly would I tell you if I knew, Señor Steele," he declared.

"And your servant?"

Dagh started; then turned quickly to his man and put the question. A storm of denials flowed upon the air.

"He says no, no, no," translated Dagh. "He insists he knows nothing about it. The stranger was not admitted by him. He is innocent under high heaven——"

"All right," muttered Steele, who was as much upset as his companions over the murder. "Tell him to shut up. I'm not the jury."

The mouth of the dead man was slightly open, very much as though he were about to utter a sharp word when the silencing pellet cut into his heart. The face was aggressive, the eyes shrewd even in their glassiness. As Douglas looked, the strangeness, the blank mystery surrounding the situation, impressed itself upon him, and brought to mind the weird tales of the natives.

He reached absently for the stiff-brimmed straw hat which lay nearby, covered the face from view, and arose, saying: "I wonder why the lights went off at just the right moment. Surely the electric company——"

He paused as a tramping sounded on the veranda and a heavy knocking at the door.

"Open to the gendarmes!" came the gruff command.

Dagh hustled his servant into the hall and bade him throw wide the door. A captain of police in resplendent red and blue uniform strode in upon them, followed rather reluctantly by four members of the Carmabal force.

The situation was presented in smoothly flowing words by Dagh, who received marked respect from the gendarmes.

The captain himself set about examining the room. His initial move was to trace the newly strung electric wires along the wall. Shortly he emitted a gasp of satisfaction.

"As I thought," he said sagely. "See! They have been cut."

"It is so. He is right," affirmed Dagh, peering over the officer's shoulder. "But who could have cut them? Ah! Stay! It is near the window. Some one from outside, perhaps——"

"Perhaps," admitted the uniformed one. "Jacques! Zeon! Go to the lawn with your flash lights. Look below this window. There may be footprints."

They waited, and shortly a gendarme's cap appeared above the sill.

"Well, Jacques, what have you found?" cried the captain.

"Nothing," whispered Jacques, whose face was white with fear of the unknown. "The ground within a radius of three meters is unbroken."

The captain looked at Dagh, who returned his gaze.

"It was done from inside, of course," was the chief investigator's decision. Like Dagh, he refused to entertain theories of the supernatural.

Dagh nodded. "Of course. But who did it?"

That was difficult; so they let it pass for a time, while the gendarmes endeavored to conceal their obvious aversion for the whole creepy and inexplicable affair behind a mask of imperturbability.

"This weapon," the officer began again, "it is your property, Señor Dagh?"

The Oro Bambian government official hesitated before answering. "Yes, it is mine. It was submitted yesterday to the Committee on Ordnance, and I brought it home with me to make tests. I have been serving the committee in an advisory way, you know——"

"I had heard of your work, sir," the captain replied respectfully enough, though with a hint of impatience in his voice. "But surely this"—he motioned toward the silent figure on the floor—"surely this is not the accidental result of your tests?"

"We would not shoot within doors," said Dagh tolerantly.

"Assuredly not. And yet it has been discharged. See! The empty shell!"

A new nervousness fell upon the group—the nervousness of an approaching crisis. Every one seemed to shrink from a straightforward recital.

"Who——" queried the captain of gendarmes, softly impressive. "Who held the weapon before the wires were torn and the room darkened?"

No one spoke.

"It was lying somewhere? On the table? On the mantel?" pursued the captain.

"On the table," murmured Dagh.

White-haired Mr. Vantine stepped forward. His face was drawn, and fear of the accusing finger of circumstantial evidence was in his eyes. Phyllis went to him, and they stood side by side, facing the gendarmes.

"I—well, I had taken the weapon from the table to—to examine it. I'm interested in such things, of course. They are in my line," explained the old gentleman. "I commented on its being loaded and inquired of Señor Dagh concerning his tests. Before I could receive an answer, the lights were extinguished, and I—I felt the revolver wrenched away from me. Then, the shot——"

Again silence. All eyes were on the captain, who was deep in thought. It seemed to the waiting ones that hours passed before the officer decided on a course of action. At length he stepped forward and addressed Mr. Vantine:

"I am sorry, señor, but there seems to be only one thing for me to do—however much I dislike it—and that is to arrest you for the murder of this unknown man. Señor Dagh, I ask your pardon, and yours, Señorita Vantine. It is my duty."

Phyllis drew herself beautifully erect. Her flashing disdainful eyes turned first upon the captain of gendarmes, then upon Dagh. "Of course you gentlemen know," she began with remarkable coolness, "about the arms contract for which three North American firms are competing?"

They nodded wonderingly. What had this to do with the gruesome mystery that surrounded them? She continued speaking in a lower voice, but still scornful, still bitterly insinuating.

"The competition for your government's contract has been keen, has it not, Señor Dagh? So extraordinarily

keen that even a murder might be committed to cast suspicion on one of the contestants so as to—to eliminate him—to put him out of the running, so to speak? It has been fully that keen, has it not, señor?"

Dagh fell back, aghast. "You accuse me of—of——"

"I accuse you of no more than you would accuse my father. You see, I merely cite a probability, señor."

Douglas Steele felt a surge of admiration sweep over him for this girl's courageous defense of her father.

Vantine struck the palms of his hands sharply together. "That's it," he cried. "That's it! A frame-up!"

Dagh raised his hands expostulating. "Oh, come, come, señor! You make such rash statements," he protested.

"You've been after me for weeks. I see it now. I understand your miserable game. Even my daughter sees into it. Tell me, Dagh. Is the Carmal police force subject to your dictation?"

"Softly, softly," interposed the captain. "You are treading on dangerous ground, señor. Is it logical to suppose that an innocent stranger would be dragged in here and assassinated merely to prevent the placing of a contract with your firm? I have been lenient with you because you are an acquaintance of Señor Dagh's; but I must warn you now that anything further you say will be used against you."

"You see, dad," said Phyllis meaningfully, "it's no use. With these men the matter is settled. But why place your case before them? Who are they to judge? Come. Get your hat and go with the captain. I shall report the affair at once to the United States consul."

"Again I am sorry, señorita," murmured the officer, "but you, too, must come with me. All of you must come with me. Are you not material witnesses? It is my duty."

"Devil take your duty," grumbled Noyes under his breath. "You're as bad as Steele. I say, Dagh"—this in a whisper intended for the Oro Bambian's ears only—"I say, can't you cross this toy soldier's palm with a bit of silver and bring him to his senses?"

The captain's ultimatum had brought a look of pained surprise to Dagh's swarthy features, and now Noyes' flippancy in the presence of death irritated him. "Please to use your brains, if you have any," he answered, speaking into the tall fellow's ear. "It would be very wise, would it not, to allow this Vantine and this Steele the opportunity to hurl the charge of bribery in our faces? Please use your brains. We are not without friends at court."

He turned a suddenly placid face upon the officer in red and blue. "Of course we shall accompany you, captain. It was to be expected," he said. Then, facing the others, he added in a paternal voice:

"We must meet the wild tales, the morbidity and unreasoning fear prevalent in our unhappy country with common sense, señors. Come! Let us be on our way."

CHAPTER III.

AT THE CONSULATE.

STEELE smiled wryly to himself as he tramped along with the others toward Carmabal. He felt quite sure that Dagh had not expected this. It would have been a master stroke, reasoned Douglas, if the black-bearded Oro Bambian had succeeded in emmeshing his two competitors for the arms contract in the mysterious crime and thus removed them from the field, but he had succeeded only in involving the whole group, including himself. Douglas looked up at the star-spattered sky and grinned. The grin faded.

Who in that blackened room had discharged the revolver? And who was

the strange dead man who had made his appearance from nowhere? These questions troubled Steele, for he could not believe Vantine the guilty party, much less the fantastic theory of the unseen hand. Yet the case against the white-haired old gentleman was by no means weak. He had held the gun before the lights flashed out, and the roaring discharge of the weapon had been almost simultaneous with the closing in of total darkness.

Douglas recalled that he himself had been standing at one of the south windows with his back to the scene. He remembered that the window was open—that all the windows were open. How easy it would have been for some one outside to reach an arm through one of these apertures and cut through the exposed electric wire! How easy! And yet there were no accusing footprints to lend plausibility to their theory.

