Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

Suddenly I Broke Away

and Held Them Spellbound

As I review that tense dramatic moment when I electrified that meeting, it all seems strange and weird to me. How had I changed so miraculously in three months from a shy, diffident "yes" man to a dynamic, vigorous he-man? How had I ever dared give my opinion? Three months before nobody ever knew I held opinions!

ALL my life I had been cursed with a shy, timid, self-conscious nature. With only a grammar school education I could never express ideas in a coherent, self-confident way. But one day my eye fell upon a newspaper article which told about a wonderful free book entitled "How to Work Wonders with Words"—a book that was causing widespread comment from coast to coast—a book that was being read not only by millionaires, but by thousands of others. It discussed men like me and explained how we could overcome our handicaps.

At first I was skeptical. I thought these defects were a part of my natural makeup—that I would never be able to overcome them. But some subtle instinct kept prodding me to send for that free book. I lost no time in sending for it, as I was positively amazed at being able to get cost free a book that made absolutely plain the secrets that most successful men have used to win popularity, distinction, money and success.

As the weeks wore on and I absorbed the principles of this remarkable method, I became conscious of new physical and mental energy, a new feeling of aggressiveness, and a resurrected personal power that I never dreamed I possessed. Then came that day in the [illegible]eral meeting when the president called on the assembled department heads and assistants for suggestions on the proposed new policy.

Three months previously, the forces of indecision, timidity, and inability to talk in public would have held me to my seat. But suddenly that new power took possession of me and drove me to my feet. That wonderful 15-minute daily training at home had taught me to forget myself and think only of my subject. Almost automatically the ideas which had heretofore lain dormant in a mental jumble, now issued with a vigor, clearness and enthusiasm that astounded me no less than my boss and associates. And I noticed with silent exultation the rapt, intent look on my audience as my story unfolded itself smoothly and eloquently.

Today the men whom I used to greet deferentially I now meet with an air of cool equality. I am asked to conferences, luncheons, banquets, etc., as a popular after-dinner speaker. And my talents are not confined to business matters, but have made me an interesting conversationalist at social affairs. I am meeting worth-while people, I own a good job, a good home, a good car. I am the happiest man that ever lived.

And I frankly and candidly admit that I owe all of these blessings to that wonderful little free book "How to Work Wonders with Words."

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- How to talk before your club or lodge
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- How to develop your power of concentration
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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME IX NUMBER 3

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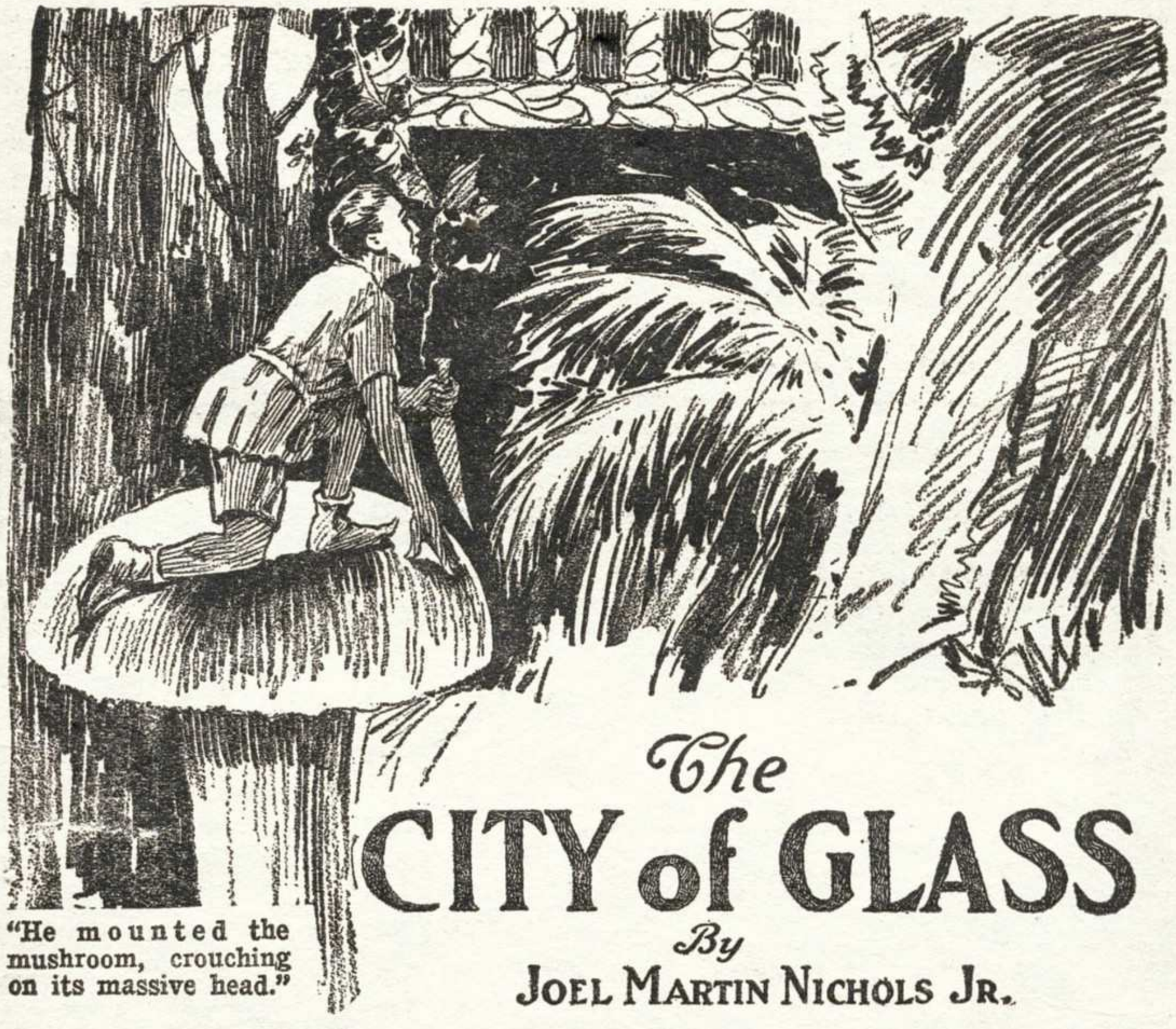


"He mounted the mushroom, crouching on its massive head."

The CITY of GLASS

By

JOEL MARTIN NICHOLS JR.

BECAUSE I have written some for publication, Professor Horace Lorne has asked me to set down in narrative form the story of our journey into the Atlantean country and how we stumbled on Klifha, the crystal city, and the strange things which befell us there. I have here at my side his voluminous notes covering the scientific aspects of our adventure, and on these as a framework I shall weave the tale.

In the plateau country which lies to the west and south of Ouargla on the Sahara route to In-Salah and Timbuktu there is a point high in the hills called Djerija by the Arabs, where, standing under the sun of noonday, one could see far to the south, riding high on the billowing sands, a great and shining city. Once there was a splendid glistening castle there, its lofty keep and topless turrets lost in the blue; and a wonderful, shining pile, half mosque, half cathedral, of an architecture familiar to no man who ever trod the route from In-Salah to Ouargla. In certain seasons when the sun was right one might see broad gardens with splashing fountains, and palm-banked avenues with small, jewel-like houses, but these came and went, visible only to the telescopic eyes of the Arabs gaged to the endless Sahara distances.

By night, too, there was an odd, bluish glow over the spot where the mirage had been by day, and often the In-Salah caravans reported huge flaming meteors plunging earthward into the sapphire glow. And once a

lone camel-driver came flogging his beast into Ouargla shouting that the day of judgment was at hand and Allah had come for his faithful. He had seen over the mirage city a flash of lightning and heard the roar of thunder. Now there are some cities in the Sahara where it rains occasionally, say on an average of once in twelve years, but south of Ouargla it has not rained in the memory of living man, nor is there any account of rain handed down in the folk-lore of the people. And yet each August when the summer sirocco blew up out of that trackless eastern waste of sand wherein moves no living thing, there were those of keen nostrils in Ouargla who said they had caught in that searing breath sweetly sickish odors as of crushed lilies and rotting fruits.

All this had come to the ears of Professor Lorne. He was at that time pottering about Shott el Jerid, the salt swamps south of Tunis, working on the Borchardt theory that the lost Atlantis had once been located there. With him was his daughter, Constance, and her betrothed, Colin Penfield. I came into the story when I ran across them in a Tunis hotel and being hot for adventure begged the professor to take me with him on the expedition he was then planning. As I was something of a topographer, having served in that capacity with both the American and French armies during the war, he was glad to take me on.

I had heard of the Ouargla mirage. Is there anyone who ever set foot on the shores of North Africa who hasn't? But I confess that when he had revealed his project to me in full I was a little cold. It was too fantastic. It seems he was a believer in the theory that a mirage is the reflection of some far-distant object. Therefore, he reasoned, if there were such a mirage to be seen from Djerija, then there must be somewhere down in the desert a great mysterious city of which we knew nothing. With an instrument which he had recently invented he claimed he could, by sighting on the mirage, obtain the latitude and longitude of the lost city.

I came to realize then that he believed the mirage city not only existed but that it was the lost Atlantis of which he had already found traces in Shott el Jerid below Tunis.

"Plato's description has misled modern scientists concerning the location of Atlantis," said he. "We locate it beyond Gibraltar, which we believe to be the Pillar of Hercules, but as a matter of fact these are two distinct points separated by hundreds of miles. The real Pillar of Hercules, as known by the ancients, was located far east and south of Syrtis Major in the vicinity of Ahaggar Massif, to which Ptolemy refers in *Mons Talae*. Atlantis sank to an unknown depth in 1250 B. C. during a terrific terrestrial upheaval which, according to Diodorous, the Greek historian, swept the tectonic area lying between Teneriffe and Sicily. But the inhabitants, warned of the impending catastrophe, fled inland and disappeared in the desert. I have no doubt, now, that this great city which we see mirrored in the skies was built by them. Its remarkable state of preservation, as evidenced by the mirage, is probably due to the extreme dryness of the desert atmosphere."

"But the palm trees and the odors they tell about," put in Constance Lorne; "how could they come out of a desert waste?"

"The odors are imagination," he replied, "and none but the Arabs have seen the palms. They are probably mistaken. And anyway, what's to prevent our believing that there may not be some great oasis there?"

The upshot of it was that we all went down to Djerija. There in the

barren hills the professor set up his instrument and got his angles of refraction, and then we went back to Tunis, where it took the whole winter to figure out the problem. We then returned to Ouargla, which was to be the jumping-off place of the expedition. We were delayed for a time there because the rumor got around, I know not how, that we were going down into the desert seeking the ghostly city which was mirrored in the hills around Djerija. The Arabs believed no good could come of such a quest, and so it was only with absurdly large offers of reward that we finally prevailed upon some of them to go. Even then they demanded their pay in advance, the reason for which we were soon to learn, for on the sixteenth night out, they stole away and left us without a word of warning and without so much as a knife with which to defend ourselves. It was their plan that we should perish in the desert, leaving none to gainsay their report that we had been attacked and killed by a roving band of brigands.

"I think," said the professor, examining his pocket map after we had held our first council together on discovering our plight, "that we may be nearer our goal than we know. That is perhaps the reason why those blackguards left us so surreptitiously. Now those table-lands off to the south—my map shows nothing of that sort, which plainly indicates that those who made it did not know what they were talking about. I think if we pushed forward and climbed into those hills we might see something on the other side which would be of interest to us."

"Have you not noticed, Father," put in Constance, "that there is a distinct odor here—a sweet, sickish smell when the wind sweeps up out of the south?"

"I've noticed it," said I. "I've smelled it for two days now and it seems to be getting stronger. Didn't say anything about it because I thought it might be imagination."

Professor Lorne sniffed. "By Jove, I believe you're right. It does seem as though there is a distinct odor on the wind. Not unlike moldy new-mown hay, or perhaps rotting fruits."

"That's what they said back in Ouargla—crushed lilies or rotting fruits," put in Penfield.

We started out together toward the hills, Penfield and I in the lead leaving the professor and Constance plodding on behind. Ordinarily Penfield and I more or less avoided each other. I may as well admit here that I had never liked him very well even from the first. We were, in fact, just about opposites in everything, both physically and mentally—and I daresay spiritually also, though I have no idea as to what stand he took on those matters. He was short and thickset and dark, whereas I am tall and broad and light; he was gloomy, sometimes surly and always serious, whereas I am inclined to be somewhat of a happy, devil-may-care and improvident nature. In age he was thirty-five; I was five years younger. Looking back, I think he must have been neurotic, which would perhaps explain why his reason crumpled so quickly under the assaults which the subsequent events were to make upon it. But I know there must have been good stuff in him, otherwise he would not have been loved by such a woman as Constance Lorne. In fact that was the one point upon which I envied him; though I now deny emphatically, in view of what followed between him and me, that I had ever wished him anything but well so far as she was concerned.

Two hours of steady plodding under that broiling sun brought us to the first of the hills, and a half-hour

of scrambling saw us on the flat summit.

"There is a distinct difference in the formation of the terrain from here south," said the professor when we had regained our breath and wiped our eyes clear of the flood of perspiration. "But so far as I can see, these hills go on and on into the south without hint of human habitation or sign of water."

"We have enough in our canteens to last about two days," said I. "And after that——"

Penfield suddenly motioned us to be silent. "Don't move," he cautioned. "There's something, somebody, crouching down there behind one of those rocks. It looks like a man—and yet—but keep on talking."

We continued our conversation then until Penfield suddenly reached down to his feet and picked up a stone, signing us to do likewise. Turning with my missile ready to hand I saw a strange figure climbing up the hillside, his arm, with hand open, held up in what was apparently intended as a sign of reassurance.

It was, so far as I could see now, a human being, apparently a man well advanced in years, to judge from the smallness of his bowed figure. But it was his clothing which at once awakened my amazement. The morning sun was by this time half-way toward the zenith; the heat was already almost beyond endurance, and yet this newcomer was swathed from head to foot in a heavy garment, apparently a kind of fur unfamiliar to me.

"*Bonjour, messieurs,*" he called out as he drew nearer. "*Vous n'avez rien à craindre; je viens comme ami.*"

"He thinks we're French," said I to Penfield, who, I knew, did not understand that tongue.

"Ah, but I am mistaken," called the little man, now in English, but an English of a peculiar metallic intonation which I had never heard before. "You are not French but English—or possibly Americans."

"Americans," I volunteered. "And who may you be, pray?"

"Call me Azor," he replied, now drawing near and surveying all of us, particularly Constance, with eyes which were full of a curiosity scarcely less than our own. "Azor of the land to the south."

"Then," we all cried out together, "there is a habitable land not far from here?"

"Only the journey of a day," he returned. "You wish to go there?"

"We wish to be safely out of here," put in Penfield. "Our wretched Arabs ran away from us during the night."

He nodded his head sagely. "Ah, yes, the Arabs. They have a great fear of this country—and rightly so."

Meanwhile I had been examining his face. It seemed to me there was something vaguely unhealthy about it which belied the vigor of his movements. To begin with, it was bloodless, a sickly white with none of the yellow or brown tint which is inevitable to the men of the desert whatever their age or race. At a distance the flesh appeared to be smooth, yet it gave the impression of being flabbily unsound, and on his drawing nearer I saw that it was furrowed with a million tiny wrinkles. The eyes were dark blue, deeply set, almost cavernous and burning with a feverish fire which set at naught the calm, slow dignity of the gesticulations with which he embellished his remarks. What struck me as most strange of all, however, was the lack of moisture upon his brow. In that unseasonable clothing, after that tussle up the slope, he should have been literally wringing with sweat as we were, and yet, so far as

I could see, there was not a solitary drop on him!

And thus, as we talked, a strange thing happened. I began to have an unaccountable fit of drowsiness—a peculiar heavy feeling about the eyes and an almost overwhelming desire to sit down. Glancing over at Constance Lorne I saw her rub her eyes and yawn, and then an instant later she sank slowly toward the earth. Oddly enough, this strange behavior astounded me not at all, and perhaps I should have passed off in a like manner had I not glanced down to Azor's hand and saw there for the first time a small reddish bulb which he was squeezing between his fingers. From the mouth of it there issued a colorless vapor which disappeared immediately in the air. Then in a flash I realized what was happening.

"We're being drugged," I shouted. "It's something in that devil's hand!"

I made a lunge at him, but somehow my limbs seemed to have grown suddenly leaden and dragged me slowly to earth while the sun and the heavens and the hills above me swirled gradually around and then sank into deep darkness.

I AWOKE to find myself between warm sheets on a soft bed in a great chamber with a high, domelike ceiling. For a time my eyes wandered about, taking in with bewilderment the sumptuous furnishings—the thick rugs on the floor, the huge overstuffed chairs, the plump be-pillowed divan in the far corner. At the head of my bed was a small table, on the smoothly polished surface of which stood a huge bowl of fruit—oranges, pears, grapes, dates and bananas of a size and color I had never seen before. The air was sultry and heavy with odors sweet almost to the point of nausea. Pulling myself out of bed, I found my feet sinking into the thick carpets as in dense woodland moss. The room, as I then noticed, had no windows, the soft glowing light that suffused it being let in from the ceiling, which I now recognized as translucent glass. From the ceiling my eyes wandered back to the walls and thence to the floor, and even these, as I could see now, were of an opaque glass. Indeed, there was scarcely an object in the room which was not of the same smooth material; even the frame of the bed, the table, and such parts of the furniture as were not covered with thick padding. Only the rugs, the hangings, and the bedding were of other material, and these were of a texture I did not recognize.

Made suddenly aware of a tremendous appetite, I bit into one of the huge peaches, finding it of a supersweetness. Entranced at first by its flavor, I proceeded to devour it with great gusto, but before I was more than half-way through, the sickly sweetness of it suddenly palled on me and I was obliged to throw it aside. Then I tried one of the oranges, hoping for something tart; its taste, differing from the peach, pleased me at first, but pleasure soon passed to surfeit and surfeit quickly to nausea.

Suddenly through the steamy sultriness of the atmosphere there came to me an overwhelming desire to breathe the cool, clear air of the great out-of-doors. There was something depressing, almost loathsome here. A window to be opened—no, there were none. The door, then; I saw its outline at the farther end of the room. I tried the curiously fashioned glass knob, but it was evidently fastened from the outside and yielded not a tremor to my irritated pull.

I walked back to my bedside, noting for the first time, then, that on the small table near its head there was a button not unlike the electric push-buttons familiar in my own country. I pushed it and waited.

Presently the door opened and Azor appeared, followed by three others, obviously servants, and yet like himself in that they gave the impression of being at once young and yet very old. On their arms they carried several garments apparently intended for me. Azor had now cast aside his furlike apparel and had clothed himself in a loosely hung tunic of velvet or thickly woven silk.

"What's the game?" I demanded.

He did not answer, and I saw that he was puzzled by my slang expression.

"Why have we been kidnapped in this high-handed manner?" I asked, assuming an air of offended dignity which, although foreign to me, seemed more in keeping with the occasion.

"You are lucky to be alive," he returned. "Had you come at this time a year ago, before we Atlanteans had decided to make our great experiment, you would have perished before you ever reached the outlying hills."

"You talk in riddles," I exclaimed tartly. "Tell me, are Professor Lorne and his daughter and Penfield alive?"

"They are all alive and well," he replied. "All of them revived from the effects of the drug several days ago. You have been somewhat tardy. Miss Lorne and her father are confined in another part of the palace. Your companion, Penfield, is in an adjoining chamber, and you, my friend, are here."

"So I perceive," I returned, dryly. "Perhaps you are ready to give some explanation of this—this high-handed proceeding. I assure you that when my government hears of this——"

He shrugged his narrow shoulders. "You are quite beyond any help which may come from your government. Perhaps we gave you too much of the drug, but we had our orders to bring you in quite unblemished. You are a lucky man, my friend. The queen of Atlantis has come in here during your slumbers. She has seen you and approved of you."

"Thanks to her," said I with as much irony as I could muster. "And now this talk of experiments. What of it?" I confess that up until this moment I was convinced that I was dealing with a madman.

"Since I have been instructed to apprize you of all that has happened, and what is to happen," he continued, "then I may as well begin here and now. You, my young friend, are privileged to see what no other man from your world has seen before you. More than that, you are to take an active, and, if I may say it, a pleasant part in the physical rejuvenation of the people of Atlantis."

"Then this is Atlantis, after all, and Professor Lorne was right?"

"More right than he could have dreamed of. He expected to find a deserted city in the desert. Instead he has found Klifha, the crystal city, inhabited by a race of beings who have brought their civilization to a point far surpassing any which your own has attained, or ever will attain.

"Thirty centuries ago Atlantis and all the people whom you shall see here were already alive. We were then the favored of earth's nations, living in luxury on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea near the Pillar of Hercules. Warned by our gods of an impending cataclysm which should shake this great continent from end to end, we fled with our goods and chattels inland, moving as far south as this, our present abode.

"Several hundreds of years before this time, our scientists, who were then, as now, advanced far beyond those of any other peoples, discovered an elixir, the drinker of which is rendered immune from any save violent death. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, after we had already drunk of it, giving us a virtual

immortality, we discovered that although we were provided with what promised to be eternal life we had deprived ourselves of the power of procreating our race. In other words, the elixir acted with a double potency. It removed the necessity of our having children by making our race immortal, but at the same time, as a kind of recompense, it removed our power of producing children. There are no children in Atlantis. Those who drank the elixir while still young grew to adults and have so remained. All of us are centuries old. I was a patriarch when Greece was young. My hair was white when Plato was born. I have seen the seven cities of Troy, each in the heyday of its power. I heard Homer sing his way through the Anatolian cities. I knew Alexander and I saw the burning of Tyre.

"Naturally, we came, with the passing of time, to be old men so satiated with the ways of the world where nothing was new to us that we were glad to wander back to our homeland, to live out our years in peace beside the gently flowing stream of time. For centuries now, none of us has put foot beyond those northern hills. The spot where I and my band came upon you several days ago is as far north—in fact, as far away from Klifha—as any of us have been in more than nine hundred years.

"I said we are immortal to any except violent death. That is not exactly correct. Our scientists have noted during the past three centuries that the potency of the elixir which takes the place of blood in our veins is gradually weakening. Some of us are aging more under the hand of time than we should. Three of our number, the oldest in way of centuries, are on the verge of death. Years will yet pass before they perish, but we know, nevertheless, that the end for them is at hand.

"Now we have held communion with ourselves during the past fifty years as to what shall be done. The elixir is gone; we have lost the secret of its preparation but our scientists are of the opinion that they could readily produce it again should we so desire. But we are convinced that we do not care to go on longer as we have gone on. Life, when it is counted by the centuries, even with our luxury and diversion, grows heavy on our hands. We are sated esthetes, epicureans, sybarites, if you will. Our knowledge, matured by the centuries, has provided us with every pleasure. We have indulged our appetites, played to the whims of our senses until these senses are fast approaching the state where they can no longer be prodded into giving us pleasure. Our scientists say that the sense of taste and smell is gradually perishing. The odor of the common lily, the nectar of the ordinary fruit, pleases our palates no longer. In this sunny land of ours, by means of our great knowledge, we have kept pace with our dying senses by increasing the size and odors of our flowers and the sweetness of our fruits. These have been developed and increased to the last degree. We are reaching the point where our knowledge can serve us no longer. When these senses fail entirely, life will then be but an empty husk imprisoning a soul which would be happier in death."

"That is why," I broke in, "those fruits are too sweet for me. I can't eat them; they sicken me."

"Quite so," he replied. "And even at that, on the advice of our scientists, we gave you only the lesser of our fruits." He leaned over, seized a peach and bit into it. "Just as I thought. This peach, which is too sweet for you, is absolutely without taste to me. I could get as much satisfaction from a bit of grass."

"If you are so fed up with life here," said I, "why don't you go back into the world from which I come and find new adventure and interest there?"

He held up his hands in mock horror. "The gods spare us that!" he exclaimed. "Could we, who have gone so far beyond you, find anything there which could interest us? Bah, you are children where we are grown men, pigmies where we are giants. Your meanness awakens our contempt, and even your virtues are so puny that they call up in our breasts no admiration. Were it not so we would have been back among you centuries ago. Could we live on the tasteless husks which are food to you? Could we play your silly games? Could we appreciate your spineless philosophy? Could we whittle down our lives to your puny loves and pale hates? The gods forbid, I say again.

"But there is another reason, perhaps the most important of all, why we do not return. Your land is too cold. Our blood is gone; we need an even more than equatorial heat for our comfort. Even outside this land of ours in the desert where I came upon you, you were sweltering but I was cold."

"But here," said I, "it can be no warmer than the equator."

"There you are wrong again. This particular room is cooler than any other because it is to our purpose to keep you healthy and comfortable. We have arranged special apparatus for that reason, and your clothing has been chemically treated in order to aid you to stand the excessive heat and moisture which you find here. But outside your room, this city, huge as it is, is completely surrounded and under a dome of glass. The rays of the sun and the lack of cooling breezes intensify the heat to a point which is desirable to us."

"Then you are really a hothouse people?" I exclaimed.

"We might be described as such. But to get back to the point toward which I was tending when you interrupted. As I said, we are surfeited with life; we are gradually dying. Now in this case there are but two things to do; we must either rediscover the immortalizing elixir or we must rejuvenate ourselves in some other way. Revitalizing ourselves with the elixir is unthinkable, aye, abhorrent. We should simply be doing what we have done before; there would be no adventure in that, and moreover, we should be calling down upon ourselves another eternity of years during which, with our pleasure senses dead, there would be no joy left on earth for us. Facing us then there would be only suicide ——"

"But you say you are immortal—or nearly so," I interjected.

"You forget that I said we could die only by violent death," he corrected. "But having no wish to revitalize ourselves with the immortality elixir we are going to do another thing; we are going to revitalize ourselves with the blood of our captives."

"You cold-blooded villains!" I shouted, springing to my feet and striding toward him.

"Have a care," he cautioned. "I have a means of handling you against which even your burly strength can not avail. Have a care and listen to what I say. This is not, as you seem to think, a scheme for killing you, sucking you dry of your blood. In fact, quite the opposite; it is our wholehearted desire that you shall live and be healthy. By all the gods, have you not guessed it yet? It is common enough in your own world."

I was puzzled for a moment and then his meaning came to me with a rush. "You mean," I cried, "that

you expect us to unite with your people and——"

"Yes," he put in, "that's just it—your women and our men; your men and our women. We are indeed fortunate in having such likely specimens tumble into our hands. You owe your lives to your comely appearance and good health. The old professor will, of course, not go for much, but he may be valuable as a study."

And then for the first time the terrible thought crashed through—I say "crashed through," for it seemed to come to my consciousness in no other way. Constance Lorne in the hands of these loathsome, bloodless brutes!

Azor must have read my thoughts, for he interjected, "You need have no scruples on that score. We Atlanteans wish you well and shall accommodate ourselves to any religious ceremony which may be considered indispensable by you. And they are not all so old and perhaps so unattractive in appearance as I. The queen will undoubtedly choose you, and she, to say the least, is more beautiful—aye, far more beautiful—than even this woman in your own party."

"I wasn't thinking of myself," I replied, "but the professor's daughter, Miss Lorne—surely, you——"

"She has already been spoken for and promised," he snapped, a sudden strange irritation in his voice. "She is to marry one of the nobles; the highest in the land. She will either marry him—or perish in the moat. It is her choice."

"Damn you," I snarled, getting to my feet and standing over him; "I believe you had spoken for her yourself, you hoary-headed blackguard. But thank heaven there was somebody here with more power than you."

"It is so," he said, getting up and facing me, a queer flicker in his sunken eyes. "I had spoken for her and she would have been fortunate had my request been granted. As it is, now, she goes to Kreggor, beside whom, in natural beauty, I am as one of the lilies of the field."

I would have laughed at this remark had this been any laughing matter. I began to revolve the thing in my mind as I stood there. So the queen had chosen me, eh? I had found favor in her sight. Best now to play the game for a while. On my ability to fool her might depend our slim chance of escape. Very well, I would play Antony to her Cleopatra for whatever the gods should see fit to bring forth.

"Get into this clothing," Azor directed.

Seeing nothing better to do, I pulled on the tunic, which was of a thickish material and yet cool and light to the skin. Sandals of what appeared to be pure gold and a great belt studded with jewels completed the costume. When I was prepared he bade me follow him to the door, the servants bringing up the rear, for it was plain Azor did not trust me.

As the door opened, a warm blast, heavily laden with perfume, smote my nostrils. For the instant I almost staggered under the nauseating sweetness of it, but I recovered in a moment and followed him out upon the terrace. Here a strange sight met my eyes.

We were high up on a kind of platform which surrounded the palace towers. Glancing down, my eye took in a scene which at first reminded me of the pictures I had seen in my old school geography. It was an ideal landscape of the carboniferous age except that here and there were buildings of divergent size and shape, all of them shining out like faceted diamonds under the hot, yellow rays of the sun. Below us I saw other and lesser towers, all of a partly transparent material which was surely glass. These in turn dropped

away to grassy terraces, broken here and there by glistening pathways and great staircases piled like pyramids of salt against the green beyond. Obviously, these were the palace grounds and gardens. In them, towering half the height of the lowest turrets were Gargantuan trees of a kind I had never seen before, their trunks and limbs festooned gracefully with hanging moss and creepers. Here and there silvery fountains shot egret plumes of water heavenward, and now and then one caught the elusive gleam of statuary among the trees.

"That," said Azor, pointing with a gnarled finger downward, "is the palace garden. Beyond to the left is the great horticultural experimenting station which is really a city of glass within itself. Far below on the next gentle rise you can see the walls of the city houses shining through the trees."

I LOOKED and saw them, each cut in the same glistening material, which either shot the reflected rays of the sun back into our eyes or shattered them into a thousand shimmering rainbows in the streets below.

"All glass," said Azor. "Some steel, of course. You see that hemispherical structure there in the distance? That great spherical piece elevated on stilts, as it were? That is the source of all our power. We have harnessed the rays of the sun. We have a gigantic sun-glass there, more than a hundred feet in thickness. The sun's rays, striking through it, are concentrated and reflected against great metal boilers filled with water. These in turn produce steam to run our dynamos. The sun-glass turns easily and in time of day may be used as a weapon. Any enemy caught in that beam would be immediately reduced to cinders."

"You are helpless then, during the night?" said I.

"Not at all. The electrical energy generated during the day is stored in great batteries. With these we are able to hurl thunderbolts of a potentiality only slightly less than you have seen in your own heavens."

"But you spoke of using metal. What metal can withstand such heat, and how do you get it?"

"We use steel, especially treated to withstand terrific temperatures. We make it from iron in much the same way that you do, but we get our iron from the skies. By means of powerful electro-magnets we can draw meteors out of the heavens. Most of these are of pure iron. Working it up into steel without the necessity of smelting it is a simple matter."

"How is it," said I, thinking of it for the first time, "that you know so much of our world, which you have not visited in so many centuries? Why, you even speak English and ——"

"We speak all languages," he replied. "The acquisition of knowledge has been one of our diversions. We have also developed the radio and listen in on all of your petty conversations. And we have studied you and your habits through our great telescopes. Hence we were prepared to capture you as soon as we saw that you were most surely headed into our own country. But come, we have dallied here long enough."

He glanced at a strange timepiece which he pulled from his belt.

"Yes, it is now nearing the hour when you are to have your first audience with the queen. If you are wise"—he seemed to be putting a strange emphasis on his words now, peering up into my face with those feverish eyes of his—"if you are wise, you will see to it that you find favor with her. And finding it, you may be able to benefit by my friendship. It is just possible that you and I may find—may find a mutual benefit in aiding each other."

He turned then on his heel, while I followed, pondering his words: "We may find a mutual benefit in aiding each other." Had the little man some purpose in his obvious attempts at kindness to me? Constance Lorne, of course! There was disaffection here, and with disaffection I might profit. Very well, to it, then. I would play the game!

I followed him down a broad flight of stairs, turned and found myself at the end of a long, wide corridor stretching off into a magnificent vista of rich hangings, intricate mosaics and brilliant tapestries. A varicolored light was furnished by the sun striking through the high, vaulted roof, splitting into the spectrum and deluging everything in a shower of gold, red, violet and blue with half a hundred intermittent tints, so it seemed to me. There were bits of exquisite statuary here, some of it black as ebony but most of it of what I took to be white marble but Azor said was an especially treated glass. Presently we stepped out of the great corridor, down a flight of gracefully curving steps into a narrower passageway. There were tiny alcoves here, backed by colored glass. As I went along I saw someone seated in one of them, a strange figure, for it was that of a man bathed in a bloody glow from the ruby panes behind him. There was something familiar about him, and I looked a second time. And then I started forward, my hand outstretched in greeting.

It was Penfield!

"Well, what are you doing here and how are you feeling?" I cried.

He ignored my outstretched hand, gazing up at me out of black-rimmed eyes in which I saw points of strangely flickering fires. His appearance shocked me. I recoiled, appalled at the change in him, and we stood there for a moment with no word, he staring up into my face and I gazing down into his.

"Are you ill?" I demanded.

"Ill at heart," he answered. "But she is beautiful."

"You have seen Constance?" I whispered, bending nearer.

"Constance? I said nothing of Constance. I spoke of the queen—the queen of Atlantis."

"Did I not tell you?" whispered Azor in my ear. "He has seen her. Behold the result. It is her beauty."

I took Penfield by the arm but he shook me off, glaring malevolently up into my eyes. "You have not seen her yet or you, too, would speak of her as I do." Then he stretched out his hand and I felt his steel-springed fingers sinking into my arm. "Listen," said he, his breath now hot on my cheek, "Listen, Garth: if she chooses you, then by God I shall kill you."

"You are mad!" I cried, pulling away from him.

"Mad for love of her," he croaked.

"But Constance Lorne?" I protested.

"Damn Constance and damn you," he screamed. Then brushing me suddenly aside he turned and ran swiftly down the corridor. I stood there gazing after him in amazement until Azor plucked me by the arm. The little man touched his wrinkled forehead significantly.

"Reason has fled," he said, quietly. "We took him to the queen yesterday. Today he is insane."

"This is horrible."

"It is better for him. He will suffer less."

And so we went on down the corridor.

WYNONA, queen of Atlantis. Imagine a woman with a figure slightly larger than medium; hips and bust tending toward the voluptuous and a neck like the stalk of a lily on which blossomed a flower as fair as the immortal Helen. Eyes a deep blue, yet burning with that same

feverish fire I had remarked in the eyes of her subjects; nose straight and Grecian; drooping mouth surely voluptuous and certainly cruel. But if the fire in her eyes was like that of her subjects, here the resemblance ended, at least for such of them as I had seen. Her skin was white as alabaster, but lacked that sickly, puttyish hue which was in them a sure characteristic. And hers was the first face free of that fine network of wrinkles I had seen in Atlantis. Aye, she was beautiful.

We sat together in a tiny alcove in her glass-enclosed garden while birds of brilliant plumage sang about us and the water plashed softly in the fountains near by. From afar off, scarcely within earshot, came strains of soft music, weird yet strangely sweet. And yet, somehow the thing nauseated me from the beginning. Once she bent near me, and the heavy perfume from her dark hair deluged my senses so that for a moment my purpose reeled and I half reached out my hand to seize her naked arm.

But she was a woman, even in Atlantis with the mists of thirty centuries behind her. And so, being a woman, she pretended to play the game as other women have played it, and are playing and will play it until the stars grow cold. She pulled away from me coyly. In that quick moment my reeling senses snapped together and reason bolstered purpose once again. God! How humid the air! How heavy this eternal perfume! And these fountains splashing their never-ending music! And the birds! What would I not have given at that moment for the homely chatter of the humble hedge-sparrow! And a sight of Constance Lorne, pink-cheeked and yellow-haired and firm-fleshed.

The queen must have noticed a sudden wave of disgust in my face, for she turned to me and said, "You are not happy here?"

And I, fool that I was, I forgot I was there to play the game. I burst out, "No, let me go to my friends. Let me go to Constance Lorne. Take Penfield, my companion. He is mad for you already. My thoughts are elsewhere."

Too late I realized my mistake. She had just given me proof that she was very much a woman as I knew women, and yet I had been fool enough to speak my preference for another in her face. And that on the very heels of something which had been entirely different when I reached out my hand for her. Hell, as I was shortly to learn, has no fury like a woman scorned. She sprang to her feet and stood gazing down at me, her eyes blazing like twin stars in the gathering dusk.

"So that is it!" she cried, bending down until I felt her hot, perfumed breath on my forehead. "Know then, that she is not for you. By all the gods, this very night she shall go to Kreggor! He has asked and I have delayed, but I shall delay no longer. And so after that, perhaps she will live less in your dreams."

"She will never go to him!" I shouted in desperation.

"Then she shall be fed to the crocodiles in the moat," she answered, her eyes taking on new fury. "Let her choose and know that you have forced the choice."

With that she wheeled suddenly; came the swift rush of sandaled feet, and she had disappeared in an opening of the shrubbery.

I sat there sick at heart with what I had done. Dusk deepened to darkness. The far-distant music ceased. The birds fluttered through the foliage to their nocturnal perches. Only the never-ending splash of the fountains remained, and these, seeming now to have lost their music, rang against my ears like the clash of discordant cymbals. Presently I felt a hand on my shoulder, and looking up

in the gloom, saw Azor standing above me.

"You have been eavesdropping, you devil!" I snarled, though I did not know why I should have cared if he had.

"I heard it all," he replied frankly. "Now listen, I have something to say to you. You still have within your reach a chance to save this Lorne woman of yours. I had counted, at first, on your companion Penfield, but his reason will not stand the test. We shall be overheard here. The very walls have ears in Atlantis. Follow me quietly."

THERE being nothing else to do I followed Azor through the shrubbery. Here there was a narrow flight of stairs leading down to a small door, which he opened carefully to only a crack before going in. The place was apparently empty, for he pushed it wide then, and signed me to follow him. Once beyond the door I found myself in a huge room so large and broad that I could not see its farther walls through the dusk and the thick, green shrubbery. Near by were large glass cases filled with earth, in which were curious plants, most of them strangely stunted.

"This is the royal horticultural experimental chamber," began Azor. "The workers have left for the day, so we shall be unmolested. And now to begin."

He drew me by the arm across the floor to a glass case raised on a platform between two huge potted ferns. Glancing down upon it I saw through the glass several rows of tiny mushrooms or toadstools, together with bits of decayed wood on which tiny lichens were growing.

"You have bungled it badly," continued Azor as we leaned over the glass together. "And yet all is not lost. But we must act quickly because the Lorne woman is in imminent danger. The queen has held off on Kreggor's request for several days, though she has promised her to him, but I think, without doubt, she will give the order this night. In fact, I doubt not that it is already given. Kreggor, however, will try nothing until midnight or thereabouts. So we have some time for our plans to work."

Drawing closer to me, he reached within his tunic and pulled out a long, glistening dagger, the handle of which he pressed into my hand. "It is of glass," he whispered, "but quite unbreakable. You must be doubly careful, for the tip, the point, is dipped in deadly poison. Sink that but once into Kreggor's body, yes, only so much as scratch him with it, and Constance Lorne is saved."

I took the weapon from him, half fancying for the moment to plunge it into his own shriveled breast. But I remembered immediately that I should have further need of him, and so he lived.

"Listen carefully," he admonished as I hid the blade under my tunic, "Constance Lorne is in the great eastern tower; the tallest of them all and the last to the east except one. Kreggor's apartments are next west, and there is, of course, a connecting corridor between. Now there is no way for you to go to her aid from the inside of the palace, because Kreggor will have the corridor well guarded by his henchmen and by electrical paraphernalia which would mean certain death to you should you encounter it. A suspicious man is Kreggor. And so, therefore, you must scale the outer walls and enter her chamber through a door which opens into Kreggor's corridor."

"But the walls are smooth; they are glass," I objected. "A fly could not cling there."

"Do not interrupt me," he replied testily. "I have means. I have means."

He tapped the glass surface at his elbow with a nervous finger. "You see here," he continued, pointing to the fungus below, "one of the swiftest-growing and most virulent plants in Atlantis. It is a development of your own common toadstool, but owing to the peculiar atmosphere and great age of everything in which it finds root here, its growing powers have gone far beyond anything you have ever dreamed of in your own world. The specimens in this case are purposely stunted by bacteria which we have placed in there to feed upon their roots; otherwise we should soon be overrun and driven from our own abode. But now, should you, for instance, drop a spore from one of these plants in the moist earth at the foot of the eastern tower wherein your friends are confined, there would be in a very few moments a huge growth towering as high and perhaps higher than the loftiest of the towers."

He bent nearer now, the peculiar feverish fire in his eyes blazing out with renewed fervor.

"Your task is this," he continued. "It is necessary for you to scale the eastern tower wall from the grounds outside. Now I shall give you one of these seeds and you are to drop it in the soil close to the wall. You must then act quickly, for this spore will sprout almost immediately and the growth will be shoulder-high before you realize what has happened. Therefore, when you see the club-head of the plant rising out of the turf before you, hesitate not so much as a second but climb upon it. You can hold yourself in place without fear of falling by cutting holes in the thick pulp to which you can cling. Clinging there you will be carried immediately aloft as the plant pushes upward. As you pass the rotunda on the last turret, jump from the plant. Following the rotunda around to the west, you will find a door leading into the great corridor which separates the apartments of Kreggor and Constance Lorne. Conceal yourself behind the hangings. Sometime during the night Kreggor will come by alone. Then you are to strike, swiftly and surely, that there may be no outcry, for upon your silence depends your life. After that you may make your way back here as best you can, and I will conceal you until we know better what we can do."

He opened a drawer beneath the case and took out a small glass jar. Pushing his fingers through the wide mouth he seized something there and then passed it to me. It was already so dark that, so far as I could see, there was nothing in his hand. But on his admonition to look closer I saw lying on the tip of his finger a white speck of powder, a mushroom spore. Reaching up, he tore a leaf from a near-by twig, and wrapping the spore within, passed it to me.

"You'd best give me several," said I. "This one may be sterile. I shan't have time to come back for more."

"I shall give you no more," he said firmly, turning away. "As a matter of fact I am risking much in giving you even the one. The growth will develop spores immediately upon its maturity—say in half an hour; the spores will be scattered and in an hour or so the palace lawn will be thick with them. I am hoping that someone will notice the growths and give the alarm before they have gone beyond our control. Otherwise we shall be hard put to it to win back the garden from being completely overrun. I can tell you truly that there is more danger to us packed in a single one of those glass bottles than would be in a ton of your dynamite. Each bottle contains spores from all manner of virulent fungi; once these were loosed in Atlantis and hell itself could not prevail against them."

"When do we start?" I asked, coming up behind him. He had forgotten to close the drawer, and now I had a bottle of the powdery spores concealed beneath my tunic.

"In two hours from now. Return to your chamber. I shall come for you when it is time."

As I followed him back through the winding corridors I saw a figure lurking in one of the alcoves. Glancing a second time and going partly out of my way to make sure, I saw that it was Penfield. I called out to him then but he made no sign of recognition.

IT WAS perhaps an hour before midnight when my chamber door opened in almost ghostly fashion and Azor came in, his somber robes and hood under the subdued glow of the lights giving him the appearance of some huge bird of ill omen. Over his arm was a garment similar to the one which enveloped his own shriveled figure, and into this he bade me draw myself as soon as possible, pointing out that I ran less risk of being seen when clothed in black.

"You must hurry," he admonished. "I have it on good authority that Kreggor will act by midnight. He has other business to occupy him until then."

Again we hurried down the innumerable flights of stairs. Most of the lights had been extinguished in the palace at this hour, but here and there a dim globe made weird shadows among the palms and statuary which lined the corridors. Finally Azor opened a small door, and stepping to one side, pointed out into the darkness.

"Follow this pathway," said he. "It leads directly to the eastern towers. Plant your spore at the foot of the second and largest. You can't mistake it. I can not go farther, for my presence is required elsewhere and my absence would be noticed. Good luck to you, as they say in your country."

He held out a shriveled claw but I did not take it. Somehow, even then, I did not feel that I could trust him out of my sight. He was aiding me to save Constance Lorne, but only to serve his own desires. For the moment we were bound together by a common purpose. But that afforded me no delusions. Once that purpose had been served and he would use every means in his power to destroy me.

I sped out into the night along the glass pathway under the towering shrubbery and lofty palms. Here and there festoons of moss hanging down wiped me gently across the face like ghostly fingers seeking my identity. The air was sultry as usual, happily not quite so warm as during the day, but now it reeked more than ever with dampness and heavy odor. Once I slipped on the smooth glass underfoot, and my legs, shooting out from under me, plunged my body to the hips in the dripping growths which lined the pathway. Came a dull cracking as of rotten wood and then a renewed flood of odor, more sickly sweet than I have ever smelled before. Peering ahead in the gloom I saw that I had crashed into a bower of roses; the blooms, tremendous growths like cabbage, bobbed above me in silent mockery. For the first time, now, even the thrill of approaching danger left me and I felt the full thrust of a loathing which until now had stirred but faintly in my breast.

God, what a country! Nauseating sweetness; warm, clinging moisture and a night full of lusts and hatreds!

I took the path again. Something glided across my path and into the trees. It was a huge reptile, and I started back in horror but remembered then that Azor had said these were palace pets and quite harmless. Now a monster toad hopped to the

middle of the pathway and stood there glaring up at me with its basilisk eyes. Knowing the thing was harmless, and yet full of loathing, I quickened my speed and leaped high in the air, clearing its slimy, upturned head by many inches.

The breathless miasma of the great honeysuckles clinging to the wall on my left now deluged me; my senses fairly reeled under the blanketing heaviness of it. God, for a breath of clean, dry, desert air!

And then my sixth sense pricked me—the swift, unerring consciousness of impending danger. What was that? A footfall behind me? I paused. Again it came. Now the crack of a rotting bough under human foot. Now a swift patter. No toad or reptile that!

I paused; my pursuer paused also. I walked forward slowly. He did likewise. I turned and ran back. His receding footsteps sounded in my ears. And then it came to me. I was being stalked—stalked here in the dripping sultriness of the night; stalked by someone who followed close, betraying his presence with careless feet and yet delaying the attack! If it were an Atlantean, why did he not cry out and give the alarm? Surely there were enough of his compatriots close at hand within these very walls.

And yet I had no time to stalk him as he was stalking me. The precious moments flew. Azor had said there should be no delay, for danger gathered with every tick of the clock about the head of the woman in the great eastern tower. Kreggor! What sort of monster was he, Kreggor? Constance in Kreggor's arms! Push on! Push on!

I found myself muttering these words aloud in the night. I broke into a half-run, and my pursuer ran also. And then I came to a small canal over which there was an ornate glass bridge. Looking to the left I saw that the canal wound away and disappeared among the palace towers, probably to connect eventually with the city moat. By now the one behind me was nearer still; I fancied I could hear his labored breathing, and yet the night was so thick under those overhanging, moss-grown limbs that I could see nothing behind me. The opposite end of the bridge, free from the leafy roof overhead, was bathed in the wan, eery light of a waning moon. I crossed over, and on the other side found a small shrub near a statue, in the shadow of which I resolved to await the man who followed. The best I could imagine was that it must be Azor who would be trailing me, ready to cut me down as soon as I had slain his enemy, Kreggor. And so, thinking this, I made up my mind that I should kill Azor first.

As he came out of the shadows which hid the farther end of the narrow causeway I rushed out and met him beneath the moon, midway the bridge, my dagger lifted upward ready to strike him down. Muffled though he was in his midnight cloak, he was quick and lithe and in a moment we were locked together, each holding the weapon hand of the other. Then he writhed suddenly in my grasp, tore away his arm and raised it to strike. Looking upward I saw it glistening in the moonlight —a glass dagger, the very twin of my own. The movement tore the hood from his face and the moon laid its wan light across his features.

It was Colin Penfield!

I dropped my own weapon then and seized his upraised arm in both my hands. "You fool," I whispered in suppressed fury. "It is I, Garth. Hold up until I explain."

"I will kill you, Garth," he muttered, trying to wrench his hand away. "You shall never leave this place alive. I will kill you. You

were the chosen one, but when they find you here in the morning——''

His voice trailed off into a maniacal shriek of laughter that split the murky stillness about us. And then I knew he must be surely mad—mad for Wynona, queen of Atlantis!

Still, for Constance Lorne's sake I tried to reason with him as we swayed together on the brink of the canal, the murky waters below waiting only to swallow one or the other of us—or both.

Somehow then he tried to wrench himself free and we slipped on the glassy incline, he going down with me on top. His skull struck the pathway with a resounding thump, and the glass knife clattered to the ground beside us. I kicked it backward far from his reach, and breathed easier now that its deadly point no longer threatened.

I believe that blow restored his reason for the moment—but only for the moment. He sat up, looking from me to the glass parapet and then around us to the strange shadows etched by the moonlight on the walls of the palace.

''It—it was that villain, Azor,'' he mumbled. ''He set me to tracking you. Told me to kill you when you had made away with—with that Atlantean up there—Kreggor, he called him. I was to wait until you had done the job—and then—with that poisoned dagger——''

So that was it! Azor was playing both ends against the middle. How simple it all was! Afraid to kill Kreggor himself and still more afraid to kill me, the chosen one of the queen, he had planned that I should make away with Kreggor and be in my turn slain, obviously as the result of a jealous quarrel with Penfield. A solution of his problem which would entail no awkward explanations!

''Come,'' I said to Penfield. ''Get up. We have work to do tonight.''

I helped him to his feet and he stood gazing up at the moon. Then he pointed upward.

''I see her there—it is her face—Wynona—Wynona. Wait, I'm coming! I'm coming!''

I would have acted quicker had I realized his reason had fled once more. As it was, he shook me off with that madman's strength of his and sprang up on the parapet of the causeway. Stretching his arms toward the moon, he stepped, or rather threw himself over. It all came in the flash of an eye—his quick leap to the wall; my own cry of consternation; his outstretched arms—and then a splash.

There came a second splash and then a single scream. That was all. Running to the parapet, I gazed over the side; then leaped to its edge and prepared to dive. There were ghostly ripples on the oily surface, but nothing more. I waited a second to see his head reappear, but nothing broke that still, slimy surface!

And then, just as I poised for the dive, something shot out of the shadows beyond, moving swiftly toward me. For a moment I thought it was a log propelled by a push from some unseen hand beneath the bridge, or perhaps released from the ooze of the bottom by the crash of Penfield's body.

And then my limbs froze with horror. No log, that! It was a crocodile!

Now I spied another and still another, floating toward me, their lidless eyes gazing up at me with hungry expectation. The moon silvered them now until they stood out in ghastly outline against the murk about them. On the jaws of one I thought I saw a blotch. It was greenish black under the moon, but I knew that with the light of day upon it its color would be red. And so I stumbled from the parapet and staggered along the pathway, sick with the miasmatic horror of this hideous

night. And then I think that I, too, went a little mad.

I CAME now to the tower which I knew from Azor's description must be the one imprisoning Constance Lorne. The thick overgrowth from the trees again shut out the light of the moon, so I had to grope my way along the dripping walls, drawing back with horror as my hands encountered some huge, nocturnal beetle or the fat, gelatinous body of some oozing snail. Here was the second tower and the point at its base which Azor had recommended for the planting of the spore. Glancing upward, I thought I caught a gleam of light coming through the trees. It might be from the tower—it seemed too concentrated to come from the moon.

And then there drifted down from those dizzy heights above a scream—a woman's scream! Faint but unmistakable—it was the voice of Constance Lorne!

Reaching into my tunic I pulled out the folded leaf, unrolled it and brushed it into the moss and ferns at my feet, the speck of powder that was the mushroom spore. It must have taken root almost simultaneously with its touching earth, for in that very moment a great blunt head, ghostly gray in the darkness, arose beside me. Startled, even though I had been prepared by Azor, I fell back. In a moment more the thing was waist-high and I knew that I must act. Seizing the club-head of the plant, I drove my knife into its pulpy sides, hollowing out handholds and footholds with swift strikes. Another instant and I had mounted it, crouching on its massive head. For a time it wobbled drunkenly, and I was afraid my weight would snap the stem; but presently it steadied and pushed itself onward. Up—up! The limb of a tree interfered now, but I hacked a way through it, the sticky, soft bark crumbling easily under the feverish strokes of my knife. Two limbs now to hack through, and we should be free. The festoons of moss on the last, twining their slimy tendrils about my body, nearly dragged me from my perch, and I cut and slashed at them with the frenzy of a madman. We pushed upward through the last and into the moonlight.

Close at hand, quite within touch, was the ghostly wall of the palace, smooth and free of the growths that encumbered it below. From above nothing but silence now. No, by heaven, another scream and the running of feet! Almost insane with impatience I got to my knees, and, in peril of slipping from my precarious perch, gazed upward. Yes, there was a light there. Now came another scream and a man's heavy voice, crying something in the Atlantean tongue. Then a harsh snarl, the sound of a blow and coarse laughter.

Up and up I went. Now the horrifying thought struck me: suppose the plant, stunted by my weight, should not thrust high enough and I should be marooned there, helpless, in full view of the palace? Now up another ten feet. The growth was surely slackening in speed. Was it approaching its limit? The parapet was almost within reach of my hands.

Heedless of the danger of falling, I scrambled to my feet and reached upward. Yes, my hands curled over the parapet edge. Kicking my feet free of their holds I pulled myself upward and swung a leg over. My feet struck the hard glass rotunda just as another scream split the stillness. The huge growth, relieved of my weight, pushed upward like a ghost of the night.

Now another scream. There was a window on the farther bulge of the turret wall, a large oval of transparent glass. Racing to it, I peered within. What I saw there sent the blood swirling into my temples anew,

and the white wall before me turned to red.

Constance Lorne was crouching behind an overturned table at the far end of the room. In front of her with his back to me was a huge, gnomelike creature; a monstrous head on a spindling neck; great, fatty body on short spindling legs and tremendous hairy arms reaching out over the table like the suckers of a devil-fish. Azor had spoken truly. Beside this creature confronting Constance Lorne, Azor was as a lily of the field!

Even as I watched in petrified horror, he reached one of those hairy arms out to her, and his coarse laughter rang out on the air. She screamed again, and pushing the table against him, ran out from her corner. But she slipped on the edge of a thick rug and fell, and in that instant he had her. Over her his great, twining arms went, reaching and pulling here, patting there, while his head, now turned toward me, showed a face sickly white like his people but bloated beyond all resemblance to a human being. In it was the tide of lust unleashed from the bonds of thirty centuries.

I tarried no longer. Remembering Azor's directions now as through a bloody film, I ran to the left, finding there a door going into the great corridor which in turn led to Kreggor's apartments. It was dimly lighted now and—thank God!—quite deserted. To the right was another door, through which I raced headlong; then another flight of steps and now another door. This must be the one leading to her chamber. Would it be locked? From the inside, yes, but not from the outside if it were like that which led to my own.

I seized the glass knob and gave a mighty pull. It swung open, showing me the room in its entirety. Luckily Kreggor was at that moment so engrossed with his prey that he had no eye to danger. In three leaps I was across the room. Constance saw me coming and stifled a scream. He must have seen it in her eyes, however, for he dropped her suddenly and whirled about. His quickness was astonishing for one of his bulk. I saw his arm go to his tunic. If it reached there and came forth with his weapon I should be lost, for he could kill me easily, as Azor had warned. But already the force of my last bound had hurled me against him. Seeing that he was too late, his hand abandoned its quest with his tunic and, shooting upward, wrapped its long, springlike fingers about my throat. He saw my dagger then as it glistened at his breast, and with a hoarse cry of consternation tried to ward off the blow. But I had sunk it home in his shoulder, too high to be mortal as a knife-thrust, yet sure to kill him because of the venom-embedded point.

He grasped me then about the waist and with a second hoarse cry which was almost a scream hurled my body upward with his giant's strength. Doubtless he had intended dashing out my brains against the wall. Helpless in that iron grasp, I held up my forearm in a hopeless attempt to ward off the blow. But he was too late. The poison had done its work. Groaning and frothing white at the mouth he sank to the floor while I snatched away from his weakening grasp. For a moment he writhed there, emitting scream after scream until the chamber rang and rang again. And then with a last convulsion which made the great muscles in his arms stand out like whipcords he lay still.