Steele was roused from his contemplations by the soft swish of skirts and looked down to find Phyllis beside him.

"Never mind, Phyllis," he said soothingly; then added with more vehemence than conviction: "Nothing can come of such uncertain evidence."

"Thank you," murmured the girl, striving to suppress the quiver in her voice and appear unafraid. "But, Douglas, it's circumstantial and—and ugly. Oh, poor dad!"

Steele was at a loss for words. In his heart he knew she had good ground for fear. For a while only the regular striking of heels on the roadway disturbed the mysterious, tropical night. Then Phyllis said: "Do you think it *might* have been a conspiracy between Señor Dagh and that man Noyes to put dad out of the way?"

"Do you, Phyllis?"

"I hardly know what to think. Those weird rumors——"

"Surely you believed it when you accused them to their faces!" Steele persisted.

"I don't believe I thought deeply about it at the time. All the evidence pointed to dad; and it was the one thing I had to grasp at. So I tried to make the most of it. I tried to show the possibility of some one else having a hand in it. For I know, Douglas—I know as surely as if I were dad himself—that he is innocent!"

"Of course, he's innocent," echoed Steele.

"But who—who killed—that—man?" faltered the girl. "Who did it, Douglas? I cannot believe it came about through supernatural causes."

At the city hall, they were taken into a large, bare room. Dagh asked to be allowed to wire to friends in Anna Mato, the capital city, which lay about fifteen miles distant, and was readily granted it.

The messages were sent. Several hours passed. It was verging upon midnight and the entire party was manifesting signs of uneasiness when a petty official made his appearance at the door.

"Now for it," thought Steele. "We stay or we go. And they can't release Dagh and Noyes without doing the same for Phyllis and me."

"I have been instructed," announced the newcomer, "to release the witnesses on their own recognizance. You have been ordered to report here tomorrow at eleven for the preliminary hearing. Please follow me."

"A sample of pull in youthful Oro Bamba," muttered Steele. "I hope contracts aren't landed that way."

Phyllis and her father were compelled to separate, the old gentleman being led to another part of the building. There was no scene. Both were very quiet.

At length it was over, and Douglas and Phyllis found themselves again in the open. Now the girl's smothered feelings sought outlet, and Steele felt very miserable to be a witness of her suffering, yet incapable of lending aid.

He tried to bolster up her courage, and finally got her to her room in the American House. She was more subdued now. She gave him her hand and bade him good night.

In spite of the exciting events through which he had passed, Douglas Steele arose at six in the morning and caught the first train out of Carmabal. His destination was Anna Mato and the United States consul, whom he knew intimately. There was work to be done if old Mr. Vantine was to be saved from paying the extreme penalty for the extraordinary crime of the night before. Steele meant to pull a few wires just as Dagh had done.

He did not, however, go direct to the consulate. He went first to a prominent lawyer friend who was doing big things for the Oro Bambian department of justice and whose assistance in this case would mean much. A persuasive hour with the gentleman, while he was still at breakfast, succeeded in enlisting his aid, whereupon Douglas hurried away to the American legation.

The consul was engaged. His secretary urged Steele to return later, or take a seat and wait; but Steele was impatient. It was then approaching ten o'clock, and he must be at the Carmabal city hall within an hour and a quarter. A train left at ten twenty-six. He seized the secretary by his coat lapels and pleaded the importance of his mission. As this met with no response, Steele dashed by the fellow and pushed unbidden into the consul's private office.

The consul—a lean, vigorous man of middle age—was at his desk; beside him sat a lavishly costumed army officer. "I beg your pardon," apologized Steele, entering and closing the door, "but——"

"Ah, Steele, just the man I want to see," cried Consul Rogers. "General Banno has called on me in quest of specific information regarding the three

U. S. A. firms competing for Oro Bamba's latest and largest arms contract. I have given him the facts at my disposal, but of course the weapons themselves are what count. Have you by chance a sample of that new Detwiler automatic——"

Steele had. And he proceeded to get the every-ready sample out and demonstrate its working to the leading military man in Oro Bamba. In a moment he had the weapon lying in a dozen pieces on the desk and was reassembling it before the eyes of the surprised general. Mr. Rogers kept up a running comment: "You've met General Banno before, of course, Steele? No? Well, well, we must remedy that. General, allow me to present——"

The hurried demonstration was interrupted to permit of a formal handshaking with the serious-faced officer.

"You see, Steele, General Banno is chairman of the committee on ordnance," continued the consul. "He really doesn't care who lands the contract so long as his army is equipped with the most efficient weapons. The firm that can produce the goods is the firm he'll be glad to do business with. That is the general's way of looking at things, and has been ever since he helped Oro Bamba win her freedom."

"Then the contract is ours." Steele was again the master salesman, forgetful for the time of his residence in mysterious Oro Bamba. "The Detwiler automatic is quite superior to any similar weapon on to-day's market. The wise thing, it seems to me, general, would be for you to sign a preliminary contract with me right now! It needn't be a binding one. We can arrange it that, should the committee vote it down, it will be null and void between us. What do you say, sir?"

Although visibly impressed by Steele's sample of the Detwiler automatic, the general was reluctant to sign contracts

on a moment's notice. Yes, he had the power to do so, but, as in the past, he preferred to vest that power in the committee. Douglas met his objection with an avalanche of arguments. He urged that non-military men might drift into error, that experts alone could judge such things impartially.

"Of course you understand," he concluded, "that I am not seeking the revolver contract alone, but the entire arms equipment order for which proposals were asked by your government. If this is to be given our factories, it must be done as quickly as possible, for conditions of labor and supplies are rather uncertain. I repeat, the advisable thing—the only thing—to do, sir, is to sign up this tentative contract at once!"

Steele placed the copy of a preliminary agreement—which he had been carrying in his pocket for weeks—immediately under General Banno's thumb.

The serious-faced general fumbled with a gold tassel for some seconds, then did what even Steele hardly dared hope or expect of him—signed the order!

Five minutes later, the elated Douglas and his friend the consul were alone.

"Whew!" gasped Steele, mopping his forehead. "That's over—and a number of other things with it, I guess," he added soberly, thinking of Phyllis' early threat to sever their friendship if he won the much-disputed contract.

"The quickest and cleanest bit of salesmanship I've never witnessed," commented Rogers admiringly.

"But, by George, I didn't come here to sell arms equipment," cried Steele, his mind returning with a rush to the unseen crime of the night before. "My friend Vantine—you've heard of him, of course—has been arrested on a—on a charge of murder. He's innocent; and I want you to help me prove it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STOCKY STRANGER.

DOUGLAS managed to get back in Carmabal by eleven o'clock, but the hearing developed nothing, Mr. Vantine being held without bail, while the witnesses were liberated under bonds, a proceeding easily possible in Oro Bamba at that time.

A week passed. The outlook was gloomier than ever. Steele spent much of his time with Phyllis, doing his best to hearten her for the strain to come. Meanwhile the story spread through the country, adding to the great fear already prevalent.

Details of the murder mystery, as supplied by the various Oro Bambian newspapers, were of a character calculated to send shivers up and down the spine. The gruesome and unexplainable side was featured in glaring headlines and to such an extent that even the better educated citizens of Carmabal came to shun the new Dagh villa as a haunt of the dark forces of the invisible universe.

Late one night, several hours after Phyllis had retired, Steele sat alone in the lobby of the American House, turning over the details of the case while he puffed at his brier and gazed dreamily into the blue-gray smoke clouds drifting about him. Who was the murdered man? How was it that a person so well dressed as he should be without a wallet, letters, or papers of some sort? Had the fellow been robbed of his valuables? If so, by whom? And had the depredation been committed before or after his appearance at the drawing-room door?

These questions were extremely perplexing. Like Phyllis, Douglas refused to give credence to the theory of the unseen hand. He was inclined for a while to lay the crime to some one on the outside—perhaps an enemy of the stranger's, or perhaps only an ordinary

thief who had broken the electric wire, leaped into the room under the protecting cloak of darkness, and seized the revolver from Mr. Vantine's hand. Too, it might have been an employee of the electric company, or one of the gardeners, or the chattering servant; for who else knew of the temporarily strung wires? Now the American's mind recalled a flutter of white through one of the windows, and it strengthened his theory of the criminal making his appearance and disappearance through these apertures. He was about to discount the turbaned servant and the gardener as suspects when the fact of the gendarme's failure to discover footprints near the window put a sudden crimp in his deductions. Perhaps, after all, the shooting had been committed by a person or persons, so far unknown, who were inside the house at the time of the tragedy, but who had fled by the rear door or elsewhere quickly enough to escape detection.