Constance stood there, her lovely hair disheveled, her uncomprehending eyes riveted in stupefaction on the monster at her feet.

"Quick," I exclaimed. "Where is your father? We have not a moment to lose."

"In the next chamber," she cried, drawing herself together. "I know the way and the door opens from the outside."

TOGETHER we stumbled out of the room. The hall was still dim, but from somewhere deep in the distant corridors we heard shouts of alarm and the running of feet. Suddenly the great lamps above our heads burst into light, leaving not a shadow in which to hide. Part-way down the corridor there was another door which I seized and threw open. Just beyond the threshold, fully as pale as those bloodless Atlanteans, was Professor Lorne.

"Follow us," I shouted. "They are coming already."

In the dim distance of the corridor I saw figures moving toward us. Then another set of lights above our heads leaped into life and we stood revealed to the entire hall. There was surely no escape in that direction. We were trapped in the tower!

And then I remembered that great, ghostly plant which stood out beside the rotunda. Here was the road I had come—would it not bear us away as well? Could I not hack footholds in the stem of the thing, thus providing us with a crude ladder to the earth?

Motioning them to follow me, I rushed out upon the rotunda. The great white stalk stood there as I had left it a few minutes before, its club-head only a few feet above the parapet where growth had ceased. The stem was more than I could reach around with both arms, but I threw myself about it and with my dagger began cutting a series of footholds and handholds in the woody pulp.

"Follow me down," I directed.

It was a test of courage for any man, let alone a woman. We were high in the air; a fall at that height would mean almost certain death, for the foliage which spread between us and the ground, soft as it was, could hardly be expected to break the fall of a hurtling body. And yet without a moment's hesitation Constance Lorne reached out her hands, fitted her feet into the holes and began to descend. The professor came just behind her.

By this time lights were gleaming here and there about the palace. There was an increasing chorus of shouts, the ringing of a great bell and then running of feet. In a moment Kreggor's henchmen would be in the tower. There, with the body of their master to tell the tale, it would not be long before they scattered to find us. It could be but a few minutes at most before some one of them would spy us, and we were helpless to defend ourselves. Any object tossed from the parapet above would brush us like so many flies from the stalk of our friendly plant.

But still they did not come, doubtless believing we had hidden ourselves behind some of the corridor hangings above. Minutes passed while the din behind the palace walls increased and more windows leaped into life, sending long pencils of light into the gloom of the gardens below.

I was beginning to breathe easier. I had cut my way down to the higher of the tree limbs through which I had bored my way on the upward journey. Then a strange thing happened. Presumably the weight and motion of our bodies on the stalk of the toadstool had shaken the ripening spores loose from their place under the head, and now they were falling like fine rain to the ground below. Five minutes later, just as I was helping Constance to climb to a point where she could share my perch on the tree limb, two great, grayish heads thrust their way through the foliage. In a moment they were popping up all about us; some of them seemed almost alive in the uncanny way they nosed about, pushing us

hither and yon until I feared we should be shaken to the ground. These of course would develop spores in their turn, and in a very short time the whole palace grounds would be a forest of these great stalks. With that, new hope arose in my breast. Perhaps in the ensuing confusion we could conceal ourselves until some other means of escape offered itself.

Presently, however, as we crouched there I heard a shout above our heads, and glancing up I saw a row of grotesque faces peering over the parapet. They had seen us! Another shout and the faces disappeared. I seized Constance by the hand and bade her follow me along the tree limb. Our hiding place had been discovered, but perhaps we had yet time to reach the ground and be off.

After an eternity, as it seemed to me, of wild scrambling we reached the trunk of the tree and I swung Constance down, followed by the professor. Here the moss and creepers aided us and I began to have hopes we should yet reach the ground unseen. Trembling with expectation I reached the last limb; below us lay the ground, too far to jump and yet within reach if we aided ourselves by these twining creepers. I seized one, had thrown my leg about it and was about to swing off, when there came a shout from the palace windows.

Too late! Several of the terrace doors opened and in the wink of an eye they were pouring into the grounds. A moment later and they had gathered beneath us, cutting off all hope of escape. We were captured!

Why I thought of it at that moment is more than I shall ever know. Perhaps the sight of those huge growths leaping into life all about us, and the obvious consternation of the Atlanteans at the spread of the toadstools, brought back the words of Azor: "The spores in a single bottle are more dangerous to us than a ton of dynamite."

And I had a bottle there in my tunic. Mixed fungi, he had called them. Not all toadstools, apparently. Snatching the bottle out, I pulled off the cap and hurled the contents out upon the moist air.

For a moment the men below did not seem to grasp the significance of my action. Some of them even started to pull themselves into the tree, bent on our capture, while others turned their attention to the toadstools. But they were quick to realize what had happened, for presently there came a cry of surprize, followed by a shriek of alarm.

In a second all was bedlam and struggle below us. I had seen the swiftly pushing and apparently harmless toadstools, but here there was something different—horribly different. Like Jason I had sown the dragon's teeth, and a thousand, yes, a million warriors were springing full-panoplied from the earth. Great whitish monsters seemed literally to leap into the air about us. In the flash of an eye those hideous growths had fastened themselves upon the bodies of the Atlanteans, wrapping their million tendrils about them, bearing them by sheer weight to earth, where the horrible struggle continued, shielded mercifully from our eyes by the intervening darkness.

All was confusion about us now. The great fungi puffed up here and there until the whole grounds seemed to rise and swell in a yeasty mass toward our tree limb. In this mass dark figures struggled and fought for life, only to disappear one by one as though dragged from the surface by unseen hands to smother in the pulpy mass below. There were shrieks, cries, and groans. Several of the Atlanteans at the very edge of the spreading gray carpet pulled themselves loose and started to run away,

only to have some great fungus, leaping seemingly from nowhere, land upon their shoulders and drag them down. Presently the whole grounds as far as I could see were a seething, swaying mass of gray. The spores must have begun to ripen and fly by that time, for I saw some of the pulpy mass leap to the rotundas and windows of the palace, where it soon passed within, to judge from the pandemonium from those trapped behind the walls.

I began to realize, then, that these things were actually ripening in the air! Soon nothing would be safe—even we should be attacked! I wondered, then, why we had not been attacked already. The solution of this I was shortly to learn, for at that moment some poor wretch at the very foot of our tree managed to pull himself free and had dragged himself almost to our feet before I realized what had happened. I had not the heart to kill him or thrust him back and was debating with myself what course to take when the problem was solved without my interference.

One of those spores had apparently sprouted in his clothing, for all at once a pulpy, writhing grayish matter sprang into being about his neck. Never shall I forget the look of horror in the man's eyes as the slimy stuff, increasing and multiplying with each second, gradually broke his hold on the creepers about him and dragged him down to his death. He landed with a heavy thump, and vanished from view with a last despairing scream.

There were fungi all about us on the tree limb now, yet though it trailed over my feet and gathered about my knees I still felt that I had freedom of movement. Why did not it attack us as it attacked the Atlanteans?

"Are we to die the same way?" I asked, turning to Professor Lorne.

"I do not think so," he replied calmly. "We should have been attacked long before this if we were not immune."

"Immune?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, immune. The Atlanteans fall easy prey to these fungi because of the decadent nature of their bodies. Back in our own country it is comparatively rare to see fungi form upon any organic matter which is young and vigorous. You see toadstools and lichens and other forms of fungi preying upon old, damp or rotting material, but rarely on the young and growing. We—even I—as contrasted with the Atlanteans are young and vigorous. Our flesh and organs are sound and healthy. This health and soundness is due to blood and youth. These people have neither. Life is preserved in them by some fluid other than blood. Their bodies are like damp, sodden tree-trunks, and as such they fall easy prey to these flying spores."

"Then they might be described as a decaying people," I ventured.

"It is not a bad adjective. But come, I think we had best be moving on out of here. We are safe for the moment, but if these fungi keep on spreading we shall soon be engulfed. We could be quickly smothered in the stuff even though it could not seize and suck at our bodies, as it appears to be doing with those dying wretches below."

It was indeed true that this new danger threatened us. Obviously, we must be out of here as soon as possible. Glancing about me I noticed that a huge limb growing from the opposite side of the tree led out over the parapet of a near-by canal. As yet only small bits of fungus had formed on the parapet's mossy surface, though puffs of the stuff were spreading over the ground on either side. To gain the canal parapet by means of the tree limb would be the work of a few minutes.

I ran out on the limb, bidding them follow. Luckily our combined weight as we approached the end bent it downward so that the task of getting from the tree to the parapet was a simple one. Once there, the road between the canal on one side and the puffing, yeasty mass of fungi on the other lay free and open.

"The fungus has not yet come thus far," observed the professor as we reached the end of the boulevards leading up into the city, "but I fear, at its present rate of advance, it will soon overrun the entire area. Atlantis is surely, surely doomed. The Atlanteans are evidently panic-stricken. No concerted effort can be made, in such confusion, to check these growths."

We started down the nearest of the palm-banked avenues, one which, to all appearances, seemed to lead toward the outskirts of the city. Once across the moat and into the desert, we should be safe. Back of us the hideous bedlam from the palace grew fainter and fainter, but now and then from the houses about us we heard cries of alarm. Then, for the first time since we had left the castle grounds, we saw a group of Atlanteans turn out of a side street and run down the avenue ahead of us. They, too, were bent for the bridges and the desert.

And then, while we looked on, a horrible thing happened. The air about us must have been filled with these invisible flying spores, for suddenly on the shoulders and about the legs of the flying group ahead there sprang into being great puffs of grayish-white fungi. In less than ten seconds each of the helpless wretches was rolling about the roadway, screaming and tearing with frantic fingers at this terrible enemy. Even before we had reached them they were entirely enveloped and their struggles had all but ceased.

"Just as I feared," gasped the professor, "the air of Atlantis is now alive with spores, and these hapless wretches will carry the fungi to every part of the city. The very bridges are likely to be packed high with the stuff before we can reach them, cutting off all escape by that means."

By this time the eery light of coming dawn had suffused the street. Here and there we saw some struggling gray mass beside the roadway, but we knew now too well what it was to give it more than a passing glance. These grew thicker and thicker as we went on, but here most of them lay still, which meant they had been attacked on their rush for the city bridges long before. That explained, perhaps, why we had seen so few of the Atlanteans running in the streets. Doubtless most of them, at the start of the outbreak, had made a dash for the bridges only to be dragged down long before they reached them.

Presently the professor bade us stop. "It is no use to go farther in this direction," said he. "See, that is undoubtedly a bridge in the distance, but these people have been caught there, and now there is no way for us to get through that seething mass. We should only be smothered."

It was true! Gazing ahead in the gray light of dawn I saw a huge trembling wall ahead of us, higher than the surrounding houses. It was the fungus, feeding on the Atlanteans who had sought escape at the bridges. To try to push our way through that seething, writhing mass would mean a terrible death by suffocation!

"No doubt every bridge leading from the city is in the same condition," said Professor Lorne. "Perhaps we might be able to swim the moat at some spot between."

"Impossible," said I. "The moat is alive with crocodiles. These At-

lanteans have surely signed their own death warrant.''

And then I told them further what had happened to Penfield. I had whispered to Constance before how Penfield had perished, and from time to time I had seen tears in her eyes; but now, with a moment's breathing space, she began to cry.

The professor touched his head significantly when I had told him more in detail. ''Penfield had insanity in his family,'' he whispered to me as we were hurrying back along the way we had come.

And so in this manner Colin Penfield passed out of our lives forever.

By this time the streets were clearly outlined in the first golden flush of dawn. There were no longer any living Atlanteans to be seen, and the fungus, as if still unsatiated, had begun to spread into the trees and shrubbery which lined the avenues. These, already covered from trunk to leaf, were like giant puff-balls raised against the sky. Tendrils of the stuff began to make their way across the streets, and these, coiling about our feet, made walking extremely difficult. Surely something must be done erelong or we should be trapped in some corner and overcome.

But what could we do? Every avenue was now a seething mass of gray. Every bridge leading out of Atlantis would surely be blocked. The moat was out of the question. A matter of a few hours and we, too, would be face to face with death. Indeed we were that already.

THE morning sun rose blood-red over the housetops, revealing new horrors with every blazing shaft. The city of glass had now become one vast, silent sepulcher wherein the only thing that lived, aside from us, was death itself.

Despair had seized upon my own heart when suddenly there loomed over the housetops before us a Gargantuan three-legged structure supporting a huge hemisphere of glass. It was the Atlantean sun-glass which Azor had pointed out to me from the terraces of the palace.

Professor Lorne grasped the possibility quicker than I.

''By Jove,'' he cried suddenly, ''the sun-glass! We have the means here of burning our way out of this accursed city!''

He began to run once more, and we after him. Shortly we found ourselves in a large open square with the great glistening crystal over our heads. There was a small steel cupola just below and to the right of the glass. This, obviously, was the structure which housed the apparatus for directing the ray. Another few seconds and we had swarmed up a narrow steel ladder, finding ourselves in a small steel box with a maze of wheels and levers on the wall. The professor seized upon these and began twisting them this way and that, his eyes glued to a large mirror before him, which, as I could now see, reflected the movements of the great lens above. If the source of electrical power, stored for night use, was still intact, we should have no difficulty in shifting the brilliant beam of light which now rested on the base of the steel boilers across the square.

The lens was moving. Power was still intact. Manipulating the levers for several minutes, the professor worked out their meaning, pointing out in excited tones, meanwhile, that the apparatus did not differ so greatly from that of the great telescope with which he was familiar at the university. Now he shot the great beam for the first time into the massed fungi in the streets below us. For a moment there was dead silence, and I thought the cursed growths must be immune from heat. Presently, however, there came a slight hiss-

(Continued on page 426)

The BLOOD-FLOWER

by SEABURY QUINN

"To your kennel, hound of hell! I, Jules de Grandin, command it!"

"*ALLO,*" Jules de Grandin seized the receiver from the office telephone before the echo of the tinkling bell had ceased, "who is it, please? But of course, *Mademoiselle,* you may speak with Dr. Trowbridge." He passed the instrument to me and busied himself with a third unsuccessful attempt to ignite the evil-smelling French cigarette with which he insisted on fumigating the room.

"Yes?" I queried, placing the receiver to my ear.

"This is Miss Ostrander, Dr. Trowbridge," a well modulated voice informed me. "Mrs. Evander's nurse, you know."

"Yes?" I repeated, a little sharply, annoyed at being called by an ordinary case after an onerous day. "What is it?"

"I—I don't quite know, sir." She laughed the short, semi-hysterical laugh of an embarrassed woman. "She's acting very queerly. She—she's—oh, my, there it goes again, sir! Please come over right away; I'm afraid she's becoming delirious!" And with that she hung up, leaving me in a state of astounded impatience.

"Confound the woman!" I scolded as I prepared to slip into my overcoat. "Why couldn't she have hung on thirty seconds more and told me what the matter was?"

"Eh, what is it, my friend?" de Grandin gave up his attempt to make the cigarette burn and regarded me with one of his fixed, unwinking stares. "You are puzzled, you are in trouble; can I assist you?"

"Perhaps," I replied. "There's a patient of mine, a Mrs. Evander, who's been suffering from a threatened leukemia—I've administered Fowler's solution and arsenic trioxid and given her bed-rest treatment for the past week. It looked as if we had the situation pretty well in hand, but——" I repeated Miss Ostrander's message.

"Ah?" he murmured, musingly. "'There it goes again,' she did say? What, I wonder, was 'it'; a cough, a convulsion, or—who can say? Let us hasten, my friend. *Parbleu,* she does intrigue me, that Mademoiselle Ostrander with her so cryptic 'There it goes again'!"

LIGHTS were gleaming through the storm from the windows of the Evander house as we came to a stop before its wide veranda. A colored servant, half clothed and badly frightened, let us in and ushered us on tiptoe to the upper story chamber where the mistress of the establishment lay sick.

"What's wrong?" I demanded as I entered the sickroom, de Grandin at my heels.

A glance at the patient reassured me. She lay back on a little pile of infant pillows, her pretty blond hair trickling in stray rivulets of gold from the confines of her lace sleeping cap, her hands, almost as white as the linen itself, spread restfully on the Madeira counterpane.

"Humph!" I exclaimed, turning angrily to Miss Ostrander. "Is this what you called me out in the rain to see?"

The nurse raised a forefinger quickly to her lips and motioned toward the hall with her eyes. "Doctor," she said in a whisper when we stood outside the sickroom door, "I know you'll think me silly, but—but it was positively ghastly!"

"*Tiens, Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin cut in, "I pray you be more explicit: first you tell Friend Trowbridge that something—we know not what—goes again, now you do inform us that something is ghastly. *Pardieu,* you have my sheep—*non, non,* how do you say?—my goat!"

In spite of herself the girl laughed at the tragic face he turned to her, but she recovered her gravity quickly.

"Last night," she went on, still in a whisper, "and the night before, just at 12, a dog howled somewhere in the neighborhood. I couldn't place the sound, but it was one of those long, quavering howls, almost human. Positively, you might have mistaken it for the cry of a little child in pain, at first."

De Grandin tweaked first one, then the other end of his trimly waxed blond mustache. "And it was the sleepless dog's lament which went again, and which was so ghastly, *Mademoiselle?*" he inquired solicitously.

"No!" the nurse exploded with suppressed vehemence and heightened color. "It was Mrs. Evander, sir. Night before last, when the beast began baying, she stirred in her sleep —turned restlessly for a moment, then went back to sleep. When it howled the second time, a little nearer the house, she half sat up, and made a queer little growling noise in her throat. Then she slept. Last night the animal was howling louder and longer, and Mrs. Evander seemed more restless and made odd noises more distinctly. I thought the dog was annoying her, or that she might be having a nightmare, so I got her a drink of water; but when I tried to give it to her, *she snarled at me!*"

"*Eh bien,* but this is of interest," de Grandin commented. "She did snarl at you, you say?"

"Yes, sir. She didn't wake up when I touched her on the shoulder; just turned her head toward me and showed her teeth and growled. Growled like a bad-tempered dog."

"Yes? And then?"

"Tonight the dog began howling a few minutes earlier, five or ten minutes before midnight, perhaps, and it seemed to me his voice was much stronger. Mrs. Evander had the same reaction she had the other two nights at first, but suddenly she sat bolt-upright in bed, rolled her head

from side to side, and drew back her lips and growled, then she began snapping at the air, like a dog annoyed by a fly. I did my best to quiet her, but I didn't like to go too near—I was afraid, really—and all at once the dog began howling again, right in the next yard, it seemed, and Mrs. Evander threw back her bedclothes, knelt up in bed *and answered him!*"

"Answered him?" I echoed in stupefaction.

"Yes, doctor, she threw back her head and howled—long, quavering howls, just like his. At first they were low, but they grew louder and higher till the servants heard them, and James, the butler, came to the door to see what the matter was. Poor fellow, he was nearly scared out of his wits when he saw her."

"And then——?" I began.

"Then I called you. Right while I was talking to you, the dog began baying again, and Mrs. Evander answered him. That was what I meant" — she turned to de Grandin—"when I said, 'There it goes again.' I had to hang up before I could explain to you, Dr. Trowbridge, for she had started to crawl out of bed toward the window, and I had to run and stop her."

"But why didn't you tell me this yesterday, or this afternoon when I was here?" I demanded.

"I didn't like to, sir," she defended. "It all seemed so crazy, so utterly impossible, especially in the daytime, that I was afraid you'd think I'd been asleep on duty and dreamed it all; but now that James has seen it, too——"

Outside in the rain-drenched night there suddenly rose a wail, long-drawn, pulsating, doleful as the cry of an abandoned soul. "*O-o-o—o-o-o-o—o-o-o—o-o-o-o!*" it rose and fell, quavered and almost died away, then resurged with increased force. "*O-o-o—o-o-o-o—o-o-o—o-o-o-o!*"

"Hear it?" the nurse cried, her voice thin-edged with excitement and fear.

Again, "*O-o-o—o-o-o-o—o-o-o—o-o-o-o!*" like the echo of the howls outside came an answering cry from the sickroom beyond the door.

Miss Ostrander dashed into the room, de Grandin and I close behind her.

The dainty white counterpane had been thrown back, Mrs. Evander, clad only in her Georgette nightrobe and bed-cap, had crossed the floor to the window and flung up the sash. Already the wind-whipped rain was beating in upon her as she leaned across the sill, one pink sole toward us, one little white foot on the window-ledge, preparatory to jumping.

"*Mon Dieu,* seize her!" de Grandin shrieked, and, matching command with performance, leaped across the room, grasped her shoulders in his small, strong hands, and bore her backward as she flexed the muscles of her legs to hurl herself into the yard below.

For a moment she fought like a tigress, snarling, scratching, even snapping at us with her teeth, but Miss Ostrander and I overbore her and thrust her into bed, drawing the covers over her and holding them down like a strait-jacket against her furious struggles.

De Grandin leaned across the window-sill, peering out into the stormy darkness. "Aroint thee, accursed of God!" I heard him shout into the wind as he drew the sash down, snapped the catch fast and turned again to the room.

"Ah?" he approached the struggling patient and bent over her, staring intently. "A grain and a half of morphine in her arm, if you please, Friend Trowbridge. The dose is heavy for a non-addict, but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it is *necessaire* that she sleep, this poor one. So! That is better.

"*Mademoiselle,*" he regarded Miss Ostrander with his wide-eyed stare, "I do not think she will be thus disturbed in the day, but I most strongly urge that hereafter you administer a dose of one-half grain of codein dissolved in eighty parts of water each night not later than half-past 10. Dr. Trowbridge will write the prescription.

"Friend Trowbridge," he interrupted himself, "where, if at all, is *Madame's* husband, Monsieur Evander?"

"He's gone to Atlanta on a business trip," Miss Ostrander supplied. "We expect him back tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? *Zut,* that is too bad!" de Grandin exclaimed. "*Eh bien,* with you Americans it is always the business. Business before pleasure, business before happiness; *cordieu,* business before the safety of those you love!

"*Mademoiselle,* you will please keep in touch with Dr. Trowbridge and me at all times, and when that Monsieur Evander does return from his business trip, please tell him that we desire to see him soon—at once, right away, immediately.

"Come, Friend Trowbridge—*bonne nuit, Mademoiselle.*"

"I SAY, Dr. Trowbridge," Niles Evander flung angrily into my consulting room, "what's the idea of keeping my wife doped like this? Here I just got back from a trip to the South last night and rushed out to the house to see her before she went to sleep, and that dam' nurse said she'd given her a sleepin' powder and couldn't waken her. I don't like it, I tell you, and I won't have it! I told the nurse that if she gave her any dope tonight she was through, and that goes for you, too!" He glared defiantly at me.

De Grandin, sunk in the depths of a great chair with a copy of de Gobineau's melancholy *Lovers of Kanda-har,* glanced up sharply, then consulted the watch strapped to his wrist. "It is a quarter of 11," he announced apropos of nothing, laying down the elegant blue-and-gold volume and rising from his seat.

Evander turned on him, eyes ablaze. "You're Dr. de Grandin," he accused. "I've heard of you from the nurse. It was you persuaded Trowbridge to dope my wife —buttin' in on a case that didn't concern you. I know all about you," he went on furiously as the Frenchman gave him a cold stare. "You're some sort of charlatan from Paris, a dabbler in criminology and spiritualism and that sort of rot. Well, sir, I want to warn you to keep your hands off my wife. American doctors and American methods are good enough for me!"

"Your patriotism is most admirable, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin murmured with a suspicious mildness. "If you——"

The jangle of the telephone bell cut through his words. "Yes?" he asked sharply, raising the receiver, but keeping his cold eyes fixed on Evander's face. "Yes, Mademoiselle Ostrander, this is—*grand Dieu!* What? how long? Eh, do you say so? *Dix million diables!* But of course, we come, we hasten,—*morbleu,* but we shall fly.

"Gentlemen," he hung up the receiver, then turned to us, inclining his shoulders ceremoniously to each of us in turn, his gaze as expressionless as the eyes of a graven image, "that was Mademoiselle Ostrander on the 'phone. Madame Evander is gone—disappeared."

"Gone? Disappeared?" Evander echoed stupidly, looking helplessly from de Grandin to me and back again. He slumped down in the nearest chair, gazing straight before him unseeingly. "Great God!" he murmured.

"Precisely, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin agreed in an even, emotionless voice. "That is exactly what I said. Meantime"—he gave me a significant glance—"let us go, *cher* Trowbridge. I doubt not that Mademoiselle Ostrander will have much of interest to relate.

"*Monsieur*"—his eyes and voice again became cold, hard, stonily expressionless—"if you can so far discommode yourself as to travel in the company of one whose nationality and methods you disapprove, I suggest you accompany us."

Niles Evander rose like a sleepwalker and followed us to my waiting car.

THE previous day's rain had turned to snow with a shifting of the wind to the northeast, and we made slow progress through the suburban roads. It was nearly midnight when we trooped up the steps to the Evander porch and pushed vigorously at the bell-button.

"Yes, sir," Miss Ostrander replied to my question, "Mr. Evander came home last night and positively forbade my giving Mrs. Evander any more codein. I told him you wanted to see him right away, and that Dr. de Grandin had ordered the narcotic, but he said——"

"Forbear, if you please, *Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin interrupted. "Monsieur Evander has already been at pains to say as much—and more—to us in person. Now, when did *Madame* disappear, if you please?"

"I'd already given her her medicine last night," the nurse took up her story at the point of interruption, "so there was no need of calling you to tell you of Mr. Evander's orders. I thought perhaps I could avoid any unpleasantness by pretending to obey him and giving her the codein on the sly this evening, but about 9 o'clock he came into the sick-room and snatched up the box of powders and put them in his pocket. Then he said he was going to drive over to have it out with you. I tried to telephone you about it, but the storm had put the wires out of commission, and I've been trying to get a message through ever since."

"And the dog, *Mademoiselle,* the animal who did howl outside the window, has he been active?"

"Yes! Last night he screamed and howled so I was frightened. Positively, it seemed as though he were trying to jump up from the ground to the window. Mrs. Evander slept through it all, though, thanks to the drug."

"And tonight?" de Grandin prompted.

"Tonight!" The nurse shuddered. "The howling began about half-past 9, just a few minutes after Mr. Evander left for the city. Mrs. Evander was terrible. She seemed like a woman possessed. I fought and struggled with her, but nothing I could do had the slightest effect. She was savage as a maniac. I called James to help me hold her in bed once, and then, for a while, she lay quietly, for the thing outside seemed to have left.

"Some time later the howling began again, louder and more furious, and Mrs. Evander was twice as hard to manage. She fought and bit so that I was beginning to lose control of her, and I screamed for James again. He must have been somewere down-stairs, though, for he didn't hear my call. I ran out into the hall and leaned over the balustrade to call again, and when I ran back—I wasn't out there more than a minute—the window was up and Mrs. Evander was gone."

"And didn't you do anything?—didn't you look for her?" Evander cut in passionately.

"Yes, sir. James and I ran outside and called and searched all through the grounds, but we couldn't find a

trace of her. The wind is blowing so and the snow falling so rapidly, any tracks she might have made would have been wiped out almost immediately.''

De Grandin took his little pointed chin between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand and bowed his head in silent meditation. ''Horns of the devil!'' I heard him mutter to himself. ''This is queer—those cries, that delirium, that attempted flight, now this disappearance. *Pardieu*, the trail seems clear. But why? *Mille cochons*, why?''

''See here,'' Evander broke in frantically, ''can't you do something? Call the police, call the neighbors, call——''

''*Monsieur*,'' de Grandin interrupted in a frigid voice, ''may I inquire your vocation?''

''Eh?'' Evander was taken aback. ''Why—er—I'm an engineer.''

''Precisely, exactly. Dr. Trowbridge and I are medical men. We do not attempt to build bridges or sink tunnels. We should make sorry work of it. You, *Monsieur*, have already once tried your hand at medicine by forbidding the administration of a drug we considered necessary. Your results were most deplorable. Kindly permit us to follow our profession in our own way. The thing we most of all do not desire in this case is the police force. Later, perhaps. Now, it would be more than ruinous.''

''But——''

''There are no buts, *Monsieur*. It is my belief that your wife, Madame Evander, is in no immediate danger. However, Dr. Trowbridge and I shall institute such search as may be practicable, and do you meantime keep in such communication with us as the storm will permit.'' He bowed formally. ''A very good night to you, *Monsieur*.''

Miss Ostrander looked at him questioningly. ''Shall I go with you, doctor?'' she asked.

''*Mais non*,'' he replied. ''You will please remain here, *ma nourrice*, and attend the homecoming of Madame Evander.''

''Then you think she will return?''

''Most doubtlessly. Unless I am more badly mistaken than I think I am, she will be back to you before another day.''

''Say,'' Evander, almost beside himself, burst out, ''what makes you so cock-sure she'll be back? Good Lord, man, do you realize she's out in this howling blizzard with only her night-clothes on?''

''Perfectly. But I do declare she will return.''

''But you've nothing to base your absurd——''

''*Monsieur!*'' de Grandin's sharp, whiplike reply cut in. ''Me, I am Jules de Grandin. When I say she will return, I mean she will return. I do not make mistakes.''

''WHERE shall we begin the search?'' I asked as we entered my car.

He settled himself snugly in the cushions and lighted a cigarette. ''We need not search, *cher ami*,'' he replied. ''She will return of her own free will and accord.''

''But, man,'' I argued, ''Evander was right; she's out in this storm with nothing but a Georgette nightdress on.''

''I doubt it,'' he answered casually.

''You doubt it? Why——?''

''Unless the almost unmistakable signs fail, my friend, this Madame Evander, thanks to her husband's pig-ignorance, is this moment clothed in fur.''

''Fur?'' I echoed.

''Perfectly. Come, my friend, tread upon the gas. Let us snatch what sleep we can tonight. Tomorrow—*eh bien*, tomorrow is another day.''

HE WAS up and waiting for me as I entered the office next morning. "Tell me, Friend Trowbridge," he demanded, "this Madame Evander's leukemia, upon what did you base your diagnosis?"

"Well," I replied, referring to my clinical cards, "a physical examination showed the axillary glands slightly enlarged, the red corpuscles reduced to little more than a million to the count, the white cells stood at about four hundred thousand, and the patient complained of weakness, drowsiness and a general feeling of malaise."

"U'm?" he commented non-committally. "That could easily be so. Yes; such signs would undoubtlessly be shown. Now——" The telephone bell broke off his remarks half uttered.

"Ah?" his little blue eyes snapped triumphantly as he listened to the voice on the wire. "I did think so. But yes; right away, at once, immediately.

"Trowbridge, my old one, she has returned. That was Mademoiselle Ostrander informing me of Madame Evander's reappearance. Let us hasten. There is much I would do this day."

"AFTER you went last night," Miss Ostrander told us, "I lay down on the chaise longue in the bedroom and tried to sleep. I suppose I must have napped by fits and starts, but it seemed to me I could hear the faint howling of dogs, sometimes mingled with yelps and cries, all through the night. This morning, just after 6 o'clock, I got up to prepare myself a piece of toast and a cup of tea before the servants were stirring, and as I came down-stairs I found Mrs. Evander lying on the rug in the front hall."

She paused a moment, and her color mounted slightly as she went on. "She was lying on that gray wolfskin rug before the fireplace, sir, and was quite nude. Her sleeping cap and nightgown were crumpled up on the floor beside her."

"Ah?" de Grandin commented. "And——?"

"I got her to her feet and helped her up-stairs, where I dressed her for bed and tucked her in. She didn't seem to show any evil effects from being out in the storm. Indeed, she seems much better this morning, and is sleeping so soundly I could hardly wake her for breakfast, and when I did, she wouldn't eat. Just went back to sleep."

"Ah?" de Grandin repeated. "And you bathed her, *Mademoiselle,* before she was put to bed?"

The girl looked slightly startled. "No sir, not entirely; but I did wash her hands. They were discolored, especially about the fingertips, with some red substance, almost as if she had been scratching something, and gotten blood under her nails."

"*Parbleu!*" the Frenchman exploded. "I did know it, Friend Trowbridge. Jules de Grandin, he is never mistaken.

"*Mademoiselle,*" he turned feverishly to the nurse, "did you, by any happy chance, save the water in which you laved Madame Evander's hands?"

"Why, no, I didn't, but—oh, I see—yes, I think perhaps some of the stain may be on the washcloth and the orange stick I cleaned her nails with. I really had quite a time cleaning them, too."

"*Bien, très bien!*" he ejaculated. "Let us have these cloths, these sticks, at once, please. Trowbridge, do you withdraw some blood from *Madame's* arm for a test, then we must hasten to the laboratory. *Cordieu,* I burn with impatience!"

An hour later we faced each other in the office. "I can't understand it," I confessed. "By all the canons of the profession, Mrs. Evander

ought to be dead after last night's experience, but there's no doubt she's better. Her pulse was firmer, her temperature right, and her blood count practically normal today."

"Me, I understand perfectly, up to a point," he replied. "Beyond that, all is dark as the cave of Erebus. Behold, I have tested the stains from *Madame's* fingers. They are—what do you think?"

"Blood?" I hazarded.

"*Parbleu*, yes; but not of humanity. *Mais non*, they are blood of a dog, my friend."

"Of a dog?"

"Perfectly. I, myself, did greatly fear they might prove human, but *grâce à Dieu*, they are not. Now, if you will excuse, I go to make certain investigations, and will meet you at the *maison* Evander this evening. Come prepared to be surprized, my friend. *Pardieu*, I shall be surprized if I do not astonish myself!"

FOUR of us, de Grandin, Miss Ostrander, Niles Evander and I, sat in the dimly lighted room, looking alternately toward the bed where the mistress of the house lay in a drugged sleep, into the still-burning fire of coals in the fireplace grate, and at each other's faces. Three of us were puzzled almost to the point of hysteria, and de Grandin seemed on pins and needles with excitement and expectation. Occasionally he would rise and walk to the bed with that quick, soundless tread of his which always made me think of a cat. Again he would dart into the hall, nervously light a cigarette, draw a few quick puffs from it, then glide noiselessly into the sickroom once more. None of us spoke above a whisper, and our conversation was limited to inconsequential things. Throughout our group there was the tense expectancy and solemn, taut-nerved air of medical witnesses in the prison death chamber awaiting the advent of the condemned.

Subconsciously, I think, we all realized what we waited for, but my nerves nearly snapped when it came.

With the suddenness of a shot, unheralded by any preliminary, the wild, vibrating howl of a beast sounded beneath the sickroom window, its sharp, poignant wail seeming to split the frigid, moonlit air of the night. "*O-o-o—o-o-o-o—o-o-o—o-o-o-o!*" it rose against the winter stillness, diminished to a moan of heart-rending melancholy, then suddenly crescendoed upward, from a moan to a wail, from a wail to a howl, despairing, passionate, longing as the lament of a damned spirit, wild and fierce as the rallying call of the fiends of hell.

"Oh!" Miss Ostrander exclaimed involuntarily.

"Let be!" Jules de Grandin ordered tensely, his whisper seeming to carry more because of its sharpness than from any actual sound it made.

"*O-o-o—o-o-o-o—o-o-o—o-o-o-o!*" again the cry shuddered through the air, again it rose to a pitch of intolerable shrillness and evil, then died away, and, as we sat stone-still in the shadowy chamber, a new sound, a sinister, scraping sound, intensified by the ice-hard coldness of the night, came to us. Someone, some *thing*, was swarming up the rose-trellis outside the house!

Scrape, scratch, scrape, the alternate hand- and foot-holds sounded on the cross-bars of the lattice. A pair of hands, long, slender, corded hands, like the hands of a cadaver long dead, and armed with talons, blood-stained and hooked, grasped the window-ledge, and a face—God of Mercy, such a face!—was silhouetted against the background of the night.

Not human, nor yet wholly bestial it was, but partook grotesquely of both, so that it was at once a foul caricature of each. The forehead was

low and narrow, and sloped back to a thatch of short, nondescript-colored hair resembling an animal's fur. The nose was elongated out of all semblance to a human feature and resembled the pointed snout of some animal of the canine tribe except that it curved sharply downward at the tip like the beak of some unclean bird of prey. Thin, cruel lips were drawn sneeringly back from a double row of tusklike teeth which gleamed horridly in the dim reflection of the open fire, and a pair of round, baleful eyes, green as the luminance from a rotting carcass in a midnight swamp, glared at us across the window-sill. On each of us in turn the basilisk glance dwelt momentarily, then fastened itself on the sleeping sick woman like a falcon's talons on a dove.

Miss Ostrander gave a single choking sob and slid forward from her chair unconscious. Evander and I sat stupefied with horror, unable to do more than gaze in terror-stricken silence at the apparition, but Jules de Grandin was out of his seat and across the room with a single bound of feline grace and ferocity.

"Aroint thee, accursed of God!" he screamed, showering a barrage of blows from a slender wand on the creature's face. "Back, spawn of Satan! To thy kennel, hound of hell! I, Jules de Grandin, command it!"

The suddenness of his attack took the thing by surprize. For a moment it snarled and cowered under the hailstorm of blows from de Grandin's stick, then, as suddenly as it had come into view, it loosed its hold on the window-sill and dropped from sight.

"*Sang de Dieu, sang du diable; sang des tous les saints de ciel!*" de Grandin roared, hurling himself out the window in the wake of the fleeing monster. "I have you, vile wretch. *Pardieu, Monsieur Loup-garou,* but I shall surely crush you!"

Rushing to the window, I saw the tall, skeleton-thin form of the enormity leaping across the moonlit snow with great, space-devouring bounds, and after it, brandishing his wand, ran Jules de Grandin, shouting triumphant invectives in mingled French and English.

By the shadow of a copse of evergreens the thing made a stand. Wheeling in its tracks, it bent nearly double, extending its cadaverous claws like a wrestler searching for a hold, and baring its glistening tusks in a snarl of fury.

De Grandin never slackened pace. Charging full-tilt upon the waiting monstrosity, he reached his free hand into his jacket pocket. There was a gleam of blue metal in the moonlight. Then eight quick, pitiless spurts of flame stabbed through the shadow where the monster lurked, eight whiplike, crackling reports echoed and reechoed in the midnight stillness,—and the voice of Jules de Grandin:

"Trowbridge, *mon vieux, ohé,* Friend Trowbridge, bring a light quickly! I would that you see what I see!"

Weltering in a patch of blood-stained snow at de Grandin's feet we found an elderly man, ruddy-faced, gray-haired, and, doubtless, in life, of a dignified, even benign aspect. Now, however, he lay in the snow as naked as the day his mother first saw him, and eight gaping gunshot wounds told where de Grandin's missiles had found their mark. The winter cold was already stiffening his limbs and setting his face in a mask of death.

"Good heavens," Evander ejaculated as he bent over the lifeless form, "it's Uncle Friedrich—my wife's uncle! He disappeared just before I went south."

"*Eh bien,*" de Grandin regarded the body with no more emotion than

if it had been an effigy molded in snow, "we shall know where to find your uncle henceforth, *Monsieur*. Will some of you pick him up? Me—*pardieu*—I would no more touch him than I would handle a hyena!

"Now, *Monsieur*," de Grandin faced Evander across the living room table, "your statement that the gentleman at whose happy dispatch I so fortunately officiated was your wife's uncle, and that he disappeared before your southern trip, does interest me. Say on, tell me all concerning this Uncle Friedrich of your wife's. When did he disappear, and what led up to his disappearance? Omit nothing, I pray you, for trifles which you may consider of no account may be of the greatest importance. Proceed, *Monsieur*. I listen."

Evander squirmed uncomfortably in his chair like a small boy undergoing catechism. "He wasn't really her uncle," he responded. "Her father and he were schoolmates in Germany — Heidelberg — years ago. Mr. Hoffmeister—Uncle Friedrich—immigrated to this country shortly after my father-in-law came back, and they were in business together for years. Mr. Hoffmeister lived with my wife's people—all the children called him Uncle Friedrich—and was just like one of the family.

"My mother-in-law died a few years ago, and her husband died shortly after, and Mr. Hoffmeister disposed of his share of the business and went to Germany on a long visit. He was caught there in the war and didn't return to America until '21. Since that time he lived with us."

Evander paused a moment, as though debating mentally whether he should proceed, then smiled in a half shamefaced manner. "To tell you the truth," he continued, "I wasn't very keen on having him here. There were times when I didn't like the way he looked at my wife a dam' bit."

"Eh," de Grandin asked, "how was that, *Monsieur?*"

"Well, I can't quite put a handle to it in words, but more than once I'd glance up and see him with his eyes fastened on Edith in a most peculiar way. It would have angered me in a young man, but in an old man it both angered and disgusted me. I was on the point of asking him to leave, when he disappeared and saved me the trouble."

"Yes?" de Grandin encouraged. "And his disappearance, what of that?"

"The old fellow was always an enthusiastic amateur botanist," Evander replied, "and he brought a great many specimens for his herbarium back from Europe with him. Off and on he's been messing around with plants since his return, and about a month ago he received a tin of dried flowers from Kerovitch, Rumania, and they seemed to set him almost wild."

"Kerovitch? *Mordieu!*" de Grandin exclaimed. "Say on, *Monsieur;* I burn with curiosity. Describe these flowers in detail, if you please."

"H'm," Evander took his chin in his hand and studied in silence a moment. "There wasn't anything especially remarkable about them that I could see. There were a dozen of them, all told, perhaps, and they resembled our ox-eyed daisies a good deal, except that their petals were red instead of yellow. Had a queer sort of odor, too. Even though they were dried, they exuded a sort of sickly-sweet smell, yet not quite sweet either. It was a sort of mixture of perfume and stench, if that means anything to you."

"*Pardieu,* it means much!" de Grandin assured him. "And their

sap, where it had dried, did it not resemble that of the milkweed plant?"

"Yes! How did you know?"

"No matter. Proceed, if you please. Your Uncle Friedrich did take these so accursed flowers out and——"

"And tried an experiment with them," Evander supplied. "He put them in a bowl of water, and they freshened up as though they had not been plucked an hour."

"Yes—and his disappearance—name of a little green man!—his disappearance?"

"That happened just before I went south. All three of us went to the theater one evening, and Uncle Friedrich wore one of the red flowers in his buttonhole. My wife wore a spray of them in her corsage. He tried to get me to put one of the things in my coat, too, but I hated their smell so much I wouldn't do it."

"Lucky you!" de Grandin murmured so low the narrator failed to hear him.

"Uncle Friedrich was very restless and queer all evening," Evander proceeded, "but the old fellow had been getting rather childish lately, so we didn't pay any particular attention to his actions. Next morning he was gone."

"And did you make inquiry?"

"No, he often went away on little trips without warning us beforehand, and, besides, I was glad enough to see him get out. I didn't try to find him. It was just after this that my wife's health became bad, but I had to make this trip for our firm, so I called in Dr. Trowbridge, and there you are."

"Yes, *parbleu,* here we are, indeed!" de Grandin nodded emphatically. "Listen, listen carefully, my friends; what I am about to say is the truth:

"When first I came to visit Madame Evander with Friend Trowbridge, and heard the strange story Mademoiselle Ostrander told, I was amazed. 'Why,' I ask me, 'does this lady answer the howling of a dog beneath her window?' *Parbleu,* it was most curious!

"Then while we three—Friend Trowbridge, Mademoiselle Ostrander and I—did talk of *Madame's* so strange malady, I did hear the call of that dog beneath the window with my own two ears, and did observe Madame Evander's reaction to it.

"Out the window I did put my head, and in the storm I saw no dog at all, but what I thought might be a human man—a tall, thin man. Yet a dog had howled beneath that window and had been answered by *Madame* but a moment before. Me, I do not like that.

"I call upon that man, if such he be, to begone. Also I do request Mademoiselle Ostrander to place her patient under an opiate each night, that the howls beneath her window may not awaken Madame Evander.

"*Eh bien,* thus far, thus good. But you do come along, *Monsieur,* and countermand my order. While *Madame* is not under the drug that unholy thing beneath her window does howl once more, and *Madame* disappears. Yes.

"Now, there was no ordinary medical diagnosis for such a case as this, so I search my memory and my knowledge for an extraordinary one. What do I find in that storehouse of my mind?

"In parts of Europe, my friends—believe me, I know whereof I speak!—there are known such things as werewolves, or wolf-men. In France we know them as *les loups-garoux,* in Wales they call them the bug-wolves, or bogie-wolves; in the days of old the Greeks did know them under the style of *lukanthropos.* Yes.

"What he is no one knows well. Sometimes he is said to be a wolf—a magical wolf—who can become a man. Sometimes, more often, he is said to be a man who can, or must, become a wolf. No one knows accurately. But this we know: The man who is also a wolf is ten times more terrible than the wolf who is only a wolf. At night he quests and kills his prey, which is most often his fellow man, but sometimes his ancient enemy, the dog. By day he hides his villainy under the guise of a man's form. Sometimes he changes entirely to a wolf's shape, sometimes he becomes a fearful mixture of man and beast, but always he is a devil incarnate. If he be killed while in the wolf shape, he at once reverts to human form, so by that sign we know we have slain a werewolf and not a true wolf. Certainly.

"Now, some werewolves become such by the aid of Satan; some become so as the result of a curse; a few are so through accident. In Transylvania, that devil-ridden land, the very soil does seem to favor the transformation of man into beast. There are springs from which the water, once drunk, will make its drinker into a savage beast, and there are flowers—*cordieu,* have I not seen them? —which, if worn by a man at night during the full of the moon, will do the same. Among the most potent of these blooms of hell is *la fleur de sang,* or blood-flower, which is exactly the accursed weed you have described to us, Monsieur Evander—the flower your Uncle Friedrich and your lady did wear to the theater that night of the full moon. When you mentioned the village of Kerovitch, I did see it all at once, immediately, for that place is on the Rumanian side of the Transylvanian Alps, and there the blood-flowers are found in greater numbers than anywhere else in the world. The very mountain soil does seem cursed with lycanthropy.

"Very well. I did not know of the flower when first I came into this case, but I did suspect something evil had cast a spell on *Madame.* She did exhibit all the symptoms of a lycanthrope about to be transformed, and beneath her window there did howl what was undoubtedly a wolf-thing.

" 'He has put his cursed sign upon her and does even now seek her for his mate,' I tell me after I order him away in the name of the good God.

"When *Madame* disappeared I was not surprized. When she returned after a night in the snow, I was less surprized. But the blood on her hands did perturb me. Was it human? Was she an all-unconscious murderess, or was it, happily, the blood of animals? I did not know. I analyzed it and discovered it were dog's blood. 'Very well,' I tell me. 'Let us see where a dog has been mauled in that vicinity.'

"This afternoon I made guarded inquiries. I find many dogs have been strangely killed in this neighborhood of late. No dog, no matter how big, was safe out of doors after nightfall.

"Also I meet a man, an *ivrogne*—what you call a drunkard—one who patronizes the leggers-of-the-boot not with wisdom, but with too great frequency. He is no more so. He have made the oath to remain sober. *Pourquoi?* Because three nights ago, as he passed through the park he were set upon by a horror so terrible that he thought he was in alcoholic delirium. It were like a man, yet not like a man. It had a long nose, and terrible eyes, and great, flashing teeth, and it did seek to kill and devour him. My friends, in his way, that former drunkard did describe the thing which tried to enter this house tonight. It were the same.

"Fortunately for the poor drunken man, he were carrying a walking

cane of ash wood, and when he raised it to defend himself, the terror did shrink from him. 'Ah ha,' I tell me when I hear that, 'now we know it were truly *le loup-garou,*' for it is notorious that the wood of the ash tree is as intolerable to the werewolf as the bloom of the garlic is unpleasant to the vampire.

"What do I do? I go to the woods and cut a bundle of ash switches. Then I come here. Tonight the wolf-thing come crying for the mate who ranged the snows with him last night. He is lonely, he is mad for another of his kind. Tonight, perhaps, they will attack nobler game than dogs. Very well, I am ready.

"When Madame Evander, being drugged, did not answer his call, he was emboldened to enter the house. *Pardieu,* he did not know Jules de Grandin awaited him! Had I not been here it might well have gone hard with Mademoiselle Ostrander. As it was"—he spread his slender hands—"there is one less man-monster in the world this night."

Evander stared at him in round-eyed wonder. "I can't believe it," he muttered, "but you've proved your case. Poor Uncle Friedrich! The curse of the blood-flower——" He broke off, an expression of mingled horror and despair on his face. "My wife!" he gasped. "Will she become a thing like that? Will——?"

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin interrupted gently, "she *has* become one. Only the drug holds her bound in human form at this minute."

"Oh," Evander cried, tears of grief streaming down his face, "save her! For the love of heaven, save her! Can't you do anything to bring her back to me?"

"You do not approve my methods," de Grandin reminded him.

Evander was like a pleading child. "I apologize," he whimpered. "I'll give you anything you ask if you'll only save her. I'm not rich, but I think I can raise fifty thousand dollars. I'll give it to you if you'll cure her!"

The Frenchman twisted his little blond mustache furiously. "The fee you name is attractive, *Monsieur,*" he remarked.

"I'll pay it; I'll pay it!" Evander burst out hysterically. Then, unable to control himself, he put his folded arms on the table, sank his head upon them, and shook with sobs.

"Very well," de Grandin agreed, casting me the flicker of a wink. "Tomorrow night I shall undertake your lady's case. Tomorrow night we attempt the cure. *Au revoir, Monsieur.* Come away, Friend Trowbridge, we must rest well before tomorrow night."

DE GRANDIN was silent to the point of moodiness all next morning. Toward noon he put on his outdoor clothing and left without luncheon, saying he would meet me at Evander's that night.

"Meantime, Trowbridge, *mon vieux,* I beg you will assist me in the kitchen. There is much to do and little time in which to do it."

Opening a large valise he produced a bundle of slender sticks which he began splitting into strips like basket-withes, explaining that they were from a mountain ash tree. When some twenty-five of these had been prepared, he selected a number of bottles from the bottom of the satchel, and, taking a large aluminum kettle, began scouring it with a clean cloth.

"Attend me carefully, Friend Trowbridge," he commanded; "do you keep close tally as I compound the draft, for much depends on the formula being correct. To begin."

Arranging a pair of apothecary's scales and a graduate glass before him on the table, he handed me this memorandum.

R

3 pints pure spring water
2 drachms sulfur
½ oz. castorium
6 drachms opium
3 drachms asafœtida
½ oz. hypericum
¾ oz. aromatic ammonia
½ oz. gum camphor

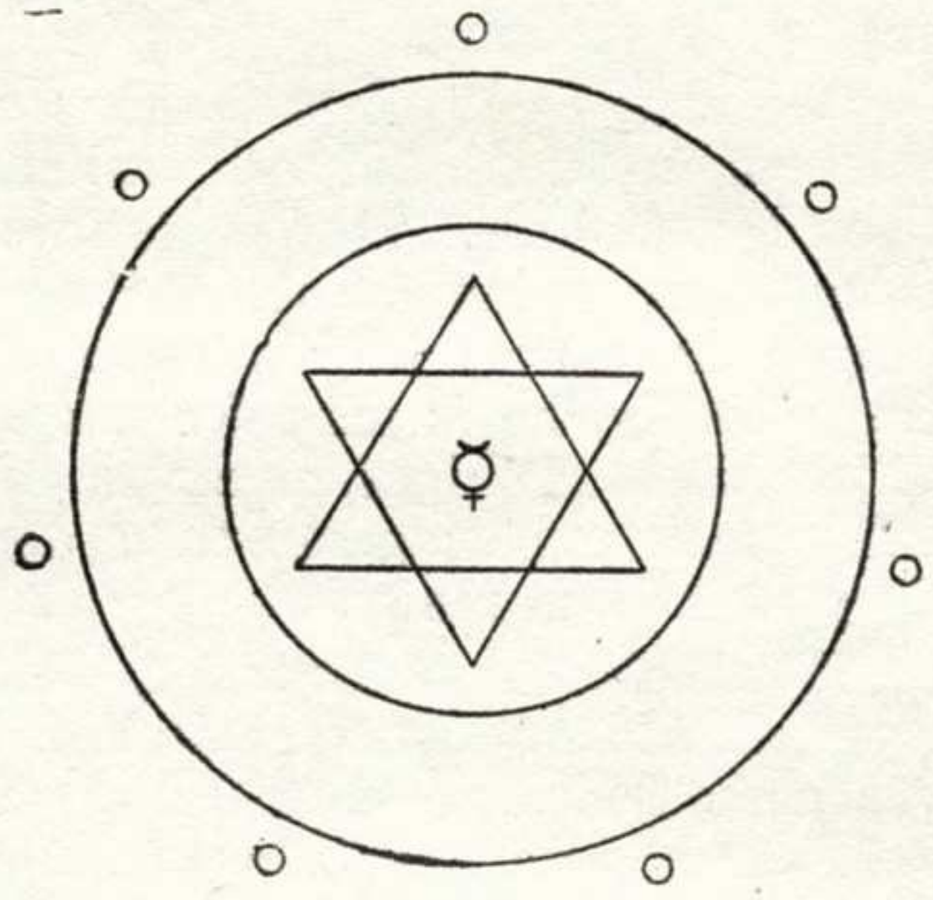
As he busied himself with scales and graduate I checked the amounts he poured into the kettle. "*Voilà*," he announced, "we are prepared!"

Quickly he thrust the ash withes into a pailful of boiling water and proceeded to bind together a three-stranded hyssop of ash, poplar and birch twigs.

"And now, my friend, if you will assist me, we shall proceed," he asserted, thrusting a large washpan into my hands and preparing to follow me into the dining room with the kettle of liquor he had prepared, his little brush-broom thrust under his arm.

We moved the dining room furniture against the walls, and de Grandin put the kettle of liquid in the dishpan I had brought in, piling a number of light wood chips about it, and starting a small fire. As the liquid in the kettle began bubbling and seething over the flame, he knelt and began tracing a circle about seven feet in diameter with a bit of white chalk. Inside the first circle he drew a second ring some three feet in diameter, and within this traced a star composed of two interlaced triangles. At the very center he marked down an odd-looking figure composed of a circle surmounted by a crescent and supported by a cross. "This is the Druid's foot, or pentagram," he explained, indicating the star. "The powers of evil are powerless to pass it, either from without or within. This," he pointed to the central figure, "is the sign of Mercury. It is also the sign of the Holy Angels, my friend, and the *bon Dieu* knows we shall need their kind offices this night. Compare, Friend Trowbridge, if you please, the chart I have drawn with the exemplar which I did most carefully prepare from the occult books today. I would have the testimony of both of us that I have left nothing undone."

Into my hand he thrust the following chart:



Quickly, working like one possessed, he arranged seven small silver lamps about the outer circle where the seven little rings on the chart indicated, ignited their wicks, snapped off the electric light and, rushing into the kitchen, returned with the boiled ash withes dangling from his hand.

Fast as he had worked, there was not a moment to spare, for Miss Ostrander's hysterical call, "Dr. de Grandin, oh, Dr. de Grandin!" came down the stairs as he returned from the kitchen.

On the bed Mrs. Evander lay writhing like a person in convulsions. As we approached, she turned her face toward us, and I stopped in my tracks, speechless with the spectacle before me.

It was as if the young woman's pretty face were twisted into a grimace, only the muscles, instead of resuming their wonted positions again, seemed to stretch steadily out of place. Her mouth widened gradual-

(Continued on page 423)

The SEVENTH SYMPHONY

by
VICTOR
ROUSSEAU

"The fingers struck the notes clearly, leaping from string to string as the bow scraped across them."

DR. IVAN BRODSKY put down the morning paper with a long whistle, got up, put his hands in his pockets, and paced the room continuously. "Too bad! Too bad!" he kept repeating.

During the months that I had lived with him and assisted him in the psychical investigations which he carried on, I had learned one thing above all others—to let him tell his story in his own way. So I waited until he was ready to speak. I could not conceive what he had read that had so agitated him, and my astonishment was increased fourfold when he came and stood by my side, wiping the tears from his eyes unaffectedly.

"Rose Celaye is dead," he volunteered finally.