At this point the midnight quiet of the lobby was disturbed by the entrance of a short, stocky, and rather hard-looking individual who strode to the hotel desk and demanded of the night clerk in peremptory tones:

"Man named Morris on your register?"

"Maybe," retorted the clerk, not relishing the other's tone. "You may hunt for it, if you wish." He thrust the register toward the stocky chap, who, after returning the clerk's look with one equally sharp, gave his attention to the big book and ran his finger down its lists.

A moment later his growl sounded again. "The devil! He's not here. Seems we're always losing each other."

"Huh! If you've got a date with the devil, this town's a good place to keep it," sneered the clerk.

The other grinned and said something in a lower tone which Steele failed to catch. He then turned on his heel and

went out into the street. Steele returned to his musings.

One thought persisted with him. That concerned the white flutter through the open window of the murder room. Once resurrected from the grave of the subconscious, this ghost of a happening—this mere impression—now dominated his mind.

What would flutter like that? A white-shirted person leaping from sill to lawn. Hardly. The white patch wasn't more than a few inches square, if that.

A letter! Documents! Personal possessions! By the shades of every great detective that ever lived, that was it! The contents of the dead man's pockets had been hurled out into the night! It seemed certain now that Dagh's servant was the guilty party. Of course, after returning from the police station, the fellow had retrieved the stolen articles. But at that, there might be a paper or two, a card or some other trifle which, lying in the grass, had escaped him. Steele thought it would be an excellent plan to search Dagh's grounds for a clew of this character. A fragment might serve to identify the man and aid in clearing up the mystery. Motivated by visions of Phyllis' gratitude, Douglas forgot the hour of the night, forgot everything but this new mission. Acting on impulse, he started immediately for the Dagh villa.

Not a cloud obscured the flood of soft light that poured down upon Oro Bamba from a rich, full moon. Douglas could see well in front of him. It was a splendid night for the search he contemplated. He swung briskly along, wrapped in thought, and untroubled by those intangible fears which would have restrained the natives from any such rash undertaking. He pictured, not his immediate surroundings, but Dagh's lawn; and his nerves were aquiver with expectancy.

When at last he came in view of the

señor's residence, he was pleased to see that no lights were burning. Without hesitation, he strode across the lawn and proceeded to the windows of the room wherein the tragedy had occurred. Measuring off possibly fifteen feet from the ledge, he knelt in the untrimmed grass and swept his hands through it, peering close to the ground so that even a small object might not escape him. It was tedious, eye-straining work, but he kept at it, unmindful of the passage of time, unmindful of the subdued racket of disturbed insects, unmindful of everything but the thought that he was doing this for Phyllis.

Once he believed he had found something of value, and pounced upon it, but it was only a glittering chip of mica, which he threw down disgustedly. Ten minutes passed, and he was about to give up and return to the hotel, when his wandering hand touched paper. Repressing the cry of exultation that rose to his lips, Douglas scrambled erect and began smoothing out the crumpled sheet.

"Measured by your eagerness, it must be worth a fortune," said a calm voice behind him, and he whirled to behold in the moonlight, not a transparent, spiritual form, not a fearsome ogre such as the natives pictured, not even Dagh himself, but the face of the stocky stranger who had approached the hotel desk not an hour before!

CHAPTER V.

SHADOWS IN THE NIGHT.

WELL?" queried the man, who held a revolver loosely in his hand.

"Well?" responded Douglas.

"Suppose you give it up?" He extended a palm for the paper.

"Not while I'm conscious."

The newcomer ignored the challenge in Steele's voice and continued:

"What are you doing here at this hour? Who are you?"

"Really, I can't see that it is any of

your business. Suppose I should ask you the same questions?"

"Now don't get impertinent, young fellow," came the warning, and atop it the quick command: "Hand over that paper!"

"What if I refuse?"

The revolver quivered menacingly.

For answer, Steele ducked and launched himself in a flying tackle at the man's knees. They crashed to the ground together, the weapon flying off somewhere in the deep grass.

The stranger, cursing under his breath, reached for Steele's throat. Steele held him off, and for some seconds they writhed and tussled fiercely without either gaining advantage.

At length the fellow's fingers did find Steele's throat, and Douglas, feeling his wind choked off, lashed out with his fists. The blows proved effective. His antagonist relaxed and rolled over on his back.

Steele leaped to his feet, surveyed his dazed opponent for a moment, then picked up the disputed paper which lay near by and merged himself in the shadows of the villa, where he waited and watched.

The belligerent newcomer regained his senses shortly and struggled to a sitting posture. He gazed about in search of Douglas and, finding him gone, grumbled with disappointment. His next move was to cast around in the grass for his weapon.

Steele saw the barrel gleaming in the moonlight just outside the cloaking shadows of his observation post. The stocky little man caught sight of it and began crawling closer—closer. Douglas' muscles bunched for a spring. He felt quite sure the other participant in this game of hide and seek would discover him and make quick and deadly use of his firearm.

But the stranger remained absolutely unaware of Steele's presence. He

grasped the revolver, thrust it into a pocket, and got to his feet, shaking himself, doglike, to recover his scattered wits. He threw one more look around him, then walked away and down the road toward the town.

Douglas followed, stealing softly along in the roadside shadows. His thoughts were on the scrap of paper, and his fingers tightened upon it in his pocket. So far he had had no opportunity to examine the writing, but by the stranger's eagerness to possess it, he was led to assume it valuable. Hope surged high within him. This might be the needed clew to an understanding of the murder mystery. Perhaps it incriminated this man on the road in front of him. Whatever the contents of the paper, it would surely pay to keep the fellow under surveillance.

And now Steele's sharp eyes caught a stealthy movement in the foliage fifty yards ahead. The stranger, swinging along in the very center of the moonlit road, had barely passed this point of leafy disturbance when five crouching figures dashed upon him, and bore him, struggling, to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE CONSPIRATOR IDENTIFIED.

DOUGLAS STEELE'S first impulse, unarmed though he was, was to rush forward and aid the chap, but he thought better of it in time.

The small fellow was a doughty fighter and apparently not given to throwing up the sponge while strength remained in him. He writhed and kicked and thrashed about with his fists in the dust of the road, but his splendid opposition was quite useless. In short order the five had trussed him up with a gag in his mouth. Pushing him before them, they slipped back in the bushes.

Cautiously, Steele approached the spot. He heard twigs snapping beneath

the feet of the little party as they tramped along. Unafraid and quite as determined as ever, he followed. By exercising great care, he managed to keep in their wake without being discovered.

Half an hour later they came upon a tar-papered shack in a clearing. Heavy brass padlocks, gleaming in the moonlight, fastened the single door and window. One of the five brought out a key.

When all were within, and the door closed again, Douglas crept toward the window.

By the light of three tallow candles sunk in the spindle necks of whisky bottles, Steele saw the stocky man on a pile of blankets in a remote corner; he was still trussed up, but the gag had been removed. The gang had comfortably disposed itself about the place as though for an indefinite stay.

The captive was reviling his abductors in English. They talked among themselves and paid little attention to him.

As clearly as possible Steele mapped out the location of the place in his mind, then stole back among the trees and undergrowth and made for the road to Carnabal.

Dawn had come; and the flaming sun crept stealthily from its hiding place behind the distant mountain ranges, suddenly flooding the land with the glory of a new day. Unobserved now, Steele brought forth the scrap of paper for which he had fought and found it to be merely the upper portion of a warrant issued by the police department of the city of Sacramento, California, for one Alexander Hull. The paper was torn across at that point, and further details were missing. As he studied the sheet, Douglas began to feel that he had gone astray in his search for evidence.

Breakfast was being served at the hotel when he entered, and the picture of Phyllis Vantine in a morning gown

of delicate tea-rose, moving listlessly toward the dining hall, greeted his eye.