I tried to murmur something appropriate, but I must confess that the announcement did not stir me greatly. Of course, like most others, I had heard of that wonderful woman cellist who had blazed her triumphant path through all the capitals of Europe and America, from Buenos Aires to Moscow. I had seen the notice of her death, in her thirty-fifth year, and had forgotten that the doctor, like every Pole, had a passionate love for music.

"You knew her, perhaps, doctor?" I faltered.

"Not in the body," said Brodsky, quite simply, as though drawing some obvious distinction. "But what does that matter? I heard her play. I heard her in Carnegie Hall when she went to New York last year. And dead! Rose Celaye dead!"

Presently he came and sat down at my side.

"The world is poorer today than it was yesterday," he said to me. "Rose Celaye was the greatest cellist of the day; if she had lived five years longer she would have been the greatest that ever lived. But she was more than a great player—she was a woman of the most noble nature. She was never spoiled by the flattery that

NOTE.—This is the seventh of a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls."

she received. She lived just as simple, unaffected a life as always, devoting all her income beyond the amount necessary for living to the encouragement of poor artists. And only five years ago, when princes and millionaires were at her feet, she married a poor clerk in a lawyer's office, for love. I believe their lives were ideally happy. I met him once; he offered to introduce me to his wife, but I would not meet her. You see, I had heard her play. I did not want to meet her in the flesh."

OUR psychical investigations occupied much of our time about that period, and this conversation made little impression on me. It must have been four or five months afterward that it was recalled vividly to my mind when I entered the doctor's office a little late one morning and saw upon the hall table, as I went in, the card of a visitor, engraved "Auguste Celaye." Inside, the man was taking off his gloves. He was about five-and-thirty years of age, as I should judge, a Creole in appearance, and possessed a striking and dignified demeanor.

"Dr. Brodsky," he began, when we had been introduced, "you will have no recollection of me, of course, although I once had the pleasure of making your acquaintance for a few moments at a reception."

"On the contrary, I remember you very well," replied the doctor.

"I am extremely glad of it," returned the young man cordially, "because it will make my mission easier. I am not, of course, unacquainted with the reputation that has come to you from your remarkable investigations in psychic affairs. I have always believed in such things, and so did my wife. Curiously enough, she often expressed the wish to meet you, and the fact that I did not introduce you to her that afternoon was the cause of our only disagreement. Before her death she and I often discussed the possibility of the spirit making itself manifest to mortals, and we resolved that, whichever died first, he or she would return to give proof of immortality to the other.

"Her death, as you know, was comparatively sudden. She lingered in a semi-conscious state for perhaps two hours after we realized that the end was approaching. Toward the last her mind grew clearer, and she motioned to me to bend over her. In a very weak voice she told me that she was going to give me the proof we had always spoken of. She would, if possible, play for me her transcription of the wonderful 'Heartbeat March' from the seventh symphony of Beethoven upon her cello. It was her favorite piece, and mine. And then, just before she died, she spoke your name.

"After her death I was wild with grief. I locked away all her possessions in a room of our apartment and would not allow anyone to touch them. I traveled for some months, and arrived back last week. Time had softened my excess of sorrow, as I suppose it must, though the grief will, I know, be permanent. And then, for the first time, I dared to think of her promise. But so great was my dread of disappointment that for several days I could not bring myself to unlock the door of the room in which her things were stored. Finally I brought myself to it, took out her bow and cello, which had rested there, untuned, untouched, for months, and placed them in my room and waited in the darkness. But nothing occurred, and at last I went to bed and soon fell into a sound sleep.

"It must have been shortly after midnight that I awoke with a start. I had dreamed of hideous discords, and the dream was verified. Upon my ears there burst the wildest, most terrible medley of sounds that I have

ever heard. They crashed out upon the instrument in the most grotesque manner imaginable, and yet, horrible as it was, the time and accentuation seemed to be those of the seventh symphony.

"You can imagine my horror. I sprang from the bed and struck a match. Instantly the sounds ceased, and yet, when I drew near, I saw the strings quivering, as though the hand of the ghostly visitant had barely left them. That night I heard no more, but every night since then that horrible noise awakens me at the same time. It lasts about as long as the movement from the symphony, and it has the inexorable rhythm of that relentless 'Heartbeat March' by which Beethoven suggested the march of life from birth to death, 'from the grave to the grave;' but it is a cacophony of hideous dissonances, and it is always the same. I know the fearful tune by heart—if tune it can be called. And all day long it haunts me in imagination. So I should have gone mad if the remembrance of you had not suddenly come to me last night when I was at the summit of my suffering.

"I took the first train from New York this morning, found your address in the telephone book, and have come to beg you to solve the mystery. Have I gone insane and do I imagine it? Or is it that my wife has forgotten music in her present condition of existence? If that be so, if character so change, what does remain of us? Or is it some devil that has come back to mock and torture me?"

He ceased, and, overcome by his emotion, leaned his head upon his hand and regarded Brodsky intently.

"You are satisfied that these sounds are produced without any human agency?" he asked.

"Absolutely," the young man replied. "Moreover, they are produced by some intelligent being, for the sounds are precisely the same on each occasion. It is almost as though some travesty of the seventh symphony had been written out, so identical is each performance with the last."

"Then," said Brodsky, "you have actually the proof of immortality that you demanded. What matter the details of it? Why seek further elucidation? Is it that the human heart will not believe?"

"No," replied Celaye steadily. "It is because I fear that the sounds are made by some devil assuming her identity."

"Well, we'll have to go and see," returned the doctor. "It's no use forming hypotheses. Today we have some work that must be finished here; tomorrow my assistant and I will be at your apartment at 7 o'clock in the evening."

CELAYE departed reluctantly, leaving us an address in the portion of New York City that adjoins Columbia University. On our arriving at his apartment house, a plain but comfortable-looking structure, the elevator boy took us up to where Celaye stood waiting for us.

When we had concluded a very pleasant meal Celaye led us into the large room which he used both as a bedroom and a sitting room.

In one corner, propped up against the wall, was the cello, the bow beside it. Brodsky advanced to inspect it. Instantly Celaye darted in front of him, his eyes blazing angrily, to bar the doctor's progress.

"You shall not touch it!" he cried. "No hand but mine has ever been laid upon it since she died."

Brodsky stopped short and looked at Celaye with mild indignation.

"I beg your forgiveness," said the young man humbly, transformed once more back to his normal condition. "But I can not allow you to touch it. It is a foolish whim of mine

—but I can not. I can not explain it, but I must insist on this."

"My dear sir," said Brodsky severely, "it is not at all essential to my purposes that I touch the instrument. I did not desire to do so in my capacity as doctor, but merely from the natural interest that I take in musical instruments of such antiquity."

The young man flashed out eagerly. "You recognize it?" he asked in delight. "It is a genuine Carroba, made at Leghorn, in 1729. Pray look at it." He turned it for Brodsky's inspection, but all the while seemed ready to spring to the defense of it.

"Such old instruments have a peculiar psychic value," said Brodsky thoughtfully. "Well, will it play for us if we put out the lights?"

We lowered the gas, but not a sound came from the instrument.

"It only plays at 1 in the morning," said Celaye. "That was the hour at which she died," he added.

"Well, sir," said Brodsky, "I doubt very much whether it would play for us all tonight, even if we were to sit up till that hour. Especially since you told me that the sounds cease the moment that you light the gas. It is controlled evidently by some power that is most delicately attuned. As you may know, the soul that returns to earth is by no means a free being, able to communicate with the survivor upon all possible topics. Were this so, we should have learned from such wandering beings the secrets of their own state. By a wise provision, the soul can return only for some special cause; the mother to watch over her babe; the wife to prove her continued existence to her husband; the miser to reveal some hidden hoard. The soul that returns is responsive to one single emotion. Therefore, our presence alone would serve to neutralize this."

"Is there no way, then?" cried Celaye despairingly.

"There is one way," said Brodsky thoughtfully. "But it is a dangerous way, and I would resort to it only upon your solemn pledge that you will never again resort to it so long as you live. It is the way so wisely forbidden by Moses, the great lawgiver, the way that Saul utilized at En-Dor—the seance. By the united electrical powers of our bodies, we can, when seated in a circle, bring about the effects we seek. But there are hosts of evil agencies ready to rush in and usurp the functions of our minds. We must hold no commerce with these, give them no freehold over us. If, therefore, we sit tonight, may I have your promise never to do so again?"

"I promise," replied the young man solemnly.

When this had been done we put out the gas lights and seated ourselves around the instrument in such a manner that, without touching it, we could, by extending and joining hands, completely encircle it. Thus we waited in silence for five, ten, twenty minutes. But nothing occurred, no sound came to break the silence.

"It will not play; I know it," said Celaye abruptly, rising and lighting the gas jets sullenly. He stood in the center of the apartment over the instrument, glaring at us defiantly. The doctor smiled.

"At least you have one consolation," he said. "If it had been some mocking spirit that struck the strings it would have come to us. We can dismiss that hypothesis. Well, suppose you put us up here for the night."

"I will," said the young man eagerly, his face clearing. It was evident to me that his swift moods were rather the result of his nervous tension than of a difficult nature.

"There is a bedroom adjoining; I will leave the door open and you shall make yourselves comfortable there. If it does not play tonight, at least I shall be free from those terrible jangles that haunt me."

While he was searching for pillows and bedding I cross-questioned Brodsky upon the failure of his plan.

"I will tell you frankly why I made that suggestion," he said to me. "As I remarked, if it had been some devil, as I suspected, that played the jangles, it would have come eagerly. As you know, the difficulty at the seance table is not to obtain communication, but to keep off the lying, prankish elemental spirits that assume the names and personalities of the departed. Had any such creature come I should have made some conventional excuses to Celaye and departed. The fact that nothing occurred is highly satisfactory. The good spirit returns to this earth plane only with great difficulty and travail. Well, there will be nothing for us to do except to wait."

We resolved not to undress, but to sleep or rest upon the coverlets. We sat up together until close upon midnight, spending what would otherwise have been a very pleasant evening. Our host was a man of vast information and much culture, and, by tacit consent, no further word was spoken regarding the object of our visit. Shortly before midnight Celaye began to yawn.

"I always become uncommonly sleepy about this hour," he said. "With your permission I will leave you and go to bed as though you were not here, so as to reproduce as nearly as possible the exact conditions of other nights."

"A very excellent suggestion," said Brodsky approvingly. "Well, we will retire also, and I think the door may be as nearly closed as possible without preventing our hearing anything that may happen."

We put out the gas in our room and talked in whispers.

"That sleepiness of Celaye's is promising," said Brodsky confidently. "Sleep is an invariable precursor of psychic phenomena, as you have found. Don't let yourself be overpowered, though, and in about an hour we shall hear something of interest, unless I am very much mistaken. I only hope the sounds are loud enough to reach us. To one in such a disturbed condition as Celaye the least murmur may appear a thunderclap."

I SMILE when I recall the doctor's words. In spite of my resolution I had fallen into a light doze—and Brodsky afterward confessed to me that he, too, had yielded to sleep—when I was awakened by a furious, grating noise in the large room. I was wide awake in an instant. The cello was moaning like a tortured man. Thunderous discords fell from it, the strings grated and crackled as though some lunatic were at the instrument. I rushed to the door, but Brodsky held me back.

"It will cease if you enter," he whispered.

Never do I hope to hear such music again. And, what made it more horrible, there seemed to be some method in the playing of it; there were fearful parodies of motifs and phrases, the fingers struck the notes clearly, leaping from string to string as the bow squeaked and scraped across them. A moment later the door was flung into our faces as Celaye burst into the room.

"I can not bear it," he cried. "It is not she; that would be too horrible. Light a match, for the love of heaven!"

The doctor found and struck one, and on the instant the noise ceased. Brodsky and I ran across the room and inspected the instrument. The strings were still vibrating, but no

sound came from them. We stared at one another in astonishment. Then we heard Celaye sobbing in the next room. It took the doctor half an hour to restore him to his normal self.

"I can not help you," he said at length, when Celaye was dressed and we three sat once more in the gaslight. "If I had anything from which to obtain inferences—but I am helpless here. The world of psychic phenomena is an unmapped chart; we are only beginning to explore the coasts and boundaries. But one thing I would advise you: destroy the instrument."

"Never!" cried Celaye, his face aflame. "She has come to me, she has tried to make herself intelligible, to give me the sign I asked for."

"Well, I will not be responsible for your sanity," said Brodsky curtly.

"A lot I care for that," retorted Celaye, laughing bitterly. "Man," he added fiercely, snatching at the doctor's arm, "don't you understand what is troubling me? My wife lived for her music; she lived in it, it was all in life to her, except perhaps my love. And am I to believe that, once she has 'put on the garments of immortality,' she has lost all her knowledge of it, so that she can only play jangled, hideous mockeries of what she tries? Why, if that be so, then indeed death changes us beyond all recognition; we are no longer the same personalities that we have been, but something different. We spend our lives developing ourselves, our finer natures, we hope and dream that it is not for nothing. And now—must I believe that all this is thrown away upon the rubbish heap and that we become mere helpless automata? Answer me, answer!"

His grief was pitiful to witness. But argument with him would have been impossible. His mind was beyond reason, tottering as it was upon the borderland of madness.

"I do not think that is so," Brodsky replied.

"Think!" shouted Celaye, springing to his feet, his face distorted with passion. "You are an impostor, sir. I asked you here in good faith, hoping that you could give me back my faith and confidence, and you came looking upon the matter as an experiment. You care nothing for my grief, only for your own amusement. Dr. Brodsky, I have the honor to wish you good-night."

Brodsky faced him unmoved. His cheek paled, but all his muscles were under complete control.

"You have used hard words to me," he said. "Sometimes, indeed, the wisest of physicians are at fault; and then it is our reward to be accused of imposition. Well sir, it is unnecessary for me to reply further to your accusations. I wish you good-night."

I thought Celaye would have come to his senses then, but, to my astonishment, he made no answer of any kind. Instead he sank into a chair and burst into a fit of hysterical weeping. The doctor looked at him in seeming irresolution for one moment; then, as though realizing the impossibility of assisting him further, he took his hat and followed me out of the door. The sleepy elevator man took us down-stairs.

"Well, it's a hotel in town for us tonight," said Brodsky, as we marched down the deserted street. "There is a good hotel I used to visit some twenty blocks from here. What do you say to a walk?"

I agreed, and we tramped on in silence.

WE MUST have covered some half a dozen blocks when Brodsky stopped on a corner.

"Now why couldn't I solve that mystery?" he asked abruptly; and

(Continued on page 431)

EVOLUTION ISLAND

By EDMOND HAMILTON

"Brilling turned suddenly toward the two prisoners. "And for you two, death!" he said.

THE thing can be traced back, now, to its beginning. Back to a certain night in April, to the auditorium of the Boston Science Institute, where Dr. Walton delivered his epochal lecture.

A lecture that few enough heard, at the time. Nor is that wonderful. Outside the night was warm and luring, the first breath of spring for a winter-weary world. Inside—only a biologist lecturing. It is hardly strange that the audience that night was a small one.

Yet when Walton emerged onto the stage with the Institute's president, he did not seem to notice the rows of empty seats. He was a quick, nervous little man of middle age, with thick, black hair through which he constantly ran his right hand, and black eyes that flashed restlessly about. While the smiling rotund president introduced him to the audience, with a few bland and cheerful inanities, Walton was fidgeting nervously in his seat, and when the other had stepped back with a concluding eulogistical phrase, the little scientist sprang at once to the front of the stage, being greeted by a ripple of mild applause. At once he started to speak, with staccato rapidity.

"The title of my lecture," he began, "*Evolution and the Future,* is somewhat ambiguous, so I will say now that it is not my intention to discuss old theories, but to present a new one. Yet for my purpose, it is necessary to bring to your attention first the general theory of evolution, as it is now known.

"As you know, before the promulgation of that theory, it was generally believed that all species, all races of living creatures, had always possessed the same form and nature, and always would. It was not thought possible that in time a creature or race of creatures could change entirely in nature and bodily form, develop, that is, into a higher state of existence.

"Then came the great work of Darwin and Wallace and Huxley. It became clear that the only constant thing in our world is change, that instead of remaining always in the

same forms, life constantly changes and develops into new forms. Up from the first plasmic slime, the base of all life on earth, life has advanced through a thousand different forms, up a thousand branching paths. Sea-slime—jelly-fish—invertebrates—reptiles—mammals—man—up, up, always up, striving, climbing, every generation a tiny bit ahead of the previous generation, a tiny bit farther advanced along the road of evolution. We know not where that road leads, for our path of evolution, like the paths all life must follow, was laid down for us, as I believe, by a Power above earth. So, although we know not what forms we are changing into, or what forms all other living things change into, we do know that that change is going on, infinitely slowly, but steadily. How much higher the human race today than the savage Neandertal men of fifty thousand years ago! And fifty thousand years from now, men will be as much above us. It is the same with all life, with all forms of life. All go up, up, change and change.

"We can not swerve aside from the path of change we follow. But suppose we could speed up our progress, could travel faster up that path? Suppose we were able to accelerate the process of evolution so that a thousand years of evolutionary development could be crowded into a single day?

"Such a suggestion sounds mad, almost. Evolution is the slowest process of nature, and how could it be accelerated? To discover that, we must discover the cause of evolution itself, must find out *why* we change, why all life changes.

"That question, the cause of evolution, is the great riddle of biology. Countless explanatory theories have been advanced, adaptation, segregation, mutations, Mendelism—I could recount a dozen such, but all such explanations have failed; and the cause of the evolutionary change has remained a mystery. A mystery which I have finally solved. And the answer, the force that drives life up its myriad roads of change, the very cause of evolution itself, is—the Garner ray.

"I imagine that the name is unfamiliar to most of you. It is only within the last few years that the Garner ray has been isolated, by the physicist whose name it bears. Even yet, the nature of the ray has remained largely a mystery. We know, however, that the earth, the universe, is one vast welter of vibrations, visible and invisible. From this ruck of vibratory forces we can pick a few that are known to science. The Hertzian rays—that is, the radio waves—and chemical rays, heat rays, light rays, a vast welter, I repeat, of vibratory forces.

"And the Garner ray is one of these. It is thought to be a new kind of chemical ray, having its source in vast masses of radio-active substances in the earth's interior. It is also thought that the ray is altered, somehow, by the magnetic currents that race between the poles. Whatever its origin, it is known that in some places on the earth the ray seems exceptionally strong, while in other spots it is rather weak. This is taken to mean that the radio-active materials that are its source are unevenly distributed in the earth's interior.

"You will want to know what connection this ray has with the subject of evolution. It has such a connection, and I have been the first to find it. We know the profound effects that the other vibratory forces have on life. Light rays, for instance: how changed life would be without them! And this Garner ray has an equally important effect on life, for it is the constant action of this ray, affecting the nerve centers in a way I can not explain, that changes all of us, mentally and physically, that changes all

life, that causes the evolution change itself. Since the first presence of life on earth, the action of this ray has driven it upward to its present levels, and still drives it upward, slowly, but unceasingly.

"And I have proof that this is so. Physicists have found that in the continent of Australia the ray is weakest on earth, due, no doubt, to the fact that the radio-active bases of it are scarce in the earth beneath the island continent. The ray is weakest there, has always been weakest there, and what is the result? Any zoologist will tell you that Australia abounds with strange animals found no place else on earth, that evolution there seems retarded, slower. It is so even with the human beings there. The native Australian, the bushman, is without doubt the lowest form of human being on earth, the least developed of all the races of men.

"I come now to the heart of my interest. I have shown you that this Garner ray, acting on all life on earth, has caused all the evolutionary changes of the past. I have shown you that where the ray is strongest the course of evolution is most rapid, and vice versa. Now suppose that we were able to produce this ray artificially, as we produce light and heat and radio waves artificially. Suppose we produced this Garner ray in the laboratory, then concentrated it, condensed it, focused it, and turned it on a human being. What would be the result?"

Walton paused and held up a lean finger to emphasize his words. "When that is done, when an artificial Garner ray is produced and turned onto a human body, the possessor of that body will be thrown thousands of years ahead in mental and physical development, will be thrown ages ahead of the rest of us in point of evolutionary standing.

"And if the same thing were done to all of us, it would have the same effect on all, would take us ahead thousands, millions of years in development, depending on the strength of the artificial ray. Think of the countless ages it took life to crawl up to the present human form. And then, after those eons of painful progress, this mighty jump, this great short-cut. Seven-league boots for humanity, on the road of evolution!

"And this is no vain dream. It will be accomplished. I do not say that I can accomplish it myself, but it will be done, if not in our time, in some time to come. It will be done, and then—the great transformation. I seem to see humanity leaping up to full stature at once, springing from achievement to achievement, strong and conquering. I seem to see men become like gods ——"

2

EVEN now, one remembers the uproar created by Walton's astounding statements. An uproar that spread over the scientific world, and into the newspapers, making a world-figure of the obscure Boston scientist. And, too, making him one of the most denounced men in the world.

For his theories found no shadow of acceptance. Nine scientists out of ten, when asked for opinions, had it that Walton was either deluding himself, or was an outright charlatan. Evolution, they pointed out, was, after all, only a theory. A great theory, a basically important theory, but still a theory. It belonged more to philosophy than to science. So when Walton treated evolution as a laboratory matter, and calmly proposed to speed up the process, it seemed plain to them that he was either slightly crazy or a skilful publicity-seeker.

Thus Walton found himself universally condemned, and strangely enough, seemed to mind it not at all. Luckily for him, he was not depend-

ent on an academic position for his existence, since he had an ample inherited income. So, quite unaffected by the storm he had raised, he went calmly on with his work, spending most of his time in the little laboratory building behind his home.

This home of his was an inherited, old-fashioned mansion, a big, rambling house that had formerly stood at the center of an estate, but was now surrounded by the neat bungalows of a modern suburb. Behind it stood the little brick building that held his laboratory, and although Walton had made no statements after his lecture, he was generally believed to be at work testing his theories in that place. None could say for certain, though, for Walton had but few friends and admitted only one of these into the laboratory.

The single favored one was Stuart Owen, a young physician who had just returned after a month's absence from the city, and who was eager to learn more of the turmoil Walton had stirred up. So, directly after his return, he had hurried out to his friend's home to hear more about the matter.

As the two friends entered the main room of the laboratory building, a man working at a table there rose and came to meet them. This was Brilling, Walton's assistant, a silent, hawk-nosed and thin-lipped young man who mumbled a few words of greeting and then hurried back to his work. Owen then seized the opportunity to satisfy the question in his mind.

"This evolution business, Walton," he began; "you were hardly serious about that, were you? I read the reports of your lecture in the papers. You aren't really working on a thing like that, are you?"

"No, I was quite in earnest," Walton assured him. "Brilling and I have been working on the thing for nearly two years."

Owen's face showed his surprize. "But man," he protested, "it sounds silly, almost. To speed up evolution —you'll never succeed."

Walton smiled slightly, and exchanged a significant glance with his assistant. Then: "But I have succeeded," he said, quietly.

As Owen looked his amazement, he went on, "I suppose I can trust you to keep the matter a secret for the present, Owen?" And at the other's swift nod, he continued, "Well, look over here," leading the way to a long work-bench.

A litter of electrical apparatus covered the bench's surface, and in a clear space to one side stood a small cylindrical case of black insulating material, which was studded on its top with a number of small nickel switches and connected by a dozen wires to the electrical instruments on the bench. Laying a hand on the case, Walton remarked, "The fruit of a year's work. This little instrument, Owen, is capable of producing an artificial Garner ray that is many times stronger than the natural ray. It is powerful enough to affect anything inside this room, to throw any living thing in the room ages ahead in evolutionary development. The ray itself is a chemical ray, produced by a combination of radio-active elements inside the case, but it is changed and altered by a series of small but powerful electro-magnets through which it passes."

As Owen regarded the black cylinder dubiously, Walton said, "I see that I'll have to convince you another way," and made a gesture to Brilling, who left the room, returning in a few minutes with a live chicken.

Placing the chicken on the floor beneath the bench, Walton took from a drawer three narrow pads of gray cloth, one of which he handed to Owen, and another to Brilling. As Owen examined the thing, perplexed by its unlooked-for weight, Walton

told him, "A shield for you, Owen, to protect you from the ray. When this is strapped around your body, covering your spine, the ray will have no effect on you. It can't penetrate through the lining of metal foil in these pads, and thus the vital spinal nerve-centers are protected."

When Owen had awkwardly adjusted the shield to Walton's satisfaction, his friend exclaimed, "Now watch," and reaching over to the black case, snapped on a tiny switch, then stepped back and pointed toward the chicken on the floor.

Owen looked, then gasped with astonishment. For the chicken was changing—changing. As he watched, the wings became smaller and smaller, shriveled away and vanished, the feathers became sparse and disappeared also, the fowl became ever more small, dwindled, contracted until it was hardly larger than a robin, then fell dead, a shrunken little bundle of skin and bone. Owen looked up, to meet Walton's smiling eyes.

"You see?" asked Walton, snapping off the switch. "You have just seen the entire future of a species, have seen, in a few minutes, the changes that species will go through in the next few ages."

He turned to Brilling, who again left the room, returning with another chicken.

"I'm going to reverse the process now," Walton said, "and throw this one back in development. In other words, you saw the future of the species, now I'll show you the past."

"But how—?" Owen began, then his words were broken into by Walton's swift explanation.

"Easy enough. Once I had found out how to produce the Garner ray, the ray that accelerates evolution, I looked for a ray that would do the exact opposite, that would reverse evolution. And I found that all that was necessary to produce a reversing ray was to reverse the current in the electro-magnets that alter the ray. So this reversing ray is the exact opposite of the Garner ray, the accelerating ray, and has an exactly opposite effect. Therefore, unless you want to be thrown back a million years in development, see that your spine-shield is on all right." And he laughed as Owen nervously adjusted the pad.

Walton placed the second fowl in the same position as the first, but took time first to secure it to the floor by two large steel shackles which he attached to its legs, and which were chained to the floor. At Owen's questioning glance he smiled. "A necessary precaution," he said; then, reaching toward the ray-producing case, snapped on another switch, stepping instantly aside when he had done so.

As Owen watched the creature on the floor, fascinated, it changed as swiftly as the first, but grew in size instead of dwindling, seemed to pass with lightning speed through a hundred different forms, changing into a large-sized, fierce-looking bird with coarse, heavy plumage and a long feathered tail, with jaws instead of a beak, jaws that were lined with sharp teeth.

"Archeopteryx," said Walton, and Owen started. An archeopteryx, the first known bird, creature of the Reptilian Age! Even as he stared at the thing it was changing again, passing into a true reptile form, a leathery-skinned thing that strained at the shackles holding it. Then there was a swift flashing through a myriad half-glimpsed reptilian forms, passing down through a chain of slimy sea-creatures; and suddenly the change had stopped, and on the floor lay a little heap of slimy, viscous substance.

"Protoplasmic sea-slime," said Walton; "the first and lowest base of life."

Owen found that his hands were trembling. As Walton snapped off the switch on the case, he called to him, "Good God, Walton, can you do that with any creature?" And he pointed a tremulous finger at the slimy mass on the floor.

"I can," Walton told him, "and as soon as I have made experiments on a big scale with the accelerating ray, I'll try it on a human being—a willing subject, of course. I will try to throw him ahead enough to give him advanced mental and physical powers, without taking him too far."

"On a big scale," Owen repeated, "how can you do that? If you spread that accelerating ray over a big territory, who knows what people might be caught by its power, and changed? Who knows what would happen?"

Walton waved away the objection. "I've thought of that, Owen. And consequently, we're going to work out the thing where it will be absolutely safe to do so, that is, on an island. A little island town in the West Indies, a few hundred miles south of Cuba, which I bought at a ridiculously low price. It's entirely uninhabited, now. So that's my plan. To set up a larger ray-projector that will cover the whole island with its power, then get a lot of different animals and turn them loose there. You see the idea? Every living thing on the island will be under the influence of the accelerating ray, and thus everything on the island will be thrown ahead in evolutionary development. We can see hundreds of thousands of years of development, condensed into a few weeks or months. Of course Brilling and I will wear the shields, to protect ourselves, but everything else will change, and we can keep records of every change in each species, photographs and notes, and such. It's all planned out, Owen. Brilling and I sent our equipment down to a Cuban port some time ago, and we're leaving ourselves next week, for the island."

"I don't like it," Owen told him. "There's something ghastly about the whole idea. You know that I'm not a superstitious man, but this plan of yours—why, you're twisting the very basic laws of nature, Walton, and no one ever tried that yet but came to wreck."

Walton's face was dreaming, abstracted. "No, Owen, every achievement of science has been heralded as a tampering with nature. And this will be the greatest thing ever accomplished for humanity, if we can go through with it. If our experiments down there are successful we will try it on the human body. Think of it, Owen: thousands, millions of years of development, accomplished in a flash. If we can do it——"

Owen did not answer, and a silence fell over the three men. As he left the laboratory, he looked back and saw on the floor the shining heap of slime there. A vague, doubting fear ran through him, an oppressing foreboding of evil.

And that weighting fear clung again to him, a week later, as he watched a rusty tramp steamer go out from a New York dock, bearing with it Walton and Brilling, who had contracted to be put ashore at the Cuban port where their equipment awaited them. Owen watched the boat warp through the foggy mists of early morning, then walked slowly back from the dock's edge.

It was only then that it occurred to him that he had no way of communicating with Walton, short of going to the island itself. The outcome of the whole matter would remain in doubt for him until Walton came back. Until Walton came back! But would he ever come back?

Would he?

3

WALTON came back. He came back a year later, on a stormy night in May, when the wind was lashing the deserted streets with gusts of cold rain. Owen, lounging in his rooms over a dull novel, heard a sudden knocking at his door, and when he flung the door open, a wet and shabby figure staggered in, that he knew at once was his friend. During all that year he had had no word from Walton, and now, as he pulled out a chair for the dripping, swaying figure before him, he could restrain his questions no longer.

Slumped in the chair, staring fixedly at the opposite wall, Walton did not seem to hear his eager queries. Owen noticed then that the man seemed years older, his face drawn and haggard, his eyes dazed. But at a word in Owen's speech, sudden life leapt into his expression.

"The island," he repeated; "yes, I come from there, Owen."

"And Brilling?" asked Owen.

"He is—alive," was the slow answer.

Shocked by the utter change in his friend, Owen was silent. For minutes Walton stared vacantly ahead, then seemed to pull himself together, to become conscious of his surroundings, for the first time. Turning to Owen, he said slowly, as though repeating a lesson, "I must go back, Owen."

"You mean back to the island?" asked the other, and Walton nodded.

"I must go back," he repeated, "and soon. I came to you—I can tell you——" Again he fell silent, but Owen did not disturb him, waiting until he spoke again.

With an effort, Walton resumed the thread of his speech. "The island—we went there, Brilling and I. That was only a year ago, Owen. Only a year ago!" He seemed to muse on the thought.

"But Brilling and I went there. You remember. We went to Lluegos, a Cuban port, first, and arranged to have our equipment taken down to the island for us. We took native labor down, and got the place ready, building a cottage for living quarters, and a small laboratory, and setting up our equipment there, arranging our supplies. And we brought animals down to the island, and turned them loose there.

"We got most of the animals from the menagerie of a little traveling circus that had stranded in Lluegos. The hotel proprietor there was holding the menagerie of the show for an unpaid bill, and was glad enough to sell them for next to nothing. So we had them taken down to the island and turned loose there. There was a mangy old lion, a couple of splendid young leopards, wolves, and so on. Of course we had a stockade around the cottage and laboratory, to keep them from getting too close.

"When all that had been done, Brilling and I were the only men on the island, having got rid of the laborers we had hired, as soon as their work was done. We had a small boat, a yawl, to come and go in, and by that time we had set up all our equipment. The main feature was a big ray-projector, like the one you saw, but much larger and more powerful, capable of throwing its ray over the whole extent of the island. Of course, Brilling and I wore the shields night and day, for our own protection.

"All was ready, so we began, turning on the accelerating ray, though not using near the full power at our command. We wanted the change to be slow enough to record, you see. Two days went by and we could see no change, but on the third day we noticed a changing in the lion and the leopards. The three big cats were getting smaller, were dwindling in size every hour, it seemed. In five

days they had become as small as house-cats, and were as tame. The seventh day, we found them dead.

"You see what it meant? We had seen, in seven days, the whole future development of those two feline species, had seen the fate of all their kind, in the future, and it was just what we had expected. Ever since the time of the saber-tooth tiger, the larger felines on earth have tended to become ever smaller and less ferocious. And thus we had seen the ultimate end of the species, a dwindling into mere cats.

"After that first transformation, the changes came thick and fast. The wolves changed next, changed in nature, becoming as tame and gentle as dogs. They became dogs, in fact. Then they began to grow, grew to a great size, became as large as horses, indeed. But for all their giant size, they stayed as tame as ever. Finally they dwindled too, and died away. It was the end of that species. And the changes still went on.

"We were living in a biologist's paradise, Owen, were seeing the whole future course of evolution, seeing the future development of a myriad different species. With rifles for our protection we ranged the island constantly, photographing and recording the changes we saw, constantly observing the beasts as they developed, watching, watching. We spared time only to eat and sleep.

"We kept the ray-projector always going, always sending out the accelerating ray, and always the things on the island changed. Not only the animals we had brought, but the things that had always lived on the island. Snakes, for instance. There were many of these, and under the accelerating ray they developed into horrible forms. Some grew to python size, and even larger, while some developed short legs and webbed feet, on which they walked and ran. And some took to the water, as their nature changed. But in time all died away, disappeared.

"After the snakes had died away, the birds on the island began to change. Most of these died soon, but one breed evolved that lasted for a few weeks, a great condorlike thing with brilliant plumage, a giant bird of prey that was the fiercest thing on the island. It attacked us whenever we ventured out, and we were glad when it died too.

"And still the changes went on. Still the ray forced the life on the island up and up in development. After the birds, there came a change in the insect life of the place, and a wave of strange monsters swept over the island. Gigantic spiderlike beasts, monstrous flying creatures that were like great wasps, in some ways, but were the size of airplanes, and proportionately fierce. All the insect life on the island seemed to be developing into new and monstrous forms, that made the place a hell to live in. Some of the things we only glimpsed. There was a worm-thing, for instance, vast and white and sluggish, a hundred feet in length, that flopped about in a swamp and uttered hoarse, bellowing cries. We heard it at night, sometimes. . . . And there were others, even worse. But in time, all the insect monsters died away, as the others had done before them.

"And, to replace them, came giant reptilian creatures from the sea, strange sea-monsters of some future age. You see, the ray acted on the waters around the island, too, and had the same accelerating effect on all the life in them. So it was that we glimpsed strange things in the sea around us, vast scaled and fanged creatures that fought and tore with inconceivable ferocity. They were beasts of some future age, but they seemed to us like the hideous dinosaurs of the past, so large and fierce were they. Some of them were amphibian, and they made life precari-

ous for us by venturing onto the island and lumbering about, crashing through the forests and meeting and battling with each other.

"THE island was a strange place, then. And even after the sea-monsters had passed, Owen, it was strange, a place of silence and death, for the ray had wiped out all animal life on the island, had thrown all life ahead and ahead in development until all had died away. There could be no more changes, we thought. And we were wrong, Owen. We were wrong.

"For there came another change, a last, great change, a terrible change that neither Brilling nor I had foreseen. And that was a change in the plant-life on the island, in the vegetation. All animal life on the place had changed and passed, and now the plant-life was changing.

"Yet we might have expected such a change. Evolution rules all plant-life, just as it does all animal life. Just as all present species of animals have come up from the beasts of the Mesozoic Age, so have all present species of plants come up from the giant ferns and conifers of that age. All plant-life on earth is slowly developing, the same as animal life. And under the accelerating ray, that slow evolution of the plant-life on the island began to speed up, after all animal life there had passed.

"The plants changed, Owen. Trees, bushes, weeds, they shot up into strange new forms, dwindled and passed and rose to still other forms, and finally, after weeks of such changes, one type of plant began to become dominant on the island, to crowd out all the others. This was a plant much like a large cactus in appearance, but a plant that seemed almost animal in its activity and intelligence. It could wave its great feelers about, and exhibited many signs of its growing intelligence. And gradually its roots began to wither away, gradually it became able to move about at will, no longer tied to one spot by its roots.

"I understood what we were seeing. I understood then that sometime in the far future, when all animal life has died away from earth, the reign of the plants will begin, that a race of plants will evolve into the uppermost form of life, just as a race of animals, man, is the uppermost form now. I saw that long after man had gone down to extinction, the world would be ruled by intelligent, active plants.

"And I became afraid, Owen. Who could say what degree of power these plant-things on the island might not attain, if left to grow unhindered? If we allowed them to go forward in development, under the accelerating ray, we might loose an evil, spawning horror upon the world, a thing that should not be, in our time.

"And, too, I felt that my reason was going, after all the things I had seen. I felt that I must get back to the world of men, that I must make some contact with my fellow-humans if I wanted to preserve a balanced mind. So I proposed to Brilling that we turn on the reversing ray, throwing the plant-things back to harmless vegetation, then leave the island and spend a month or so in one of the West Indian cities.

"Brilling refused. He felt none of my fears, was entirely absorbed in the things we were doing. He urged me to go, though, and finally I did so, taking the yawl and heading for Jamaica. Brilling said that he wanted to study the development of the plant-things a few days more, but promised to turn on the reversing ray within the next few days, and I was content with his promise. So I left, leaving Brilling on the island alone—except for the plant-things.

"I had my month in Kingston, Owen, and then my thoughts turned

back to the island. It had been our plan to get a new lot of animals and turn them loose on the island like the first bunch, then turn on the reversing ray and watch their changes as they went back down through the evolutionary development of the past. I was eager to get started on this, so at the end of the month I left Kingston and went to the island. I went back, and I found——

"How can I describe what I found? I found all my former fears realized, and found new horror, too. I saw for the first time why Brilling had wanted to stay on the island.

"He had turned the accelerating ray on himself, Owen, had removed the shield from his body and had allowed the ray to throw him forward ages in development. And I saw him, saw the shape that was his, the shape and form of all humanity, ages from now.

"His head had grown very much larger, Owen, had grown to almost twice its former size, and had become quite hairless, though the features seemed much the same. But the body! Owen, there was no body, as we know it! Instead of a human body, the head was attached directly to a mass of flesh, round and squat, which was about half the size of a human trunk. And from this shapeless mass projected four supple, boneless arms of muscles, arms that were really long, powerful *tentacles*. He could walk on these tentacles, or on part of them, or he could use all to grasp and hold. Four long twisting tentacles, that had once been arms and legs. For I saw in Brilling the changes that future ages will work in the human body. You know, Owen, that the human body tends constantly to become simpler, less complex in organization. The toes grow smaller, less prehensile and shrink away, the hair disappears, and certain organs of the body, like the appendix, become entirely useless, atrophied. All our complex digestive and respiratory apparatus tends always to become simpler. And I saw, in Brilling, the cumulative effects of ages of such changes.

"And he had changed mentally, too. He knew me, his mind retained all its former memories and knowledge, but it had acquired also new thoughts, new ambitions, new desires. Struck with horror at the change in him, I proposed to turn the reversing ray on him and throw him back to a normal human body, but when I made that suggestion, he was furious. A body like mine, he declared, would be loathsome to him. It was just as if I had suggested to a normal human being that he allow himself to be turned into a low-browed caveman. The thought revolted him. And then I saw that this creature was no longer the Brilling I had known, but was a man of a million years from now, or more, a creature of a far-off, future time. And I realized that even more fully when I heard his plans, when I discovered what he had done in my absence.

"I found that instead of turning on the reversing ray after my departure, he had allowed the accelerating ray to stay on, and thus instead of bringing the plant-things back to harmless vegetation, he had allowed them to develop still further, to develop into active, intelligent creatures.

"He told me that, exultant, and when I could not believe, took me to the other end of the island. And there I saw the proof of his words, saw for the first time—the plant-men.

"I call them plant-men, for they were roughly human in shape, more human-shaped, in fact, than Brilling himself. They walked erect on two limbs, and had two arms or feelers, and between their—shoulders—they carried a bulbous mass in which were set their eyes, two circles of blank, dead white, with which they could

see. But there all human resemblance ceased, Owen. There were no other features in the blank faces, and the bodies, the mass of the things, seemed to be composed of dark-green fiber, coarse and stringy-looking. And, as Brilling told me, they remained true plants, for all their intelligence and activity, since they took in their food as inorganic materials, and utilized it by means of the chlorophyl in their bodies, a thing that only a true plant can do. Plants, Owen, but moving, seeing, reasoning. The things knew Brilling, they were friendly to him, crowded around him, obeyed his orders. And he had allowed them to develop in hordes, and now boasted to me that they would be his servants, his agents, his armies.

"His armies! For that was the plan he revealed to me, that was his great scheme. He meant to develop great numbers of the things, to raise up a vast army of them on the island, then send them rushing out onto the world, having them make and take with them many powerful ray-projectors, which would be set up in the world outside, and which would sweep the earth with the accelerating ray. You see the result? They would spread the deadly accelerating ray over all the earth, and after all animal life had changed and passed, as it had done on the island, then the earth's plant-life would change, would evolve into new vast hordes of plant-men. They would go on, on, raising new hordes from the very ground itself, and finally, so Brilling said, when his hordes had swept over all the earth, they would reach out to other worlds, sweep from planet to planet in irresistible force.

"IT WAS the plan of a crazed brain, Owen, a mad scheme that struck me through with horror. For I saw that Brilling could do it, could loose the hordes of the plant-men on the world, and sweep the earth with the accelerating ray. And I never doubted but that after he had done that, the plant-men would brush him from their path, after they had attained supremacy. But by then the evil would have been done. And Brilling was asking me to join him in his plan, was asking me to submit myself to the accelerating ray and become a thing like himself, then join him in this terrible project.

"I knew better than to refuse him outright. I pretended to accept the suggestion, and we agreed to turn the accelerating ray on myself, the next day. And that night I fled from the island.

"I had planned to get into the laboratory and to the ray-projector, to turn on the reversing ray and reduce the hordes of plant-men to mere vegetation again. But when I crept down to the laboratory building late that night, I found it guarded by a score of the plant-men, and knew that Brilling was taking no chances. And I knew it would be impossible for me to break through that guard. I had a pistol, but who could kill a plant with a gun? And these plant-men were armed, armed with a strange weapon that threw intense, devouring flame, a daggerlike thing that spurted out puffs of flame and oxygen simultaneously, so that whatever received that flaming discharge took fire at once. Brilling had devised the weapon for them, and it was a terrible one, I knew.

"What could I do? If I stayed on the island I could do nothing, for the next day Brilling would turn on me the accelerating ray, making of me a monster like himself. And if I refused, he would kill me, I knew. So I made my way down to the beach, to the yawl there, and left the island, heading north for Cuba. I feared pursuit, for I knew the powers Brilling had at his command, but no pursuit came, and I got safety, to Llu-

egos. And there I hesitated. What could I do? I could not spread the alarm and take a force down to the island to destroy the menace there. I knew that against Brilling's new weapons such a force could do nothing. And who would have believed my story, had I told it? But if I could go back to the island, by stealth, if only with a single friend to help me, much might be done. So I caught a New York steamer and came north, to you, the one person I thought I could count on.

"So I came. And now I must return. I came to ask you to go back with me. Even now we may be too late. But you know all now, Owen. Will you go back, with me?"

Owen's face expressed his doubt. "You know that I don't doubt your story, Walton, but it seems so utterly strange. It seems impossible that there could really be such a thing, such a menace——"

Walton spoke, solemnly. "There is such a menace, Owen. And it is a menace such as was never known before, a destroying blight that will blot out our world if it is not checked. Do you think I don't feel the strangeness of the thing? Coming north in the yawl, I felt myself going mad thinking of it. Down there on the island, Brilling, or the creature that once was Brilling, is working, planning, preparing, urging his hordes of plant-men on and on, coming nearer and nearer to the climax of his plans.

"And soon, out from the island will sweep the hordes of the plant-men, killing and spreading terror, setting up the ray-projectors and sweeping the world with the deadly accelerating ray. And then—horror and death and confusion undreamed of, over all earth. Familiar animals changing into hideous monsters, invasions of strange beasts, scourges of gigantic insect-terrors, vast sea-things pulling down ships at sea, and, most horrible of all, men and women changing into shapes of terror like Brilling, men and women changing into hideous creatures like him. A world of monstrous changes, a world where all life changes and passes, and then, at the last, a world where all animal life has died away and vanished forever. And then, the last great change, the plant-life of the world springing out into new and dreadful shapes, rising up into hordes of the plant-men. And at the end, reigning supreme from pole to pole—the plant-men!"

Walton ceased speaking, his face pale, his eyes burning. Owen rose from his chair, sickened by the picture the other had brought to his mind. Then, turning swiftly, he asked, "When do we leave, Walton?"

A faint smile passed over Walton's face, the first Owen had seen there since his return. "I knew I could count on you, Owen," he said. "There's a boat for Havana, Tuesday morning. We can get that."

FORTY-EIGHT hours later the two men stood at the rail of a fruit line steamer, watching the New York skyline fade into the distance behind them as the boat went down the bay. Neither spoke then.

Havana, then Lluegos, a colorful little port on the southern coast of Cuba. They wasted no time there, transferring their baggage at once to Walton's yawl, which had been held there for him. A few hours after reaching the port they were swinging out of the harbor in the yawl, a ketch-rigged craft with an auxiliary motor. Ahead, nearly three hundred miles of the Caribbean Sea lay between them and the island that was their destination.

Out of the harbor they went, past the spongers and fishing boats, past a gleaming white pleasure-yacht, out to the blue open sea. Steadily the little boat forged south, under a

dancing breeze. And braced against the mast, Owen looked out ahead, across the waters, wondering in his heart what soul-sickening horror they were rushing toward, what destroying terror lay in wait for them beyond the horizon. Night rushed swiftly down upon them, bringing with it the blazing tropic stars, and later the shining splendor of the full moon. Still Owen peered ahead, across the silvered moonlit waters, while at the wheel behind him, his face set and grim, Walton held south, south.

Once, that night, shortly before midnight, they passed a great liner that was heading north to Havana. It was a giant cruise-ship, its upper works ablaze with dazzling lights, its top deck crowded with swirling passengers, dancing to the music of the ship's orchestra. Across the waters the lilting melody came clearly to the two men, but they held to their course, unheeding.

A few at the rail of the big liner saw the speeding sail-boat and idly speculated on its identity and errand. But none there dreamed the truth, none guessed the strangeness and greatness of the mission on which the yawl fled south, racing down toward the little island on which was centered the fate of all the world.

4

It was night when the yawl reached the island, a deep, thick night as yet unrelieved by the expected moon. For hours Owen and Walton had tensely scanned the sea ahead, and now, as they made out a distant, dark mass that stood out dimly against the starlit sky, the tension of their nerves seemed to become even greater. In silence Owen stared at the place, while Walton expertly guided the little boat through a maze of rocks and shoals.

Silently they swept in toward the island, toward a long, sandy beach that gleamed in the faint starlight. A little channel indented the beach's outline, and into this Walton steered the yawl, its keel grating and grinding over the sand, then stopping entirely. Speaking in whispers, the two men secured the boat to a near-by boulder with cables, then discussed their plan of action.

At Walton's direction, Owen carefully adjusted the pad that protected his spinal nerve-centers from the deadly ray, Walton doing likewise. They then strove to come to a decision on their next step.

"The ray-projector is our best chance," Walton told the other. "If we can get to it, and turn on the reversing ray full power, it will wipe out all life on the island except ourselves. The island is long and narrow, with a high ridge at its center, running its full length, and the cottage and laboratory are on the southern end. I think that the main camp of the plant-men is on the eastern beaches, on the other side of the island from us. So we had best head toward the southern end at once, and try to make our way into the laboratory there."

Owen assented, and the two began to move stealthily along the beach. After a short distance, Walton suddenly turned inland and started up the long slope toward the central ridge that was the back-bone of the island, Owen following in his steps. And as he followed, Owen noted the bareness of those slopes, since they were only rock and sand. Not even the commonest forms of weeds or vegetation grew on them. Had every scrap of plant-life on the island been transformed by the accelerating ray, been changed into hordes of plant-men? He shuddered at the thought.

Half-way up to the ridge, Walton stopped abruptly and held up a warning hand. From somewhere in the darkness ahead came a thin, wailing

sound, a high-pitched whispering that came and went and came again to their ears. As they listened it seemed to grow louder, nearer, and a few pebbles rattled down the slope from above. And now they could plainly hear the sound of feet, many feet, shuffling down the bare slope toward them.

Instantly the two had sprung to the concealing shadows of a near-by cluster of giant rocks, and lying crouched behind these, peered out at what might be approaching. They heard a louder sound of shuffling, tramping feet, then down the slope and into view came a mass of dark figures that moved steadily past their place of concealment, passing down the slope toward the beach. Not unlike a crowd of men, Owen thought, watching them pass in the dim mistiness of the starlight. As they filed by, their wailing whispers came clearly to his ears, the sibilant murmur of their speech.

Before half of the marching figures had gone by, a ghostly glow of white light had poured up from behind the ridge above, and now there floated up into the sky, like a shining bubble, the full moon, laving the scene before them with its molten silver light. As that revealing light poured down on the passing shapes, Owen grasped his companion's arm, with a sudden intake of breath.

"The plant-men!" he whispered, and Walton nodded, silently.

Together, and with a common horror, they watched the passing things. There seemed nothing human about the creatures under the bright moonlight. Mottled-green travesties on the human shape they seemed, masses of stringy fiber carelessly cast into a semi-human form. It was the faces of them that held Owen's gaze, blank expanses of smooth green in which the two eyes, circles of dead white, stood out dreadfully, staring and unwinking.

He had time only to note that the passing plant-men seemed to be carrying with them a number of large metal tools, or instruments, and then they had all gone by, and the two crouching men heard them shuffling down onto the beach and along the shore. For minutes they waited, listening, but no further sound came to them, so they rose and continued up the slope, doubly cautious after their unexpected encounter with the plant-men.

The moonlight made their progress easier now, and in a few minutes they stood on the very top of the ridge, from which they could survey nearly all the island's surface.

Instantly the attention of the two was riveted on the distant beaches at the island's eastern side, for there were lights there, masses of small, gleaming lights that came and went continually, moving about in swirls and eddies, like fireflies, and some of these were gathered into clusters here and there.

Along the distant beaches these lights were present for a distance of nearly two miles, and perhaps farther, since a rolling fold of the slope beneath them partly cut off their view in that direction. As they watched, a distant clangor of metal came to their ears from the direction of the lights, faint and far, a mighty hammering of metal on metal that came to their ears on the wings of a little breeze, then died away. They listened, and it came again, and again.

"The main camp of the plant-men," Walton whispered. "There must be thousands of them down there, judging from those lights."

"What are they doing, Walton?" asked Owen. "You heard that hammering? There's something big going on down there."

Walton nodded, watching the distant lights. "God knows what they're up to, down there. Whatever

it is, Brilling is directing it, you may be sure. We can do nothing there, though.'' And he turned away from the east, and glanced around, then tugged at Owen's sleeve, pointing silently toward the northern end of the island.

A light was gleaming in that direction also, a steady, unwinking beam that was nothing like the flitting illuminations in the east. ''That light is from the cottage,'' Walton whispered. ''That's our objective.'' And he started along the ridge toward the north.

Again Owen followed, and the two moved silently along the ridge toward the distant light, which, as they drew nearer, showed itself to be a square, lighted window. The ridge sloped down as they drew near the island's northern end, and in a few minutes they had come to within a half-mile of the stockade which enclosed the cottage and laboratory, and which lay down the slope a little below their present position.

Down they crept, until they could plainly see the cottage in the moonlight, a small, one-story affair, beside which was a long, low building that Owen knew to be the laboratory.

Walton jerked a finger toward the latter building. ''The ray-projector is in there,'' he whispered, ''and if you can get inside, remember that the reversing ray is turned on by the extreme left-hand switch. If we can just get into the laboratory! The gate of the stockade is open, and I don't see anyone around. Brilling is not using the ray-projector at all, now, for he turned off the accelerating ray after the plant-men were fully developed. But if we can send out the reversing ray——''

Heart beating rapidly, Owen followed his friend, stealing down toward the open gate of the stockade. There was no sound or movement in the lighted cottage, nor in the clearing around the two buildings. His hopes ran high as they crept on.

Down, down, keeping as much as possible within the sheltering shadows, they went on, and now were passing through the open gate of the stockade, were moving soundlessly across the clearing toward the little laboratory building, whose open door beckoned to them like a magnet.

A hundred feet from that open door, Owen heard a sudden sound of running feet, and wheeling quickly, saw a little knot of dark shapes rushing through the stockade gate, toward Walton and himself. The plant-men!

''Walton!'' he cried, and saw his friend turn swiftly. From one of the racing plant-men a burst of green fire suddenly sprang out toward the two men, barely grazing them. Before the deadly flame could be again thrown at them, a high, shrill call sounded from the cottage, a wailing scream flung toward the running plant-men like a command. Owen had a momentary glimpse of a strange, squat figure outlined against the door of the lighted cottage, then the mass of plant-men was pouring down on Walton and himself.

His automatic flashed into his hand and roared, once, twice, but the nearing plant-men rushed on, unhurt by the bullets that ripped through them. He heard a wail of utter despair from Walton, an exultant, shrill cry from the cottage, and then the plant-men had rushed down on him in a solid wave, knocking him from his feet. Something hard descended on Owen's head with stunning force, and as he sank to the ground, a great curtain of orange flame seemed to be unrolling itself in his brain. Then he felt himself falling, falling, tumbling down through bottomless depths of blackness and silence into complete unconsciousness.

5

OWEN awoke to find his hands and feet tightly bound. He was sprawling in the clearing, against the wall of the cottage. Beside him lay Walton, similarly secured, and he saw that no great time had passed since their capture, for it was still dark, although in the east a faint gray light was beginning to pale the brilliance of the stars.

From where he lay he could see most of the clearing, and he noted the extraordinary activity there. The place swarmed with the plant-men, hurrying to and fro on enigmatic errands. A high, thin voice was directing their movements from the door of the cottage, and Owen squirmed into a position from which he could see the voice's owner. He looked, then shuddered with deep loathing at the thing he saw.

It was Brilling that stood there, Brilling as Walton had described him, as the accelerating ray had left him. The enormous bald head, the dull white skin, the shapeless mass of flesh that was the body, with four twisting tentacles, on two of which it supported itself. As Owen stared at the monstrosity, it caught his gaze and came down toward the two. Standing in front of them, Brilling regarded the bound pair with mocking interest.

"So you came back, Walton?" he shrilled. "And you too, Owen. For what, I wonder!" And Brilling laughed, terribly.

Neither Owen nor Walton replied, and this seemed to enrage the monster before them.

"You came back in time to see my triumph," he raved, "the beginning of my reign." He scanned the eastern sky, then flung a muscled tentacle up in sudden exultation. "Look, you fools," he cried, pointing toward the east.

Both looked in that direction, toward the misty light of dawn, when something there caught their attention, something round and black that was drifting up into the sky from the distant eastern beaches. Up and up it floated, and now a far humming sound came to their ears, a purring whine that grew to a loud droning. As they watched, the first rays of sunlight struck the thing in the air and they saw it clearly. It was a vast globe of metal, a giant sphere that glinted dully in the sunlight. A huge globe all of a hundred feet in diameter, floating up into the sky like a weightless bubble.

The droning intensified, increased. Another of the round black shapes was floating up in the east, following the first. And another, and still another, then a cluster of them, until all of fifty gigantic globes hovered a mile above the island's eastern side, circling, droning, massing.

Brilling turned to the two bound men, his face alight with evil triumph. "My armies!" he boasted. "My plant-men!" His eyes were glowing. "They go to spread death in your world, to sweep earth with the accelerating ray!" And even as he spoke, the two saw the globes moving slowly across the island, passing out in compact formation, high above.

His face upturned in the morning sunlight, Brilling watched them go. Owen turned toward his friend, then his heart leaped with sudden hope. For Walton was stealthily rubbing the ropes that bound his hands against a sharp edge of stone that projected from the ground beside him.