"Phyllis!" he called and sprang forward, the night's experiences on his lips. Her greeting was a cold unfriendly stare.

"Really, you are almost too familiar, Mr. Steele," she said. Her attitude was that of a stranger. In its very unexpectedness, it came like a blow in the face to Steele.

"Why—why—what do you mean, Phyllis?" he cried.

"Not *Phyllis*—Miss Vantine," she corrected him.

He stared uncomprehendingly at her. She returned his gaze. Then it came to him like an electric shock. She had learned of the preliminary order given him by General Banno! He recalled her threat. But faced now by the actuality of their separation, he fought the thought and told himself it could not be.

"Surely it is not—the arms contract?" he queried.

She regarded him for a moment. "What else? You knew how I felt about it. And it was anything but manly to take advantage of a competitor's misfortune. One might almost believe you had put him there. I mean it when I say I'd rather not see you any more, Mr. Steele. As for father's case, I rather think we can fight it out without your assistance."

"But, Phyllis——"

"Miss Vantine, please."

Steele's heart sank. He made a motion of resignation. She turned her back and went into the dining room, Douglas following her lithe form with wistful eyes. Even now he believed she still cared for him, but he knew her for a strong-willed little person who, once committed to a course of action, would probably persist, even though the hurt were her own.

Douglas' appetite, which until that moment had been of large dimensions,

suddenly deserted him. He crossed the lobby and flung himself on a lounge, brooding. He had always held out the half hope that Phyllis Vantine's threat to cast him aside was a jest. And perhaps it had been little more than that when first uttered. But of course that was before the perpetration of the invisible crime; before her father was thrown into jail, a suspected murderer. After all, it may have been his mistake, placing the order in such a dark hour as this. Perhaps it had been the inopportune time he had chosen for the act rather than the act itself which had angered Phyllis. He began berating himself for his eagerness to land the order. His ardor had got the best of his sense of fair play, he told himself.

A hand came down on his back, jarring him out of his reverie. He looked up to find the consul at his side.

"Well, boy," greeted Rogers, "what progress have you made in the case of your friend Vantine? The papers are filled with most ridiculous tales about him and the crime he is supposed to have committed. One would think they had been preserved from the days of the witch burners."

"The case is standing still—except for this." Steele handed him the scrap of paper.

"A police warrant for somebody or other. Where did you get it?"

Douglas told of his explorations in the night, and of his playing detective at the heels of the abductors.

The consul pursed his lips. "This may mean something, Steele," he commented. "It seems a bit queer that you should meet this man at the scene of the murder, and queerer still that he should be made off with. Why the indifference? Why the lack of interest on your part? Come, arouse yourself. We'll borrow a couple of gendarmes and round up that band and see what we can learn from them. I haven't

done a whole lot to assist you in this affair so far, my boy. Can't you see I'm volunteering?"

Rogers' enthusiasm quickly communicated itself to Steele, for here again he saw a possible chance to be of use to Phyllis and her father, whether they desired it or not. He got to his feet.

"Have you a gun?" he asked.

Rogers said he hadn't.

"Wait. I'll get you one. I've a dozen sample automatics in my room."

It so happened that Douglas and the Consul secured the services of the captain of gendarmes who had arrested old Mr. Vantine. The captain, recognizing Douglas, smiled affably and, turning to his men, said in the Oro Bambian tongue:

"We may go into a fight. Do not give the American reason to doubt your courage or your loyalty to the cause of justice."

Douglas, thinking of the brutes in the hut, muttered in Rogers' ear:

"They'll need all their courage when they collide with this gang of apaches."

In spite of the care with which Steele had mapped out the shack's location, a good three hours of beating through the underbrush passed before its rude outlines were sighted. The captain, more resplendent than ever with the noon-day sunshine playing on his red and blue uniform and gold braid, issued a soft order, and his men melted away from him.

"Surrounding the place?" Steele asked.

"S-sh! Yes," said the captain. He consulted his watch. "We shall allow them five minutes."

To Steele, the officer's timepiece seemed a wretchedly constructed instrument, ticking off seconds where, in reality, minutes had passed. Finally, eagerness got the better of him and, disregarding the Oro Bambian's warning, he crept forward to a point where the hut was clearly visible. What he

saw brought a gasp of astonishment to his lips.

Noyes, Dagh's pet in the contract scramble, was standing some little distance from the hut, talking in low tones with the swarthy leader of the apache gang!

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE IN THE WOODS.

AT that moment the swarthy fellow must have caught sight of Steele, for he whipped a revolver from his belt and pumped a bullet into the woods. His aim was too hasty to be effective, however, and the pellet cut harmlessly through the branches, sending a shower of leaves down upon the American who had flattened himself close to the ground.

The Oro Bambian police mistook this move for an attack upon their captain, and a volley of shots came from all angles of the clearing. The unfortunate apache crumpled up in a heap.

Noyes, a surprised look upon his face, fled to the shelter of the shack. No sooner had the heavy door slammed shut than the gendarmes' fire was answered from the window—a dozen explosions and little puffs of white smoke curling skyward.

Steele, lying like a sharpshooter in the grass, was emptying his automatic. The window in the hut was shattered to bits and the woodwork around it was chipped and scarred. Some one within leveled a rifle through the opening; the barrel and the man's guiding hand alone were visible. Douglas saw the black muzzle pointed straight at him. He shifted his position a bit and cut loose with the automatic. A screaming curse told him that a bullet had found the man's hand.

"General Banno should have witnessed *this* demonstration," muttered the salesman to himself. His face was flushed and his eyes gleaming with the heat of conflict.

Steele heard the captain of gendarmes calling his orders across the clearing, and by the sound of the weapons, knew they were closing in. He felt something moving on the ground beside him. It was Consul Rogers, who was having the time of his life.

"This is San Juan Hill all over again," panted the consul, wiggling forward a few feet, pausing to empty his Detwiler automatic, and repeating this series of movements again and again with machine-like precision.

The fire from the hut rose now to its greatest intensity; then slowly subsided. A white handkerchief fluttered at the window.

"Not another step, men," the captain shouted warningly to his associates, "Remain where you are. We cannot trust them."

"Tell them to march out and leave their weapons at the door," suggested Steele.

The captain did so; and one by one the dark-skinned ruffians passed out and lined up in the clearing.

Neither Noyes nor the stocky stranger was among them.

"Come, come! There are others," cried Douglas, from his position in the deep grass, and the captain of gendarmes echoed him in the Oro Bambian tongue.

One of the band shook his head from side to side in simulated bewilderment. "No more," he growled. "No more. We are all."

Heedless of treachery, Steele leaped toward the hut. The stranger, he admitted to himself, might have been disposed of in some manner or other before the police arrived, but as for Noyes, there was no avenue of escape. With his own eyes he had observed the tall, sleek representative of the Consolidated Arms Equipment Company dodge behind the shack door. He must be there now.

Douglas didn't wait to analyze the

why of Noyes' presence here, but catapulted through the opening with his revolver ready. He ran several steps, expectantly surveying each corner, then came to a bewildered halt. The place was quite empty.

Consul Rogers' form appeared in the doorway. "Well!" he queried, still smiling excitedly. "Require assistance, boy?"

"Hardly," replied Steele in a tone of deep disgust. "It seems the fellow Noyes—if it was Noyes—made his escape. As for the kidnaped chap, they probably spirited him away before we arrived."

"What? More mystery?"

"S-sh!" Douglas flicked a warning finger to his lips. They drew together, and the American salesman continued in a whisper: "If he's hiding, he's got to come out in time. Let him believe we are deceived. We'll place a watch and send the others away."

"The idea is good, but where could a human being hide in this shack? Earth floor! Log walls! No, Steele, I am afraid——"

"Surely, consul, you are not so affected by this crazy country as to suggest the supernatural again?"

"Not I. Still—he's gone, isn't he?"

"We were on all sides. Furthermore, if there is such a clever hiding place in here that we can't discern it, then I say there's nothing to do but stay."

"Don't mistake me. I am quite willing," murmured Rogers. "I assure you, I am enjoying myself."

The gaudy captain entered, stepping briskly and with almost military precision. He jangled a pair of handcuffs. His certainty was amusing. Steele could not repress a smile.

"They've gone, captain! Gone without making their adieux!"

"Gone, señor?"

"Gone!" echoed the consul.

The captain was depressed and mys-

tified. He, too, had seen Noyes flee to the shelter of the hut. Memories of other strange and inexplicable occurrences clouded his eyes. But when Steele broached his plan, the captain took heart again, for maneuvers of this sort appealed strongly to his Latin imagination.

They went out into the clearing and watched the police handcuff one prisoner to the other. Douglas, suddenly reminded of his effective shot through the window, bent an eager, scrutinizing gaze upon each hand in turn. None among these bore so much as a scratch. It must have been Noyes himself that was wounded!

At length the entire party set off through the woods. Immediately they were screened from view, the captain ordered a halt, murmured some instructions in the ear of his chief aid, and then, with Steele and the consul on either side, stole back to the edge of the clearing, while the captured banditti marched away to Carmabal.

The trio lay in the grass and waited. They were queerly contrasted, these men: the captain, brilliantly decked, and very much concerned with the things dust was doing to his costume, though suave and self-contained withal; Consul Rogers, lean, vigorous, middle-aged in years, but still youthful in manner; Douglas Steele, broad-shouldered, active, eager.

Time wore slowly through the hot afternoon. Again and again Steele consulted his watch only to berate the lagging little hands, as though *they* made and regulated time, rather than innocently recorded it.

Two hours passed, and even the captain was growing impatient. Douglas was on the point of admitting the incorrectness of his theory when the door of the shack trembled slightly, and wavered open. Instantly three pairs of eyes leaped to the spot. Three hidden bodies tensed.

Noyes stepped cautiously into the open. One hand was bound in a bloody handkerchief. The other clutched a revolver.

Rogers moved to draw his gun and a twig snapped. The cornered one's weapon swung immediately in that direction.

"Come out of there," he ordered, advancing slowly.

"Great Scott! He's turned the tables! He's got *us*!" muttered the consul.

"Hold tight and trust to luck," whispered Douglas, and his words might well have been a premonition of what was going to happen, for the very next moment Noyes stumbled over the body of the gang's leader, where it lay in the clearing, and fell flat upon his face.

Stunned though he was, he reached instinctively for his weapon, but it was too late. In that fortuitous moment the tables were turned again. He was hemmed in. Caught!

He got up nonchalantly and brushed off his clothes with his uninjured hand.

"Well?" he said. "What do you want with me?"

"Of all the colossal nerve!" Rogers exploded. "Apparently, my man, your audacity is only exceeded by your lack of scruples."

"Whoever *you* are," sneered Noyes, "I'd advise you to keep your remarks to yourself, where they might better be applied."

The consul's face blazed. He looked as though nothing would suit him better than a stand-up fist fight with this sleek rascal. But the man was injured. Rogers turned away and walked into the hut.

The captain snapped the unwelcome handcuffs on Noyes' wrists. Douglas began questioning him.

A cry came from within the shack. "Steele! Steele!" It was Rogers' voice. "Here's your kidnaped man—tied and gagged and waiting for us!"

CHAPTER VIII.

STEELE EXPLAINS.

THURSTING Noyes before them, Steele and the captain entered the shabby little building. A dirt-covered trapdoor lay open, revealing a dark basement beneath. Consul Rogers stood by the opening, a charred match in his fingers.

"Down there," he said.

Douglas seized one of the candles, gave it to Rogers to light, and set about lowering himself into the excavation.

When he again felt a firm foundation beneath his feet, he reached up for the flickering candle—and was surprised to find himself in a room by no means poorly furnished and quite cozy.

The stranger lay close by, his arms and legs bound with heavy rope, a bandanna handkerchief thrust into his mouth.

Steele ripped off the gag.

"About time," sputtered the stranger ungraciously.

"What did they want with *you*?" said Douglas, hacking with his pocket knife at the ropes.

"I guess you know better than I."

"I wish I thought so."

Freed at last, the stocky fellow arose stiffly and put in some time alternately stretching and chafing his limbs.

His curiosity aroused by the hidden apartment, Steele began an extended examination.

Wood floor, carpeted, an oil heater to dispel the dampness, chairs, a leather-upholstered couch, a roll-top desk—all this was so extraordinary that it might have been taken from the pages of a novel, Steele told himself as he walked over to the littered desk. Idly, Douglas picked up a sheet of paper and scanned it. His face took on a strange look. His eyes fastened eagerly upon the written words and he read on and on, as though oblivious of the other man's presence.

"You're a great reader, aren't you?" remarked the released prisoner, who was watching with interest.

Douglas tossed the sheet on the desk and picked up a handful more. "Come here," he said, over his shoulder.

The other approached. Douglas continued his investigation, pawing in the drawers and pigeonholes.

"Here's the most remarkable conspiracy I've ever heard of!" he cried at last.

"What?" said the man calmly.

"You've heard of the weird doings in this country—the stories of hands reaching down from nowhere and choking people to death; of mystery and madness and all sorts of terrible occult manifestations?"

"Yes. They've traveled down the coast. All bosh, I say."

"You've said something. Look at this." And Steele handed him copy, already prepared for newspaper publication, which related a fear-inspiring incident supposed to have occurred in the province of Pampa. It was dated in advance.

Scores of other similar fabricated stories littered the desk. None, however, pertained to the invisible crime; but secret correspondence, of which there was an abundance, revealed the astounding fact that no less a personage than Señor Dagh was the leader of a corporation of private individuals engaged in the work of undoing Oro Bamba, of reducing land and property values with no other intent than that of buying up the rich little country at a song.

"So this sanctum under the ground is Dagh's propaganda headquarters!" Steele exclaimed. "Well——"

He paused, for his wandering eye had caught sight of a clipping from an American periodical and pasted in a little frame which hung on the wall. Douglas read it aloud:

"If the combined newspapers of a country should set out to make the populace believe

that witches actually existed—and hammered unceasingly at that point, making use, incidentally, of all sorts of pseudo and quasi-scientific proofs toward that end—in six months' time, I say, they would gain their point. Such is the power of the press."

Steele reached for the frame and pocketed it. "That, apparently, was Dagh's inspiration," he concluded. "But come! We've got to get out of here and tell the world."

They found a ladder, which the stranger quickly ascended. Steele followed, closing the trapdoor after him. The effect of solid earth was so deceiving that he could not restrain the comment, "Mighty clever work!"

Then the other man did the unexpected.

The butt of Steele's automatic projected from his back pocket, where he had thrust it prior to his descent into the pit. The man reached over and, with a quick, jerky movement, possessed himself of it.

"You're all under arrest!" he announced calmly and, flipping back his coat-lapel, displayed a badge of the United States secret service. "B. C. Briggs is my name."

"That's twice I've been arrested today," said Noyes, in a sneering aside to the captain.

If the stranger expected a crashing dénouement, he must have been disappointed, for it fell flat.

Steele laughed. Saving a man only to be made a prisoner by him seemed rather incongruous.

"I am consul to Oro Bamba, from the States," announced Rogers, dignified now in spite of the grime of battle.

"What is the charge, señor?" questioned the captain smoothly.

"Come out in the light and let me look you over," said the secret-service operative.

The party moved through the door. "First of all," began B. C. Briggs, pointing at Noyes, "I want this man for absconding with ten thousand dol-

bars from the funds of the Union National Bank of Sacramento. I don't know what he calls himself in these parts, but his real name is Hull—Alexander Hull!"

A thrill of surprise coursed through Steele's body. He reached into his coat pocket and brought forth the scrap of paper over which he and Briggs had fought the night before.

"Here's the warrant, if you care to serve it in the formal manner, Mr. Detective," he said.

Briggs stared. "Where did you get that?"

Douglas told him.

"I'll be damned!" said Briggs.