Owen saw that none of the plant-men remained in the clearing, that all had hurried away to the eastern beaches to watch the launching of the flying spheres. And he saw that Brilling was still intent on the massed globes above, which were now passing out from above the island,

out over the sea. From a corner of his eye, without turning, he saw that Walton was fumbling at his foot-bonds, having freed his hands.

Brilling suddenly turned his attention toward the two prisoners. "And for you two," he resumed, "death!"

He turned and uttered a shrill call, a call that was echoed in the distance by a group of plant-men, returning toward the clearing. And even as he voiced that call, Walton had jumped to his feet and sprung, knocking Brilling to the ground, where the two rolled over and over, clutching and holding each other.

The four long tentacles coiled swiftly around Walton, grasping him in an iron grip, and at the same time Brilling cried out again to the approaching plant-men, a hasty, shrill command that was instantly answered by the latter, whom Owen could see in the distance, racing toward the aid of their master. And a hundred feet across the clearing was the open door of the laboratory!

With a sudden, convulsive movement, Owen rolled away from the cottage wall and out into the clearing. Twisting, squirming, rolling, he progressed across the clearing, passing the struggling Walton and Brilling, working his way toward the open door that meant life or death for the world. A chorus of wailing shouts came to his ears as the plant-men sped toward the clearing, but Owen rolled on, all his being centered on that giant black cylinder inside the open door, and the switches on its front. And on a single switch, at the extreme left-hand side.

The left-hand switch! He was at the door now, had rolled inside and was madly striving to squirm into an upright position, against the great cylinder. Would his bonds baffle him, even now? As he flung himself to his feet with a supreme effort, he saw the plant-men race into the clearing, heard Brilling's command and saw them race past the struggling pair, toward the laboratory. They were coming—coming——

Leaning far over, Owen grasped the left-hand switch between his teeth. As he did so, the first of the plant-men raced into the laboratory, swung up one of the daggerlike flame-throwers toward him. But even as the deadly weapon was leveled full toward him, Owen had jerked down the switch between his teeth, by a quick movement of his head, snapping it wide open. For a fraction of a moment there was an utter silence.

Then, from outside, came a sudden wailing cry, faint and fading. And as Owen stared, trembling, he saw the plant-men before him wavering, hesitating, saw their outlines soften, melt and change, seemed to glimpse them flashing through a thousand forms with lightning speed, then melt down to mere heaps of green slime, masses of green, slimy scum that smeared the floor and ground where the plant-men had stood.

Out beyond the open door, he saw Walton stagger to his feet, gazing in utter amazement at the heaps of slime around him. Then, reeling unsteadily into the laboratory, Walton had cut his bonds and the two walked out into the clearing, looking about as if unable to credit the miracle they had wrought.

Slime! Slime that lay where Brilling and the plant-men had moved a moment before, slime that lay wherever the plant-men had been gathered. All life on the island, save for the shielded two, had sunk down to the first base of life, under the full power of the reversing ray, had flashed down to slime like that which covered the tidal beaches ages before.

Walton shouted, now, and pointed out toward the sea. The massed globes there, that had been speeding away from the island, were wavering,

halting, driving about confusedly, the droning of their operation dying and ceasing, as one after another they plunged down into the sea, with great splashes. Spinning down into the sea, when the plant-men inside them were smitten down by the reaching, powerful ray. Smitten down—to slime!

The last of the flying globes splashed down and vanished, and Walton and Owen turned and looked at each other. There were tears standing in their eyes. Over the island lay a thick, stupendous silence.

6

As their little sailboat swept across the waters, Walton and Owen stood at its stern, watching the island drop behind. In the west, the setting sun hung at the water's edge, a great, flaming door into which the sea seemed to be pouring. And remembering the utter despair with which they had come down to the island so short a time before, Owen felt infinitely grateful, infinitely humbled.

Walton's thoughts were on something else. "Brilling gone," he said, "the plant-men all gone, the ray-projector destroyed by us—and I alone know how to make another."

"You are hardly likely to make another, are you?" asked Owen, smiling. But there was no smile on Walton's face as he answered.

"No, all that is finished, now. But it was close—close——"

As the two watched the island sink behind them, a silence fell on them, a silence of complete understanding. The sun had dropped down beneath the horizon, now, and they could hardly see the island in the darkening twilight. A moment longer they glimpsed it, a dark mass wavering against the distant skyline, then it had passed, had blended into the thickening dusk.

With a sigh, Owen turned around, and more slowly, Walton did likewise. Shoulder to shoulder, they looked out ahead. Thus the little yawl clove the waters, speeding steadily north through the swiftly gathering night.

A Requiem

***By* ERNEST DOWSON**

(Reprint)

Neobule, being tired,
Far too tired to laugh or weep,
From the hours, rosy and gray,
Hid her golden face away.
Neobule, fain of sleep,
Slept at last as she desired!

Neobule! is it well
That you haunt the hollow lands,
Where the poor, dead people stray,
Ghostly, pitiful and gray,
Plucking, with their spectral hands,
Scentless blooms of asphodel?

Neobule, tired to death
Of the flowers that I threw
On her flowerlike, fair feet,
Sighed for blossoms not so sweet,
Lunar roses pale and blue,
Lilies of the world beneath.

Neobule! ah, too tired
Of the dreams and days above,
Where the poor, dead people stray,
Ghostly, pitiful and gray,
Out of life and out of love,
Sleeps the sleep which she desired.

SOUL-CATCHER

by

ROBERT S. CARR

"The delicate netting in the big frame began to flutter as if something had got tangled up in it."

AROUND the hospital, folks said that John Dorsey was a nice old man—kind of puttery, but still a mighty good all-round M. D. He was small and mild and chubby and had soft white hair—the sort of kindly old gentleman you see telling stories to the kiddies in the park.

Old John had his ways, too; peculiar, maybe, but harmless. He was unobtrusive and fitted well into the general scheme of things around the hospital; unobtrusive, that is, except when the emergency cases came in. Old John was an emergency specialist. The ambulance boys would bring 'em in, screaming, moaning, or sometimes huddled up in a silent, blood-stained heap under the stretcher coverings and rush them into Old John's "emergency parlors," as one of the young college interns used to term it.

The ambulance boys would sometimes call me in from the orderly room to help them with some poor devil who had gotten more than his share of hard luck at a grade crossing smash. At these times I noticed that Old John wasn't the same as he generally appeared to be. He would flash into action as quickly as any first aid man in the front line trenches ever did. Old John had his own operating room, and as he didn't have much else to do, he always kept things in readiness for the emergency cases. The water in the sterilizing basin was always gently simmering over the sharp, wicked-looking things with which he did his wonder-work; the bandages, the antiseptics and the sponges were always laid out in readiness on a long table which he kept close at his side while operating.

Here is where Old John's peculiarity cropped out—he would not use an assistant or have another person in the room. The moment he heard the ambulance siren—and he always heard it before any of the rest of us did—he would hurry to his room, and by the time we had the howling unfortunate stripped and laid out and under the ether, Old John would know what the trouble was and be ready and waiting to begin.

"Clear out of here," he'd say good-naturedly, "but stay close around outside the door where I can call you if I need you."

Only, he never seemed to need any help.

But after all, there wasn't so much use for an assistant in the kind of emergencies we handled. The very messy cases often died in the ambulance boys' arms, much to their disgust, and the poison cases were taken care of with a stomach pump on the way to the hospital. The majority of Old John's patients required only to have a shut-off jammed on a squirting artery or a splintered bone yanked out of some vital organ in a hurry.

"Seems like with just me and the patient in there by ourselves, with no fool girl to get pale and shiver and act heroic, and everything right where I can reach it without having to ask for it or fall over somebody, I can do my best for a patient in the least time—and that's what counts." So spake Old John and no one disagreed.

One time McCarty said something kind of queer about Old John. McCarty's the slim young doctor who wears the thick horn-rimmed glasses and smokes so many cigarettes. It was when some Italian window-washer did an eleven-story nose-dive to the pavement and smashed himself all up. He didn't look very bad, though, so the ambulance boys rushed him in to Old John. Anybody with any sense at all would have known the wop would cash in inside of five minutes, but as an M. D.'s business seems to be taking nothing for granted, Old John ran everybody out of the room as usual and went to work. Pretty soon—according to McCarty—Old John came to the door shaking his head kind of sorrowful-like and said "too late, boys," the way he always does.

"Humph!" said McCarty, with a queer sideways look through those big glasses of his, "it does seem as if it took Dorsey a long time to find out that man was dead. And listen, Jack"—he looked up and down the hall before he spoke—"Old John didn't put his rubber gloves on all the while he was in there! Must not have even examined the man!"

Not being as smart as some, I didn't see anything special about that to bowl anybody over, but I kept still. I wasn't there when it happened, being busy at the time on the fifth floor sitting on the chest of some looney fever-case who thought he needed an airing out on the fire escape. After the little blond nurse in Ward 10 gave him a shot in the arm and got him quiet, she said to me, "Gee, but you're strong," and I kind of grinned and——

But as I was saying, Old John sure did do some wonderful things there by himself in that room. One time he took a bullet out of a fellow's head—I forget the long names the M. D.'s called the operation—but it made the other doctors sit up and take notice. Of course, a lot of the emergency cases died—but that's why they're emergency cases—because they're dying. None of the deaths were Old John's fault.

WELL, things went on as usual for a while; the interns and me bribing the drug room man to give us our little drinks of prescription whisky; the nurses smoking their cigarettes up in the roof-garden; and the ambulance boys charging the hospital double for every tire they bought.

One day along in the spring, when the auto-wreck cases began to pile in, Old John asked me to go down to the supply room and get him a new pair of surgeon's gloves. I said I would, and while I was down there rummaging around, I heard the ambulance siren, but didn't think

anything about it. I came back upstairs with the gloves and went to Old John's room. The door was closed and nobody was around. I suppose if I'd stopped to think I would have guessed that Old John had an emergency case in there, but I didn't—I went right on in. Now working around a hospital just naturally gets you to be mighty light-footed, and with the noiseless door and soft floor-pad, I guess I must not have made a sound. Old John had his back turned and didn't hear me come in. For a moment I looked, then sank back against the wall and stared while my eyes popped out and I began to sweat.

There was one of the usual busted-up fellows, all bloody and out-of-joint, lying on the operating table under the strong light. Over him bent Old John, holding in his hands a light rectangular frame about six feet long and two feet wide. Inside the frame was stretched the queerest, webbiest fine net-work I ever saw. The netting wasn't wire and it wasn't thread—I don't know what it was. A big, black wire ran all the way around this frame, under the handle by which Old John was holding it and into a round glass jar. The whole thing kind of reminded me of an old-fashioned indoor radio aerial. As I stood and looked I could see that the patient was pretty far gone, but that didn't seem to worry Old John. He stood very quiet, very tense—and waited. Soon the figure on the operating table quivered a little, then sighed and went limp all over, the way they do.

Right then is when the hair started to rise up on the back of my neck, for just a second after that fellow had passed out, the thin, delicate netting in the big frame began to flutter as if something had got tangled up in it—something you couldn't see. Then the glass jar that was hooked up with the big black wire began to fill up just as if someone was blowing cigarette smoke into it, only this stuff was thicker and gray-colored—not bluish like cigarette smoke. Pretty soon the net quit quivering and the jar was full of this smoky stuff. Old John laid down the frame on the dead man, unhooked the wire and held the jar up to the light.

"Got him, all right!" he chuckled to himself.

I guess I must have moaned or made some kind of a noise about then, for Old John wheeled quick as a cat, and when he saw me his eyes blazed up like a bad brain-fever case's. I don't know how long we stood like a couple of stone statues staring at each other—all I know is that I felt numb and sick and paralyzed all over, the same as I did the day I got hold of the wrong bottle down in the drug room.

Then little by little the glare died out of his eyes, till at last he set the jar down and smiled.

"Here's your rubber gloves," I said kind of shakily, and turned to go.

"Wait a minute," he said in his kindly soft voice, just as if nothing had happened.

I stopped. The gray vapor in the jar seemed to be restless, moving. . .

"You saw everything?" he asked.

I nodded.

He smiled the same sad way he does when he says, "Too late, boys."

"Sit down," he said, "I want to talk to you."

I sat down.

"I get all the bad cases in here," he began, "and I do all I can for them. I work mighty hard to keep them from dying and I often do it, don't I?"

Again I nodded.

"And listen," he said, leaning toward me, "if I can't save their bodies I—*save their souls!*"

Seeing the look on my face, he arose and led me to a tall black cabi-

net in one corner of the room. Lifting out a dummy shelf of books, he pointed with pride at row after row of glass jars, all filled with a thick, grayish vapor.

The instant he uncovered those things I nearly keeled over. It's a hard thing to explain, but I'll try to do it. Before I got this job, I worked behind the scenes in a big theater. Sometimes, when the stage was dark, I'd slip out to fix a set for the next scene, and from the very first I noticed a queer sensation caused by suddenly stepping into the gaze of so many eyes. I could *feel* the eyes of the audience out there in the dark even though I couldn't see them. And so it was with the jars in Old John's cabinet—I immediately felt that I was the target for a great many eyes. There was nothing I could see except those little jars full of something gaseous and gray, but——

Old John closed the cabinet and it was the same as stepping off the dark stage. The feeling of eyes was gone.

"I may need an assistant some time," he began again, "and since my secret had to be found out, I'm glad it was you and not one of those know-it-all young interns. I can depend on you to keep still about this, can't I?"

There was nothing for me to do but say yes. Suddenly the ambulance siren screamed in the distance, then screamed again, coming closer.

"Another case," he breathed. "Here—get behind this screen until after they have gone."

I hid, and in a few moments the ambulance boys had brought in another limp, sprawling bundle and turned it over to Old John. As they carried the other one out I heard him say his customary "too late, boys" and add something about "this one's going to take a lot of time." After he had locked the door I came out of hiding.

He motioned me to be still, so I stood quietly and watched him.

The case on the operating table was a big, beefy, middle-aged man, his throat and shoulders horribly crushed and bloody. I marveled at Old John's magic rubber-gloved fingers as they twinkled over the mangled area. He bent forward, quivering in his intensity of purpose, snatching up or flinging down an instrument like lightning; probing here; or with a fairylike lightness of touch tying up a severed artery. Truly Old John needed no assistant. Presently, after a most painstaking final examination, he stood back and sighed, shaking his head sorrowfully. I saw his lips silently form the words, "Too late, boys." Then suddenly another light came into his eyes, a different expression gripped his face. The transformation somehow reminded me of a story I had read about a Collie dog that tenderly guarded a flock of sheep by day, only to slip out and murder them by night.

Old John took the big net from its place of concealment.. He motioned for me to help him, and together we lifted the dying man and laid him on a long pair of hospital scales. As Old John felt his pulse, he pointed at the register hand, which stood at 173 pounds and 6 ounces. He made ready his soul-trapping apparatus and held the net close over the body. In a moment that indescribable yet definite change took place which marks the death of an unconscious person. Old John directed my eyes to the scale hand and I watched carefully. The hand held its mark steadily; then, precisely as the delicate web before me began to flutter, *the hand quickly dropped back four ounces!*

I sat dumbly as Old John completed the capture of the soul and stowed the jar away with the others. I had heard—had even read in the Sunday supplements—that the weight of a body decreases sharply at

death, but never had I expected to have it proved to me in such an awful manner. I became dimly conscious that Old John was speaking.

"You see, there *is* something definite which escapes from the body at death. That something I have in my jars, ha, ha! But the weight of the something is quickly replaced by air, exactly on the same principal as when you submerge an uncorked bottle in water—the air bubbles out and the water rushes in. . . . Look at the hand."

I looked, and saw that the body had regained the lost four ounces, the four ounces of gray nebulosity now imprisoned in the glass jar. . . .

Later, as I fled unsteadily down the corridor, I heard Old John announcing sadly that it was "too late, boys."

NEXT day I came upon Old John stretched on a couch in his room, oblivious of everything. I shook him gently, but as he did not wake, I left him to sleep on.

An hour afterward he called me in, shut the door, and went to some lengths explaining that he had been "astralizing" himself. The whole story didn't sound very plausible to me, this thing of leaving your body for a jaunt in spirit form. Still, I told myself, if anyone should know about that kind of things, it would be Old John.

To a rough, practical mind like my own, this astralizing process would seem more realistic and believable if a hypodermic syringe and a bottle of morphine went with it. But even so —there's nothing left on earth that's ungodly and spooky enough to surprize me any more. . . .

WHEN they told me Old John was dead I was almost afraid to go and look at him, but I went.

He hadn't been dead very long—hadn't been disturbed. He was stretched out on his old couch the same as if he were astralizing himself. But what made my knees start to give in like soft rubber was the sight of the janitor before the tall black cabinet, sweeping up the fragments of a great many small glass jars.

"Wha—what happened there?" I asked one of the nurses weakly.

"Why, when the elevator motor tore loose up in the attic it shook the whole building. Broke several vases in my ward and it must have jarred those glasses out of that rickety old cabinet. What on earth Old John was saving them for beats me."

I had been away from the hospital all day. The more I looked at those broken jars the queerer I felt. Pretty soon I stepped over to see Old John. The M. D.'s had his face covered up and were arguing loudly about apoplexy. I pulled the cloth down and looked at him.

Ugh! I'll never forget it! It was awful. He looked as if—oh, I can't half describe it!—looked as if he had been torn to pieces from the inside. Just as a light sack would break if there were a dozen big cats all trying to get out in different directions. Oh, his body was all together, it wasn't mangled, but—well, you could see that was the way he had died.

It took me quite a while to figure it out, but when I had, believe me, I didn't feel any better. I guess it must have happened like this:

Old John had astralized himself, and his body was lying there without any astral, or soul, or spirit, or whatever you want to call it. This must leave a sort of empty space, as near as I can understand. Then when all those jars full of captured souls, or astrals, were broken and released those things inside, then *they*—I guess you'd say "they"—saw Old John's body lying there empty—and they must have had it in for him,

keeping them canned up like that—maybe they all saw it was a chance to get a body and live again. . .. . They must have all crowded inside and taken possession of his body at once. . . . wonder what his astral did?

Maybe they fought. . . .

Anyhow, they couldn't all occupy one body, and so. . . .

This thought is driving me crazy.

The ambulance boys say I'm getting jumpy.

This hospital gives me the creeps. .

Guess I'll see if I can't get another job.

The Specter

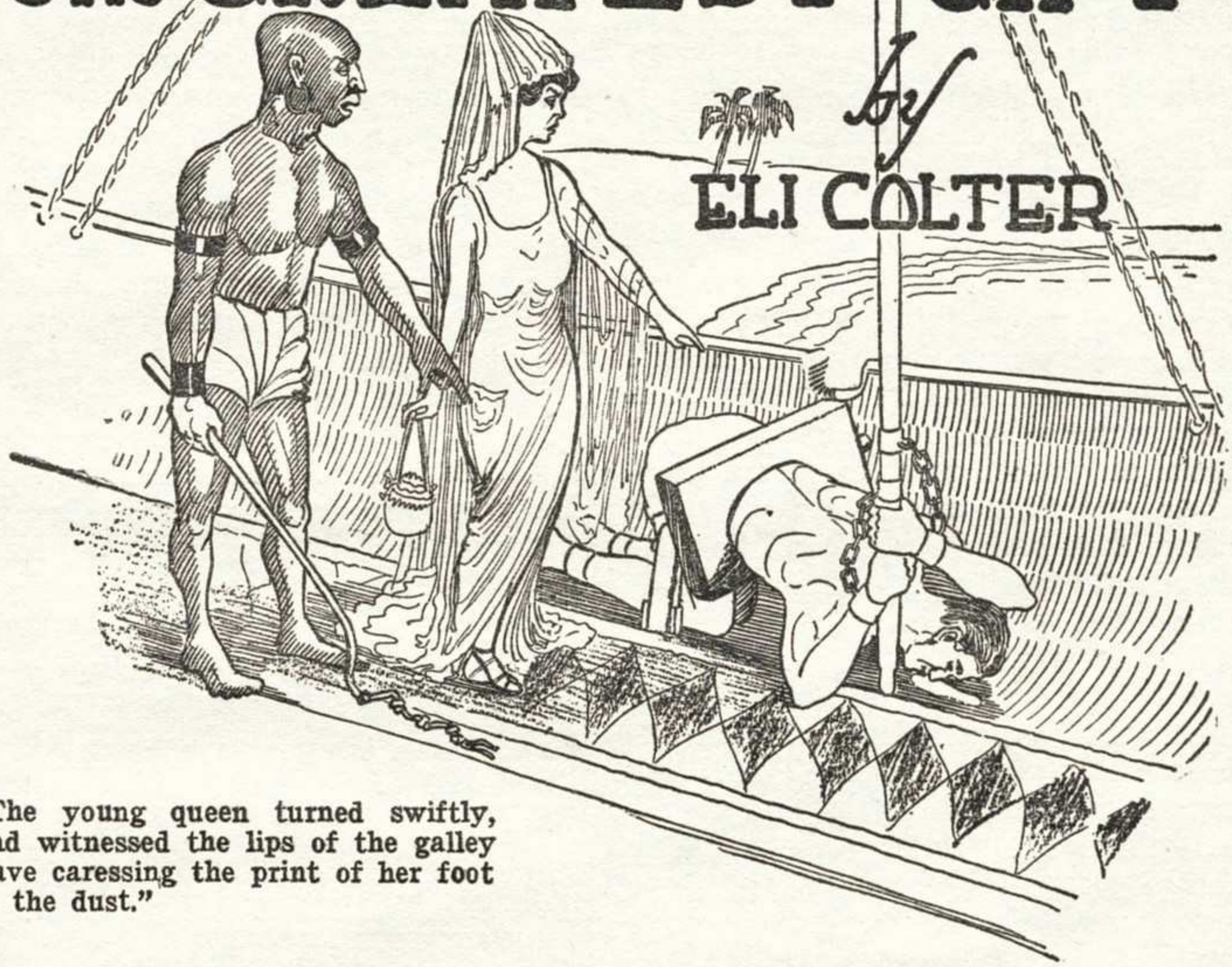
***By* MILES J. BREUER**

I dwell alone, behind the stone,
  In the Shadow's grisly gloom;
My watch I keep when flesh-folk sleep,
  Before Grohrishou's tomb.
At dank midnight in sulfur light
  My pallid shape I show;
And those that see, in terror flee,
  Nor ever respite know.
I glide among the staring throng
  Of gravestones in the dark,
For here I reign; 'tis my domain,
  This ghoulish Dead Men's Park.
And in the rooms of ghastly tombs
  I rattle dead men's bones;
My shrieking laughs 'neath epitaphs
  Are heard 'mid sighs and groans.
In every storm I show my form,
  The timids' blood to freeze;
I haunt their halls, their ruined walls;
  I leer from out the trees.
I live alone behind the stone,
  Whose gray top reeks with gore;
Each thing that runs my presence shuns—
  Alone forevermore!

The GREATEST GIFT

by

ELI COLTER



"The young queen turned swiftly, and witnessed the lips of the galley slave caressing the print of her foot in the dust."

OVER the face of the earth it was night, and in the soul of Lenore Andless it was night. But between the two nights there was a difference. The night that covered the earth was cool and dim, rippled with the intermittent songs of solitary birds, chased in a thousand lines of beaten silver by a great moon. The night in the soul of Lenore Andless was hard, black and hot with agony; there were no liquid sallies of melody from feathered throats to pierce the terrible silence; there was no moon.

She raised her drooped head to stare wordlessly into the face of the man who sat dumbly before her, then closed her eyes in a convulsive attempt to restrain futile tears; but the tears forced their way through her tight-shut lids and plashed upon her folded hands.

"Lenore—I'm sorry! What an asinine, weak, comfortless word—sorry! I'd give anything on earth if it wasn't like this. It's the wildest thing that ever happened on the crazy globe. I like you better than any woman I know. I'd hate like the devil not to see you again. But I don't love you. Why lie? And I *can't* love you. I've tried. That's the craziest part of it. I want to love you, I've tried, and I can't!"

"Don't, Tony!" The woman's face quivered and Antony Roe quickly turned away his eyes.

He rose to his feet and strode hastily to the window, where he stood rigid, staring out into the blue-white moonlight. He set his teeth savagely to control the tumultuous emotions raging within him. Three months before he had first seen Lenore Andless. From that time on he had known no

peace. They two had been drawn together by some involuntary attraction that held them as helpless as twigs drifting toward a whirlpool. He knew she had loved him instantly, but he had found himself unable to love in return.

Instead of love, he had swiftly become prey to emotions, urges and impulses that gripped him, dismayed him, frightened him till he felt himself shaken to the depths. He didn't flatter himself that he had ever been any parlor saint; he was no different from any other man of strong passions, ambitions and ideals. But the thing that had driven him since he first met Lenore Andless angered, stung and shamed him.

He knew he had hurt her to the quick; battered her sensitive spirit under the hammer-blows of hard, involuntary words. He had hated the words as he said them, and hated himself for being forced to speak them, yet he had been powerless to stay them. He had hard work staying his hands. He was conscious of the fact that he had *wanted* to hurt her, wanted to hurt her now. There had been times when he fought a wild desire to break her bones with his powerful fingers: breaking her heart with his denial of love was not enough. And again he had raged to beat her; to flog her with a cutting thong, to tear her flesh and see the crimson blood drip from her wounds. The manhood of which he had been not a little proud revolted at the horror which held him in a vise. He had determined he would conquer it, and found himself helpless.

Then he had tried to break loose from her, to get away and stay away. And he had found that effort as useless as the other. He was bound to her, bound by something more strong, more determined, more enduring than he. Weirdly, insensibly, he felt that it emanated from her. Possibly without her knowledge, possibly without possessing the slightest intimation of it, she held him. Only *she* could release him. And even if she realized it, he felt sure that she loved him too desperately to let him go. He remained bound, helpless as a man trussed hand and foot. And as he remained, gradually but with ghastly certainty the wild ungodly impulses were riding him to a fall. He had come within the aura of the final foe—Fear.

He feared for what was happening to him. He feared for his own sanity. He was no longer Antony Roe. He was some unholy fiend, swayed and tortured by the drive of some nameless terror that threatened to batter down his resistance and make of him that hideous anomaly—a male human that is less than a man. He wondered if she too had come under the influence of those wild currents. He had withheld from her, as a matter of course, the feral thoughts that raced through his brain. He knew she had found him increasingly silent. He had caught her watching him when he dared not speak for fear of what he might say. He knew she had seen him clench his hands and walk away from her. Intuition *must* tell her that he was in an agony of mind to be gone from her vicinity—yet she held him and would not let him go.

"Tony—what's the matter with us?" He felt her gaze on his back, but he did not move. Her voice rasped on raw strings down deep inside of him somewhere. "This is a wild, abnormal situation. What are we working out? What's got us? Why can't we beat it off?"

Beat—that word, *beat*. Roe wheeled from the window and walked toward her, his face white, his eyes half maniacal.

"I don't know what's got us, Lenore, but by God, something has!" He paused before her, his hands clenched at his sides. "Is there any

God ruling this universe? Ruling our lives and allowing mad currents to drive us to insane things? Is there any quality of mercy to help us through? Does He, does anybody, care what happens to us? Hell, no! We're only so many little ants crawling around on our little particular heap of dirt. If we go berserk and kill a few other ants, what does any God care? That much less work for Him—so many less ants for Him to bother about. So many——"

"Tony!" Lenore sprang to her feet and backed away from him, thrusting out her hands as though to ward off his words. "Tony—we're mad!"

"Yes—we're mad." Roe shook from head to foot as he caught himself into control with racking effort. "I am, at least. That's the only explanation. And I am going now, before I do something that will haunt me to suicide."

"Tony!" Lenore held out a pleading hand. "Tony—it may be forever!"

Roe caught her hand in both of his, and stood staring at her like a man straining his eyes through impenetrable blackness. In one split second he knew what life might have meant could he love this woman as she loved him—and knew he could not. With a smothered oath he dropped her hand, pushed her from him and rushed out the door.

FOR three hours after, Lenore Andless knew pain. There are no words with which to designate what type of pain, nor to describe the pitch of agony through which she passed before she finally threw herself exhausted on her bed. Exhausted by the travail itself. Exhausted by her wild effort to burst from the chaos into a glimmer of understanding. She stilled her mind and deliberately tried to imagine the world—her world—without Antony Roe.