"I would suggest, señor," interrupted the captain, "that you put the weapon away first and talk after. You have no charge against us. I am a captain of gendarmes, and Señor Steele and Señor Rogers were aiding me in rescuing you from your abductors." I have this man you call Hull in charge. I shall take him to Carmabal, and then it remains with you to arrange for his extradition. Meanwhile, if you wish to explain——"

For the first time, apparently, Briggs noticed the captain's uniform. "Pardon, officer," he said readily enough. "It seems I have acted a bit hastily, but one can't be too careful in this game, y'know. Here's the whole situation: Don Morris and I had been working the Chilean coast when word came from headquarters that this chap Alex Hull was somewhere in Oro Bamba. The warrant for his arrest, with a rogues-gallery photo attached, reached us a week later. We were mighty busy just then, so Don arranged to chase up here and get started on the Hull case while I finished in Chile. Don knew the man he was after: had had a run-in with him once before, I believe. So he came, with the understanding that I was to follow as soon as possible.

"We were to meet at the American House in Carmabal; but when I bounced

in there at twelve o'clock last night, Don was nowhere about; hadn't so much as registered. It got me worried. I went out in the street with the idea of looking him up. Then this fellow"—he indicated Steele—"comes bowling along in a way that gives me a hunch something is wrong. I wasn't tired, so I just obeyed a fool whim and followed him. He was snooping around the lawn of a big house out in the suburbs, when I tackled him. He knows the rest. But it wasn't until long-nosed Alex here rushed into the shack and proved himself boss of that gang of apaches, that the reason in back of this kidnaping affair began to dawn on me. He was doing his best to forestall arrest, of course. But even now I don't know what part you outsiders are playing, nor why this man was sneaking around in the country at midnight, nor how this scrap of warrant came to be where it was, nor——"

"I believe all these things can be explained easily enough if we begin with the premise that Alexander Hull, alias Noyes, *killed Detective Don Morris!*" said Steele solemnly.

Noyes' face blanched. "It's a lie; damn you, Steele—a lie!"

"Say, what do you mean?" cried Briggs, bewildered. "Don dead? What do you mean?"

"Picture, if you can, the reception hall in Señor Dagh's unfinished though occupied villa," urged the American salesman. "It is night. A conference has been arranged between three representatives of arms factories to see if some agreement might not be concluded whereby two of the bidders for Oro Bamba's latest arms-equipment contract would drop out, leaving the field free to a third man, who is Señor Dagh's choice. A loaded sample automatic lays on the table. The guests arrive one by one, among them Noyes. Old Mr. Vantine picks up the sample weapon and offers comment upon it. Every one

but Noyes is standing with his back to the hall door when a figure appears there, the figure of—who else than Detective Morris? Noyes knows why he has come, and his hand goes out instinctively, grasping an electric wire temporarily strung along the wall. With lightninglike rapidity, he cuts the wire with his clasp knife, plunging the place in darkness, rips the automatic from Vantine's hand, and fires.

"In the turmoil that ensues, the murderer creeps quickly to the body on the hall floor and removes all identifying papers, among them the warrant, which he hurls far out through an open window. Next his voice is heard at the phone, summoning the police and so diverting suspicion. Mr. Vantine is arrested and charged with the crime."

"One man killed to keep the secret, another kidnaped," summed up the consul quietly.

Absolute silence held sway among the little group in the clearing. The sun, a blazing red ball, was sinking below the treetops. Off in the green underbrush, tropic insects set up their night noises, while somewhere in the darkening depths of the forest an owl hooted, it seemed, in derision at all the weird, inexplicable tales of Oro Bamba.

Noyes drew a long breath. "He's right," he muttered, hope gone. "I did it."

"And, after all, this at least was not a frame-up of Señor Dagh's to win the arms contract?" whispered Steele.

Another—and final—headshake; and the mystery surrounding the invisible crime dissolved in the face of his admission.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE INVISIBLE STUFF.

STEELE sat in his room at the American House, puffing dejectedly at a cigar. He had endeavored to find Phyllis, to tell her the splendid news of her father's proved innocence, of Noyes'

arrest and Dagh's subsequent flight into Bolivia—as the papers, with their glaring disclosures, proved—but she was nowhere about; had been away all day. And so he had retired to his quarters to lounge in the dark and dream.

The scattered lights of Carmabal winked up at him like stars reflected in a pool, while off to the north the hills rolled up in great, black undulations until they met and merged with the tropic sky.

A breeze came in at the window, stirring the curtains. Steele closed his eyes and let the warm air caress his cheek. He was very tired. His cigar drooped in his fingers.

Phyllis had said she would hate him if he won that contract. And he had won it, taken it from her father, from Noyes, and all the rest. But, having achieved this victory, he wasn't nearly as proud as he thought he would be.

He sighed and stirred fitfully in his chair. After all, success is an empty thing without love.

He seemed to hear a soft step behind him, but was not certain. The fluttering curtain, perhaps. Concentration was a thing abhorred, for he was reveling now in the boundless fields of the half-dream world. Vague memories of Noyes' detailed confession came back to him, of how the traitor and arch-swindler, Dagh, daily gaining more confidence in his rapacious confederate, had shortly after the murder taken him into the propaganda bureau, and given him important work to do; of how Noyes, violently afraid of other detectives putting in appearance—hired the apaches who trailed and kidnaped Briggs; of—

Again the step, and now a soft hand upon his brow. It was so like a dream come to life that he dared not stir for fear of shattering it.

"Douglas!" came the faintest kind of a whisper. "Oh, Douglas—I'm sorry!"

Steele was wide awake in a flash.

"Phyllis!" He arose and reached eagerly for her through the shadows. "Little girl, little girl! You've heard?"

She clung to him. "Heard what, Douglas?"

"The wonderful news, of course, dear. They've caught the murderer. It was Noyes, and he has confessed. Your father has been liberated."

He felt the burden of her on his arm. She was sobbing her joy.

"And you didn't know?" he asked. "You came back to me only because you loved me?"

With a warm kiss he smothered the "yes" upon her lips. "I've been away in the fields for hours—fighting it out with myself. I came to you first," she told him.

Steele looked suddenly troubled. "I hope your dad will not begrudge the lost contract," he said.

"Oh, I know he won't," cried Phyllis, brightening. "A wire came from his firm this morning. They've pensioned him for his long service to them—a splendidly liberal pension, too. He will be able to live comfortably——"

He drew her to him again.

A noise startled them. They turned, still in each other's arms. It was Consul Rogers at the door. Observing the situation, he closed it quickly, his hearty laugh echoing down the hall.

"You know, Steele," he called through the panel, "there might be some virtue in that invisible stuff, after all. Don't you think so?"

UNTIL THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

MERLIN, the ancient British magician, whose name is intertwined with the heroes of the Arthurian legends, met his death in a curious manner.

His last adventure was to build a wall of brass around his native town of Carmarthen. He intrusted the work to a multitude of fiends who were set to work in a gigantic cavern in the neighborhood. It was a long job even for busy fiends, and during its progress Merlin fell in love with a supernatural being called the Lady of the Lake.

For all his arts Merlin made little headway and was accordingly much pleased one day when she invited him to visit her. Before he went he called his fiend foreman to him and told him on no account to let up on the job.

The Lady of the Lake had only sent for the magician to make sport of him and show that, no matter how powerful he was, she could elude him. Merlin, hoping to melt her, revealed to her some of the wonders of his art. He showed her a tomb constructed to receive two bodies at the same time, teaching her the magic word which would lock it until Judgment Day.

She pretended she did not believe that the tomb was wide enough at the mouth to receive even one person. Merlin, anxious to prove that it was, went in and lay down on the slab. Thereupon the Lady of the Lake—who may have been afraid of the magician—closed the door of the sepulcher and, repeating the spell he had taught her, shut him in until the Last Day. Merlin was able to speak, and his tomb became an oracle's shrine.

But the fiendish brassworkers are still at their task. They have as yet no command to cease. Any visitor to the neighborhood of the Welsh town of Carmarthen can go to the cavern's mouth and listen. From it issues the clang of forges, the clanking of chains, the ringing of anvils and the groans of workmen condemned to toil until the end of the world.



In the Shadows of Infinity

STRANGE EXPERIENCES

Under this heading we print in every issue letters from readers describing some bona-fide experience of a particularly unusual or thrilling character coming within their personal knowledge. It may be an actual, physical adventure, or a wandering exploration into the mysterious pallid borderland between this life and the realm of the unseen. It must, however, be distinctly out of the ordinary and have a psychological value as a study in the reactions of the individual figuring in the "experience," in order to receive recognition in these columns. It need not be entirely serious or tragic, though, at the time, it may seem so. Many apparently impenetrable mysteries have ridiculously simple solutions. All letters must be accompanied by the name and address of the sender, although they will be published under initials or *nom de plume*, if this is desired. Payment at manuscript rates will be made for all material appearing in this department. It will not, however, be practicable to return letters that are found unavailable. Contributors, therefore, are advised to keep copies of their letters.

Rapping "Over the Fence"

To the Editor of THE THRILL BOOK.

DEAR SIR: When I was a little girl I was adopted into a family of mother, father, two sisters, and one brother. They were distantly related to me, a normal, commonplace family. We lived in a small town, and our house was quite fine, large, and substantial.

The mother of the household died when I was fourteen. In a few months I began to notice a strained look in the faces of the two daughters, who were young women, and they always grew nervous toward evening. Johnny, the brother, about my own age, finally discovered the cause. He told me. There was mysterious rapping at the foot of the bed in which the father slept.

"It is mamma!" he said to me in a frightened voice.

After being told the awful secret, I would

not sleep alone in my little bed on the top floor. I insisted on bunking in with the older sister, Jennie. Her room was across the hall from her father's. We could easily hear the rappings from our bed. They were very soft and fluttering, and sometimes sounded from the walls and from the door to Pop's room. At first I was half scared to death, but I somehow got used to the night knocking. It was irregular. Occasionally, the sounds would cease for a week; then they would keep up for weeks. We tried to explain them on natural grounds, but could not, and we had religious counsel on the matter. Nothing availed.

Jokingly, Jennie frequently said to me: "Well, if I was a spook, I'd knock good and loud—not that timid, butterfly tapping. This is what I'd do." And she would illustrate the familiar "over the fence is out" rhythm of rapping. Jennie was fond of that knock,

anyway, and I had always noted she made use of it when she rapped on our house door to get in.

In a short time Jennie was married, and that night besides the usual mysterious rappings—which, by the way, were quite sharp and strong—the pillows were yanked from under the heads of Pop and the other daughter, Mamie. I was in sleeping with Mamie at the time and I remember how startled I was at her scream.

Time went on. After a while we got so used to the knockings that we paid little attention to them. Nothing else happened until Jennie took sick. Tuberculosis. During her illness the raps were infrequent and weak, but in the room she used to occupy there was commotion. Her erstwhile bed would be upset. Objects would fall to the floor.

Jennie lived with her husband and family in another town a few miles north of us. Almost daily she had a visit from some one of us. We saw her fading away. She knew it. But the mischievous light never left her eyes. Jennie had been the happy one of the family.

All of us were in bed this memorable night. All of us had been sitting with Jennie. We came home late. Neither Mamie nor I could get to sleep in spite of our tiredness. I heard our town clock strike two. Then, suddenly, terribly, it came.

On the foot of our bed, on the door, down the hallway, rang out vigorously the rapping of "over the fence is out!" Jennie's characteristic knock!

I fainted, and the whole house was soon in an uproar. Terror was upon us. How we lived through those hours till daylight, I cannot tell. We lighted every lamp and gas jet in the house and waited—waited. We knew the answer. Early in the morning Jennie's husband telephoned us that she had died at ten minutes after two o'clock.

Many other spiritualistic phenomena occurred in that old house, but this I hold to be the chief demonstration.

"DORA THORNE"

The Return of Sam

To the Editor of THE THRILL BOOK.

DEAR SIR: It was on one of the nights I went to see Sam Barton's sister, Elsie, that my greatest—in fact my only—experience with the world of wraiths and shadow people occurred.

Sam and I were always close friends, and his sister, Elsie, was—oh, well, just a regular fellow. We used to have lots of good times together.

The date was November 20th, 1918; I remember it perfectly. The Barton residence is reached after the ascent of a long hill. The road is bordered by trees and illuminated by arc lights at regular intervals. On this particular night, I was about two-thirds of the way up the hill, when I was accosted by a man in soldier's uniform. He had a pack of cigarettes in his hand and asked me for a light. It was in one of the darkest parts of the road that he stopped me. As the flare from the match illumined his features, I gave a sharp exclamation.

"Why, Sam, old man! When did you get back from France? I heard you were wounded and in hospital, the last news Elsie had."

I reached out to grasp his hand. He extended it and gave me a firm grip, but I noticed that the hand was very cold. He looked pale and ill and haggard, and his eyes had a bewildered, uncomprehending stare.

"I bet Elsie was glad to see you," I remarked. "Where are you going now?"

"I've got to get back to camp," he replied. "I must hurry. I can't stop to talk."

"Well, anyhow, I'll go down the road to the car with you," I suggested.

We walked along and I noticed that he limped badly.

"Where were you wounded?" I asked.

He indicated his thigh and told me that a German sniper had got him while he was out on some reconnoitering work. He had lain for several hours before being picked up and brought in by the stretcher bearers.

I left him at the station and hurried back to make my call on Elsie. I found her in tears, with a notice from the war department in her hand.

"Sam's dead!" she announced. "He was killed just before the signing of the armistice."

The particulars given in letters from Sam's comrades showed that he had died in hospital as a result of a wound in the thigh inflicted by an enemy sniper while Sam was on a reconnoitering expedition.

Now, who was the man I met on the night of November 20th?

Of course, he may have been a wandering soldier, slightly dazed from shell shock or some similar cause, who was glad of some one to talk to and didn't trouble to enlighten me when he realized that I had mistaken him for some one else. On the other hand, he looked and spoke like Sam, yet the light was poor, and his voice sounded hollow and far away. Also, he smoked a particularly

vile brand of cigarette that Sam alone of all my acquaintances favored.

This wandering-soldier theory may be true, and then again— EDWARD L. STANTON.
Providence, Rhode Island.

Spirit Raps Explained

To the Editor of THE THRILL BOOK.

DEAR SIR: My summer vacations were usually spent at an old rambling farmhouse near the Jersey shore, just the place to conjure up a storied past, not necessarily a sad one, but withal touched by melancholy. I had gone there for several seasons, without any save pleasant experiences, when something happened this summer that nearly spoiled my joy in the gentle spot.

For one thing, I was assigned a new room instead of the one I generally occupied when on my holiday. My dislike of it was immediate. Being sensitive to "atmosphere," I felt repelled by the very walls and windows of the room. I spoke of this curious feeling to a fellow boarder. He did not help me any by saying he thought it was the room in which "Uncle Timothy" had killed himself by cutting his throat with a broken pane of glass.

In bed the first night, before getting to sleep, I was uneasy. But finally I argued myself into some sense of quiet, and finally dozed off.

A rapping at the headboard of my bed wakened me. Somehow, I lay motionless. I may have been what they call in your stories "frozen with horror;" I do not know. At any rate, my head was clear, though my heart beat against my breast like a piston rod. I listened. Yes, there were the knocks, measured and regular at the headboard.

One-two-three — pause — one-two-three — pause — one-two-three.

I had read enough of spiritualistic literature to know that three raps were one of the favorite signals of communication.

One-two-three — pause — one-two-three — pause — one-two-three.

My next observation sent a chill over me, and my scalp prickled. There was a strange sort of glow in the room, and a patch of luminescence in the corner opposite the bureau riveted my gaze.

Instinctively, I shut my eyes and dared not move. My breathing I noticed was heavy and difficult. Perhaps five minutes passed, a terrible æon of time. The rapping was regular. Perhaps it was this fact which saved me from an outbreak. I grew conscious of the regularity. My mind suddenly connected two things: My inbreathings corresponded with the triple raps!

Almost without volition, I moved from my position in the bed and waited with ears sharpened, my eyes still closed.

The knocks on the headboard stopped. My terrible tension lessened, I then moved back to my first position in the bed and experimented with my breathing. With every deep intake of breath the three raps sounded. It was explained. The supernatural visitant went aglimmering. It was my breathing in that particular position that set up a motion in the headboard joints and produced the ghostly knocks.

Opening my eyes, rather ashamed of my fears, I looked for the mysterious glow in the corner of the room. It was there. But jumping out of bed, I soon discovered that it was the reflection of the moon on a hand glass which, mirror side up, lay on the bureau.

Next morning with great gusto I told my story, and it afforded a lot of amusement to my fellow boarders.

But I often wonder what I would have handed down in the form of a ghost story if I had jumped out of bed in a fright at once and refused to return. I never would have suspected the hand glass of making an apparition, I am sure, nor my breathing of collaborating with the headboard of that old wooden bed to produce "spirit rappings."

JUDITH WAINWRIGHT.

Camden, New Jersey.

An Apparition

To the Editor of THE THRILL BOOK.

DEAR SIR: The death of my brother Jack was a great shock to me. He passed away after a lingering illness during which I was his nurse. We had many serious talks in the long night watches and often discussed the future life. These last months brought us closer to each other than we had ever been in our previous lives. In the course of our conversations, Jack had promised that, if it were possible, he would come back and visit me after his death.

About three months subsequent to the event, as I was entering my kitchen one evening in the semidarkness preceding nightfall, I saw him. I shall never forget the look of suffering on his face. It was terrible—worse than in the most agonizing moments of his last illness. He just stood gazing at me without speaking.

"Jack," I cried out. "Are you in great pain? Why do you look so?"

He did not answer, but gradually seemed to fade through the doorway into the fast-gathering night shadows.

The vision was terribly vivid and realistic. It may have been purely subjective, arising from my morbid thoughts and run-down condition after nursing my brother through his last illness. Nevertheless it is my firm belief that Jack saw a way to keep his promise.

MARGARET E. M.

The Double Stain

To the Editor of THE THRILL BOOK:

DEAR SIR: The minute I was ushered into the shabby bedroom, I noticed the peculiar white stain on the carpet. Somehow, it immediately struck me as peculiar. However, it was late at night, and I had no other choice. Besides, what was a carpet stain, anyhow?

I was on a motor-cycle trip and my machine had been wrecked about two miles along the road from this farmhouse. I was lucky not to be sleeping out by the roadside or in a barn.

Dead tired, I rolled into the creaking wooden four-poster bed, expecting to be asleep the minute my head touched the pillow. I am not of a nervous temperament. Usually I sleep like a log—heavily and dreamlessly.

To-night, in spite of my fatigue, I lay awake for at least two hours and then slept only brokenly. Somehow, a ray of moonlight that came through a chink in the shutter slats seemed to cast a ghostly radiance about the stain on the carpet. The spot fascinated me. I found myself riveting my gaze, as if trying to see some significance in its irregular outline.

After one of these intervals of concentration, I suddenly discovered that a form had taken shape over the stained place. It was the figure of a woman, tall, white-robed, wraithlike. She said nothing. Her back was toward me and she seemed to be wringing her hands, all the while moaning faintly.

I don't know how long I gazed at the vision, but I was suddenly startled by an ear-piercing scream. A red line was distinctly visible against the white draperies of the figure. I closed my eyes for a moment; then opened them again.

The woman had vanished. I saw nothing but the moon ray and the peculiar stain.

In the morning I examined the room very carefully, but discovered nothing except that there was a discolored area on the floor corresponding to the white mark on the carpet. I asked the owner of the house if a murder had ever been committed in that room. He said that, to his knowledge, none had, but that he had not had the place very long. He mentioned, too, that he had acquired it an extremely reasonable figure. I tried to get in touch with the former owner, but was unsuccessful. He had moved away from that section of the country after the death of his wife, was all the information I could get.

Some doctors to whom I have told this story say that it was a case of autohypnosis, superinduced by the ray of moonlight and my overfatigued condition. Who knows?

AUGUSTUS RALSTON.

Halifax, Nova Scotia.



PUNISHMENT WITH WATER

THE third degree by water was in use in countries where the Inquisition was in force, and in parts of France, notably in criminal trials in Paris.

When the accused had heard the charge against him and failed to answer, he was stretched on a stone bench with feet and hands tied to rings so that the body was extended to its limits. The torturer inserted a horn or funnel into the mouth of the victim through which he poured water, four pints for ordinary cases, eight for obstinate cases. During the intervals of pouring, the tortured was interrogated to confess his crime or reveal the names of his accomplices.

Further refinements were sometimes added. The victim was stretched as before, sometimes on a rack, his feet higher than his head, and the skin of the abdomen drawn tight. In this position the executioner thrust a piece of fine cloth into throat and nostrils through which water was slowly filtered. During an hour the subject could not take a complete breath. He tried to swallow, hoping to make passage for air, but was foiled by the constantly moistened cloth.



Fashions in Novels.

THE day of the three volume novel is past in so far as production is concerned; yet one would hardly care to say that Dumas, Scott, Dickens, and other master romancers who could spin a yarn that would run through several bulky tomes have lost their vogue. They are still good old stand-bys for any publisher who cares to exploit them in good, moderate-priced editions.

For the leisurely narrative, people seemed satisfied to go back to the old masters; but when they want stories by contemporary writers, they seem to reflect the spirit of the age, and demand short, swift-moving novels that they can almost finish at a sitting.

Eighty thousand words nowadays is considered a good length for a book of fiction. This is extremely small when we think of Dickens' "Martin Chuzzle-

wit," with its four hundred thousand; the eighteenth-century English novel, "Clarissa Harlowe," by Richardson—which has the distinction of being the longest in the language—with its eight hundred thousand; and the old French novel by La Calprende, "Cleopatra," which ran its course in twenty-three volumes, and was widely read in its day at that.

All of which brings me around to the subject that is really on my mind—the arrangement and length of the serial novels appearing in the THRILL BOOK. Beginning in the next issue, a new policy will be inaugurated.

Personally, I have never been able to read a story in monthly or bimonthly or even weekly installments. I always save them up until the novel is completed or else wait till the book is published and then go to it.

The new plan for THRILL BOOK

serials will, I am sure, appeal to impatient minds like my own, as well as to those who are content to wait a little while—but not too long—for “what happens next” in a particularly good yarn.

Hereafter THRILL BOOK serials will be complete in two parts, appearing in two consecutive issues. The first story to be presented in this way will be “For Art’s Sake,” by Tod Robbins in the November 1st number.

Mr. Robbins is the man who wrote “The Bibulous Baby,” “Fragments,” “A Voice from Beyond,” “Crimson Flowers,” and other vivid little stories in recent issues of this magazine. In “For Art’s Sake,” he has used his unusual gift of graphic narrative and character drawing in weaving an extended plot about a sinister figure fully as maliciously evil and grim as Stevenson’s Mr. Hyde; yet the story in no way resembles “The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” although it has a good deal of the strange, fearsome fascination of that masterpiece.

You will not have to wait several weeks or months to finish this serial, either. It will appear in its entirety in the issues of November 1st and November 15th. Then in the November 15th issue, another serial will begin—a Francis Stevens story—and that will be completed in the December 1st issue.

Of course any THRILL BOOK readers who do not approve of this innovation are invited to write in and offer suggestions. The readers are the ones we are aiming to satisfy, and I have an idea that the new scheme of things is going to please most of them.

Other Features in “Our Next.”

LESLIE BURTON BLADES, the famous blind author of “Claire,” contributes a complete novel. It is called “Gifts of Tsin Lee.” This is Mr. Blades’ first bow before THRILL BOOK readers, and I am pretty sure that they will want more of him. The scenes are laid in China, that land of magic and sorcery that our Occidental minds can never comprehend, but which attracts us with a compelling glamour that is all the more potent because of its atmosphere of mystery.

Then there is our old favorite storyteller, H. Bedford-Jones, with a remarkable little tale, “Medusa’s Venom,” a weird adventure in the mountain fastnesses of Greece. Francis Stevens contributes “Impulse,” a wonderfully dramatic piece of writing; and there is another installment of that colorful Oriental romance by Rupert Hughes, “The Gift-Wife.” There will be other short stories, too, all of the unusual type, with a distinctly novel basic idea or an odd touch of whimsical humor to entitle them to a place in this magazine.

I have been receiving some highly complimentary letters recently about the THRILL BOOK, and I want to thank the writers for taking the trouble to show their appreciation in this way. Also I have received some “knocks,” which I have studied very carefully with a view to improving things. Oh, yes. Criticism is always welcomed in this office; and it needn’t be all bouquets either. The brickbats are just as welcome, because they show where the faults are and give me a chance to remedy them. THE EDITOR.





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