Hers was an intense nature. To her a thousand little things were conduit for delight or pain that to others were less than conduit for a slight smile or a trivial annoyance. To a hundred others what was the passing in and out, the casual association, of Antony Roe? The sound of his voice—and her pulse leaped. The step of his foot on the stair—and the air sang. The touch of his hand—and the world lived. He had left a little heap of cigarette ash on the shining mahogany table-top: she would have frowned at the act in another. But it was Antony who had done it this time. She swept the ashes off into her palm with an indulgent smile, and tossed them out the tall window to the breeze. Where his shoulder had leaned against the wall her hand lingered a moment as she passed. The world was no world without Antony Roe. There was no giving him up. Hold him she must, or living were a silly farce.

She drifted to sleep. She never knew when. It was a deep sleep, and with its first wings brushing her weary eyes she slipped into a mighty, poignant, unearthly dream. She found herself in a strange country, of flat rolling fields, checkered with groves in which great buildings reared mountain-high into the ether. As though drawn by some invisible, irresistible power, she turned automatically toward one massive structure standing in a towering grove of eucalypts. The pungent odor of the spicy buds filled the air as she drew nearer. As she approached the building itself she saw that the high entrance door was standing open. She walked up to it and stepped within.

She found herself in a mighty domed room, and the roof was arching and blue and dim—like the sky; and the walls were shimmering and incorporeal—like banked clouds. Then her eyes strayed down the room, at the far end of which she saw a

great, exquisitely carven alabaster throne. Upon the throne sat a man, watching her, evidently awaiting her coming. Still drawn by that invisible force, she walked onward till she stood before him and looked up into his face.

It was like no face she had ever visioned. It might have been carven from the same alabaster as the throne; it was so purely flawless, so unearthly in beauty. The wide, unwinking eyes, as deep as all mystery and as compassionate as a child's dream of God, were the color of a priceless sapphire in a pool in the shade. The silk-spun hair, rippling to his shoulders, was the shade of a ripe corn-tassel in the sun. His garment was as delicately toned as the new leaves on an apple tree in spring. And all about him there was a shimmering, gleaming, golden glow. Even his alabaster skin shone with the molten light, as though that light came from within.

He spoke: "All those who have reached the pinnacle of pain turn to me. I, too, was crucified." His voice startled her. It was cool, liquid, deep; like the sound of a great bell under fathoms of water. "We reach the pinnacle of pain by one road—the road of Karma." The golden light played over his face as he repeated, "*Karma.*"

"But what is Karma?" The girl drew back, as though a chill wind had blown across her forehead.

"The Great Law of Readjustment. No more—no less." The voice of the Shining One was like the tone of a pipe in the wind. "Men come to earth young souls untried, unproved, born equal in the beginning. Each infant soul is given its share of strength, faith, love and hope. Every thought, every dream, every emotion man knows as he passes through life sends forth a thread of vibrating energy. As each thread spins out, each man weaves his pattern of love or hate, mercy or vengeance, anger or pity, passion or pain. And he weaves also his future lives and his ultimate destiny. He comes back to earth again and again—with each life accruing something of attainment or failure, something of nobility or grossness. And death comes, and the body rots, and the soul goes into the higher planes to review the past life, to segregate the best from the experiences, to weigh the weakness and folly, to count the mistakes and heed the lessons learned. Then he is born again upon the earth, picks up the old trails and begins again. Every debt of act and deed must be paid over in double coin. And so it goes from life to life till the score is paid. And that—is Karma.

"But listen." The Shining One bent toward her, and his voice was as little silver chimes in a deep well. "There are times when, through some act of folly or cruelty in another life, the human finds things become too heavy for his soul's grace. And he may break. I grieve to see men break. I would that they should see, and trust, and fight through. So much is lost when humans break!" The voice of the Shining One was like the wail of a cello in the night in the rain. "But see! Evolution eliminates waste. You were near to breaking. I called you here that you might find faith, and strength, faith in the hour of misunderstanding. Mercy. Have you forgotten who died—for mercy?"

Mercy! What wild dream was this? Even in her sleep, Lenore remembered that Tony had cried out for mercy.

"There—see! There is the Curtain of Memory." The Shining One pointed to the far side of the room at the left, and Lenore turned her head. Across the wide space of the alabaster wall hung a great curtain of silver tissue. "Look back two thousand years, and remember." The

voice of the Shining One was like a temple bell on the top of a mountain.

ON THE silver curtain shifting shadows began to appear, assume form and color. Then before the girl's eyes grew a scene so like to life that the silver curtain faded and nothing was there but a wide flat river flowing sluggishly between sandy banks. Down the river, straight toward her, came a huge barge. It was decked in all the panoply of a royal house, shaded by striped awnings, propelled by thirty oars rising and falling rhythmically as one, each oar wielded by a slave chained in the galley to his bench.

On the silk-strewn and cushion-matted deck stood several women, waving fans, arranging pillows, striving constantly to insure the comfort of the young queen lolling indolently among them. As the barge came within the foreground the young queen pointed to a spot on the sandy bank.

"We shall pause there to rest. I hunger." Her voice came faintly, as from a great distance, yet clearly so that Lenore heard every word.

One of the serving women spoke sharply to a great black slave standing in the bow of the barge. He wheeled to call an order to the thirty white slaves at the oars. The nose of the barge swung slowly, the pace of the boat slackened, the young queen rose among her cushions and the barge touched the bank. The huge negro called to three others, and between them the four blacks raised a wide gangplank and carried it across to the low flat side of the boat where entrance and exit was made. They laid the plank from barge to bank and stepped back two on either side, arms folded across ebony chests.

The women lifted the young queen to her feet, filling their arms with silks and cushions to make for her a bed of ease on the sand, and waited her bidding. She paused a moment, swaying gracefully on her slender sandaled feet. She yawned idly, one pink palm over her mouth. Then she walked slowly toward the gangplank, her women proceeding and following her.

The slaves in the galley bowed their heads that they might not see her face as she passed. Near the cut-in exit-way one white slave sat so near, holding aloft his oar, head upon his breast, that he could have reached out and touched her as she passed. For an instant his eyes flashed up at her, and in them was the look of a man who had worshiped the sun, hopelessly, from afar. Then he dropped his gaze. None had seen the look. In the lap of the meandering current the barge lurched. The young queen swayed and stumbled, her foot missed the velvet carpet spread for her and she caught at the galley stanchion to steady herself. The white slave winced and caught his breath, but he did not move. The young queen caught her balance, replaced her foot upon the velvet carpet and started to pass on.

But the eyes of the white slave had followed her foot as it stumbled, and where she stepped he saw that she had left the print of her sandaled foot in the dust at the edge of the galley stall. His body shook, he leaned swiftly and kissed the print of her heel. But as he did so the stanchion dug harshly into his side, and he caught his breath in a low exclamation of pain. The young queen turned as swiftly as he had bent, just in time to grasp the thing he had done—to witness the lips of a galley slave caressing the print of her foot in the dust. Her face went hard with anger, she drew herself to her slender height, turned to the slave nearest her and commanded:

"The scourge!"

Over the barge settled a silence, a void of shocked suspense. Scarcely breathing, the other slaves held their faces low, and the women stared in horror at the man who had dared to kiss the footprint of a queen. The negro to whom the queen had spoken crossed the deck to return with a long knotted whip in his powerful hands. The young queen pointed to the offender, commanding sharply:

"Twenty lashes! Twenty stripes across the back!"

The huge negro braced himself, the muscles of his arms bulged, the knotted thong swung high in the air, and as it whistled downward, stinging across the bare back of the galley slave, it cut the white flesh like a dull knife, leaving a crimson stripe in its wake. Again it rose and fell, and again, and yet again. The young queen stood watching coolly, counting the slow, brutal slashes. And her eyes were contemptuous, and her face was cold, and her red lips moved as though she were savoring something sweet to the taste.

When she had counted twenty, the white slave was unconscious in his chains, his back one blood-sodden lacerated wound, and the ugly thong dripped crimson drops into the print of the sandal in the dust. The young queen issued a low command. The negro stooped, roughly seized the beaten man's chin in his hand and raised the fallen head that all might witness the humiliation of one who had dared kiss the footprint of a queen. Then there was visible for the first time the face of the flogged white slave.

"Tony!" Lenore cried, wincing in sharp pain. The young queen turned, starting as though she had heard, and Lenore Andless looked straight into her own features. "No!" The girl shivered, grasping at the arm of the Shining One. "No! I never did that to Antony!"

"Two thousand years ago," he answered her, as the picture faded, leaving only the alabaster wall and a singing silence. "And being the first cruelty, it is the last to be paid—after the way of humans. And being the cruelty of Pride, it was wanton. Why will a soul be proud? Why will even a fool be proud—when God is not?" The voice of the Shining One was like the sighing of a harp-string in an utter void. "From conquered Pride comes Humility. Out of Pain is born Compassion. There is no royal road to peace—but only a stony path of the pilgrim's progress and atonement. When we have crossed the Hills of Pain, when we have returned to life in love all we took from it in selfish greed, when we have traversed the Pit of Darkness to find Faith and come out unafraid, when we have laid upon the altar of Renunciation the Greatest Gift—the score is paid. And what for you is the Greatest Gift? The Ultimate? The All? The most you have to offer Life?" The Shining One's face was a pitying mask, molded out of the sorrow of all the world.

"Antony!" Lenore shrank backward, whispering the word starkly. "Antony! Take everything else—but don't ask me to give up Antony!"

"I ask nothing. I *may not* ask!" The voice of the Shining One was like the thin picked notes of a mellow mandolin. "You must do as you will. But in only one way lies peace. Two thousand years ago you took from him love and the homage of his spirit—took it contemptuously, as the due mead of your royal station, and when it broke its bounds that others might see—you gave in return humiliation and pain. Is not the one course for you obvious?" His challenging voice was like a trumpet sounding the last rally.

"Lord—forgive!" Lenore raised her hands in supplication, but her cry was only a whisper in all space.

"From those whom we have wronged must we ask forgiveness." The voice of the Shining One was like the reed of a mighty organ rolling down through the corridors of Time. "To those from whom we have taken, must we make return. Two thousand years ago he was chained. He is still chained. The way is clear. Go in peace." The light that radiated from the Shining One grew to such blinding intensity that she cried out and hid her face.

THEN Lenore Andless suddenly awoke in her bed, and knew nothing of how she got there. She rose, turned on the light and paced the floor, recalling in detail her wild, strange dream. *Was* it a dream? Something hovered over her, close, like the thin threads of memory, reaching back into dead ages, and she felt the warm sun on her bare shoulders, the sway of a barge under her feet. It was no dream—the way *was* clear. She shivered in agony at the thought of seeing Antony Roe pass from her, yet in the resolve of renunciation and restitution came the steady calm of peace.

All through the rest of the night she paced the floor, readjusting her balance, growing used to the barren plane of life without Antony Roe. And when morning came, and the dawn broke in her window, she went and stood with her face to the light and knew that she had the strength to set him free. Strange now, to think she had ever been so narrow-souled as to want to hold him chained when he was in torment to go. She sighed, a little sigh of relief, the sigh of one grateful for the close of a terrible battle, went to the telephone on the wall and called him.

Strained and groping his voice came over the wire: "Yes? Lenore? What is it?"

"I want you to come here—for the last time. I have one thing to say to you—and then I shall not ever see you again. Can you come immediately?"

"Immediately."

The telephone clicked in her ear, and she hung the receiver back in place, turned and walked into the other room where they had so often sat and talked. How to tell him? What to tell him? Dare she simply say that she had come to the conclusion that they were of more trouble to each other than they were pleasure, and he had best go his way? She caught herself, smiling grimly. The eternal female! Seeking to send him away from her baffled, hurt, obviously to himself the offender—to save her face and leave her right of woman-pride unmarred. Pride—Pride, mocking, futile—fighting the ignominious defeat of crying, "I was wrong. Forgive!"

One way, the Shining One had said. One way. One way to pass, to extend the Greatest Gift. Out of Conquered Pride—she began pacing the floor, setting her teeth on the flame of hot shame for the last hold of littleness. Then she heard his rap on the door, heard the door open, heard his step across the hall, heavily ascending the stairs, saw him throw open the door and come toward her. She stopped and stood very still. Barely three feet from her he halted, peering into her face. In her eyes there was an unearthly light. He did not know it, but it was the light of supreme sacrifice. Something in her face startled him.

"Antony—you are free." Her words startled him, yet even as they reached his ears he knew that he *was* free. "I shall not hold you any more. I did not know I was holding you. Go wherever you will—across the world—to the farthest planet. Nothing matters save that you find peace. But before you go, look back. Antony—*look back two thousand years—and forgive!*"

Roe did not move. His mind shook under her words, steadied, careened upward, searching through the fog of time. Something began to sing in his ears, like the humming sound of great wheels spinning in space. He felt like a man in a dream. Strange feelings and thoughts bore down on him. Remember? What? What was that upon his ankle? A chain. What was that falling from his hands? An oar. What was that whistling through the air? A bloody thong. What was that burning, biting, tearing his flesh? A knotted rope. What was that she had said? "Twenty stripes across the back."

He swayed on his feet, staring at the carpeted floor. But he saw no carpet and no twining design. His starting eyes saw only dust—dust—and the print of a sandaled foot.

"Antony—*can't* you forgive?"

What was it she had said? "Nothing mattered but that he find peace." Compassion for his cruelty now, humility for her own cruelty then, renunciation of the love that had meant better than life. Sacrifice seeking to bestow the greatest gift in atonement.

Roe lifted his head, staring into her face. His hands clenched at his sides. The sting of the lash across tortured flesh passed. And suddenly strife and terror were gone, and nothing remained but a strange sense of having at last attained what he had hungered for two thousand years. One step and she was in his arms. His voice was crying incoherently in her ears:

"My queen! There is nothing to forgive—*I love you.*"

WOLF

***By* A. LESLIE**

Eyes of flame and a heart of hell,
Voice like the toll of a funeral bell;
Thews of steel, and velvet paws,
Rapier fangs and dagger claws.

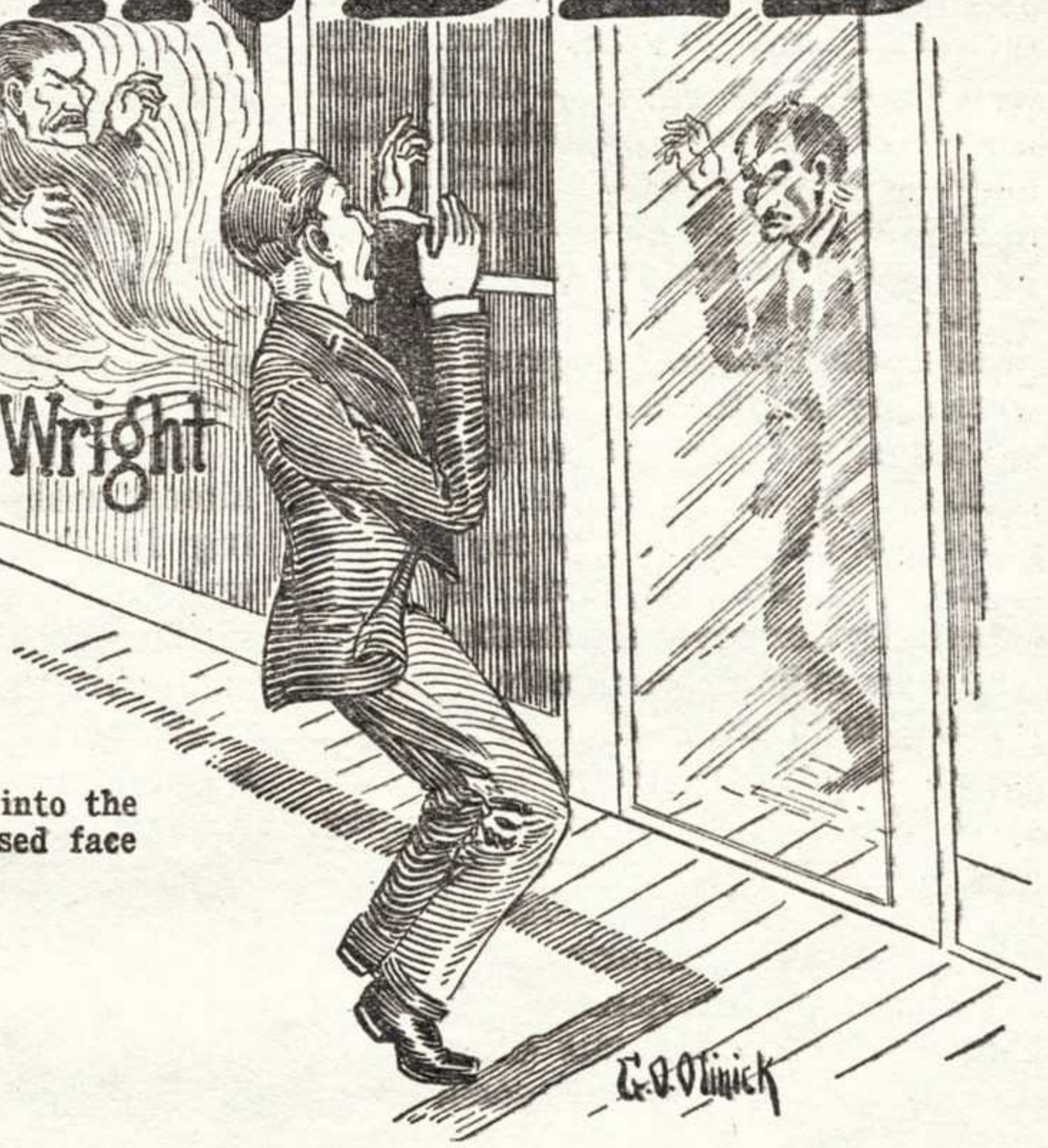
A soul? the ravished soul of a man,
Bound by the arts of the devil clan;
Seared and chained by blood and lust,
Its draggled wings trailed in the dust:
A howling thing 'neath prison bars,
Choked in the shadow of the stars;
Wallowing in the crimson feast,
Befouled by the fetid stench of the beast
As out of the awful eyes it glares
While the white-fanged monster rips and tears.

Oh moonlight trail and panting breath!
Oh wolf! wolf! wolf!—Gray shaft of death!

GUARDED

by

Sewell Peaslee Wright



"In the pier-glass he looked into the sneering, cynical, vice-impressed face of his brother."

THE house was an ancient, rambling affair, set well back from the road, and hidden from the view of the casual passer-by by a tall and moldering brick wall, overrun with dank vines and covered, on the shady sides, with a patina of moss and obscene lichens that seemed to emit a sickly, musty odor of decay.

The beautiful lawn that had at one time been the pride of some garden-er's heart was now a rank and grotesque jungle of noxious weeds. What had once been a beautiful white-pebbled drive, but was now little more than a weed-grown path, swung through the grounds in a sweeping, graceful curve to the porte-cochère and hence to the cupolaed stable, which was now but a vine-covered shell of decay that hesitated on the very brink of utter ruin.

But it was the occupant of the ancient country estate, rather than the place itself, that interested me most. In my strolls along the lonely road that led by the place, I not infrequently saw him walking moodily along the grassy and desolate drive, or sitting in solitary and contemplative grandeur on the great circular porch, now warped and wavering, that nearly encircled the massive, rambling pile.

Once, as I had passed, he had been standing close to the rusted, grilled iron gates that sagged from two weary pillars, guarding the entrance to the grounds, and I was struck most exceedingly with the power of the old man's personality.

His skin was rather dark, and his face in shape was reminiscent of some portraits of Shakespeare: wide across the forehead, which bulged

slightly, tapering down to a long and extremely pointed chin. The eyes were set deeply in their sockets, and were cold and piercing blue. His mouth was large and thin of lip, and he seemed to smile a continuous and sardonic smile that had nothing of mirth and very little of humanity in it. It was like the smile one sees on masks; carved, impersonal, sneering.

He studied me as I approached, returned my salutation civilly enough, and rather to my surprize, made some comment on the weather. Willing indeed to chat with my mysterious neighbor, I stopped, and we conversed idly for several minutes.

It was evident instantly that he was well bred and well educated, and his voice, while possessed of a peculiarly dry and unmusical quality, held the subtle inflection that is a characteristic of the voice of those who speak with authority.

"Since we are nearly neighbors, then," he concluded our chat, "you must drop in and see me some evening. You must be lonesome, up there in your big house"—and he nodded toward my country place, the roofs of which were just barely visible in the distance as they glimmered in the level rays of the downing sun—"and I am sure it is very lonely here. I shall look forward to a visit, sir!"

That was the beginning of the odd friendship that for several months existed between Joseph Morton and myself. I found that he lived utterly alone, using but three or four of the many rooms in the monstrous old house, doing his own cooking and housekeeping, and doing it with a meticulous and painstaking niceness that bespoke years of bachelor experience.

I could never induce him to allow me to play the host; so far as I know, he never left the grounds of his ancient and festering estate.

"I am here for a reason, Clarke," he would say when I pressed him to allow me to return his many courtesies. "It gives me pleasure to have you here, and I trust that pleasure is reciprocated. Some day I may tell you more; for the present I know you will excuse me if I decline."

There was a constant air of mystery about the man. His almost revolting appearance was so utterly at variance with the splendid breadth and beauty of his words and thoughts.

He would gaze at me with his hard, almost malignant eyes, his lips curling in that eternal sneering smile, and give voice to the most splendid of sentiments. We discussed art, history and literature, but never in their modern aspects. He seemed to know nothing of the living artists and writers, and nothing of modern history or politics. Religion, a prolific subject for discussion always in such talks as ours, Morton invariably sidestepped, and once when I deliberately put a question to him on this subject, in such a way that he could not avoid an answer, he said merely, "You will have to pardon me if I do not discuss that," and passed smoothly on to some other subject.

I was sorry I could not inveigle the old man into an argument on the subject of religion, for it is one in which I have been long interested. Finally, in order to see if I could not in some way open up such a discussion, I one evening voiced the sentiment that I was an utter atheist, believing in neither God nor devil, heaven nor hell.

"When you're dead, you're dead, and there's an end to it!" I stated flatly.

I had rather expected my host to take instant exception to my statement. Instead, he merely studied me carefully, his lids half closed, and in his hard and oddly baleful eyes a thoughtful light, as though he weighed a momentous problem in his mind.

"What time is it?" he asked abruptly.

I looked at my watch. "Three after 10," I said.

"I thought it was later than that; I am glad it isn't, for I want to tell you a story, Clarke. A long story, that I think will interest you, who believe that after life there are the worms—and nothing more. A true story, too, Clarke!"

THE old man leaned back comfortably, as though tired, in his chair. His head rested against the faded, worn velvet back, and his eyes were closed, almost as though he slept.

"Once upon a time, as all stories begin, there were two brothers. Let us call them George and Harry. George was the older; a serious, studious, rather silent lad, the exact opposite of his brother. Harry, even as a child, took an inhuman delight in torturing his pets, and in performing various small acts of vandalism. He grew up into a licentious, cruel, roistering bully of a man, who even in his teens had a reputation such as few men would care to bear.

"The mother of the two boys had died in giving birth to Harry, and on her death-bed the mother had given the baby in charge of George, although at the time he was only a lad himself, barely old enough to remember. The father was but the mold in which Harry's evil personality had been cast; that he died a few years later was but a blessing.

"Harry was constantly on the mind of the older brother. The dying mother's charge rested heavily on the lad's studious shoulders, but despite all he could say or do, his evil-living, drunken brother went hell-bent on his way. It almost drove George insane, but his every effort proved fruitless.

"George was twenty-seven, and Harry nineteen, when the older brother, coming down-stairs one night in the dark, in search of a forgotten book, slipped and crashed to the bottom of the polished oaken stairs. They found him the next morning, his head bent back under his body—dead.

"That is, the body was dead. George himself was not dead. He felt the crashing impact of his body on the stairs, felt a flaming wave sear his body as he struck the floor below. For an instant his brain seemed bathed in a flashing, kaleidoscopic flood of colors; new colors, out of the eye's range of sensitivity; odd, weird colors that blazed with unearthly and terrifying beauty. Then he——"

"But my dear Morton!" I interrupted. "You speak of things of which you can not know. You expect me to believe all this?"

He opened his eyes, but did not move his head.

"Let me finish my little story, Clarke; then you can decide for yourself," he said evenly. "Surely you find the tale interesting?"

I nodded; something in the blazing intentness of the man's eyes subduing the mocking, jeering words that were just behind my lips. "Go on, please," I said. "I'll not interrupt again."

"Then he rose from the floor, and, impelled by some strange instinct, looked down at his feet. *He stood looking down at his own still figure on the floor.*

"It took him some seconds to realize the truth, and then it came in a flash that sent him reeling back into the shadows of the room. *He was dead!*

"The death that was his I shall not speak of. It is not well to prematurely prepare those who must follow in the way of all flesh. It is a journey one best takes without charts or guides, for no man travels the same trail.

"George remained there in his home. In life he had worried continually about his brother and his wild, dissolute ways, and this same solicitude seemed to tie him to Harry even after he had passed out of this world.

"For a long time, George could discover no way to help. He saw his father die, a few months after his own death, but, strange as it may seem, he never saw him after he passed over. Harry, coming into possession of the family estate, went rapidly from bad to worse. On several occasions he nearly killed companions with whom he went fighting, for Harry in those days had the strength of an ox, and a fiery and evil temper that rode him haglike.

"George had learned that the sins of the earth are punished when the earthly body is discarded, and he knew his brother Harry was jeopardizing his very soul. Some day he would commit murder, the unforgivable sin, and then——. Knowing what he knew, things too horrible to pour into human ears, he tried frantically to find some way to check the mad and evil activity of his brother. And at last he found a way.

"One night as Harry was sleeping, George concentrated all the power that was in him on an idea that he wished to penetrate Harry's consciousness. He had read something of thought transference, the power of suggestion, and other kindred subjects, and he was trying, in a crude way, to put his meager knowledge to a good purpose.

"Instead of doing what he had intended, he found himself drawn, somehow, to the sleeping figure of his brother. He never knew just what force guided him in his actions. He came close to the restless, tossing figure on the bed, bent over it. Something seemed to be pressing from above; he felt strangely heavy and a smothery feeling overcame him. He seemed engaged in a sort of nightmare struggle with somebody or something that he could not see nor feel, and then he seemed to sink into a warm and yielding blackness.

"For a moment he rested, and then he opened his eyes. He found himself gazing up at the ceiling, barely discernible in the faint gray light that was filtering in from the east windows of the room.

"Startled, he leaped up. He struck the floor with a resounding thud of bare feet, and gazed around wildly, down at his body, his hands, his feet. He rushed to a great pier-glass that stood at one end of the room, and peered eagerly into its shining depths. Out at him stared, not the nothingness that would have greeted him a few minutes before, not the pale and ascetic features of his own earthly body, but the sneering, cynical, vice-impressed face of his brother! Somehow, he had driven out the vital part of Harry's own personality, and supplanted it with his own! He had switched souls!

"For months George held possession of his brother's body. The change was the wonder of all who knew him. The servants grew afraid of him; they thought he must be crazed. His boon companions, neglected now, sought him and grew angry when he—or George, as you choose!—would have none of them.

"George was conscious, at times, of an intangible outside influence beating in the air around him, as a bat flutters at the shutters of a closed window. But he was resolved that his brother's evil personality should never again invade his body. George would shut out his brother's wicked soul and leave it disembodied, so that it could harm no one, no longer foul the family name, and at last might pass to the testing without at least the black spot of murder upon it.

"But George figured without the evil forces of the world that surrounds us here on earth, invisible and intangible, yet powerful and very real. He awoke one night in the midst of a terrible and ghastly nightmare, gasping for breath and with a deathly chill creeping over him. He knew what was happening, and he fought with all the energy that was in him, but it was useless. There was a sensation of sudden expansion, of great cold, and he was beside the bed looking down at his brother. Harry was sitting up, looking wildly about the room, and the house rang with his shoutings and cursings. He knew what had happened, and he was afraid.

"I will not weary you, nor tax your belief by telling you the struggle that George waged. Suffice to say that at last he won out; he could enter the body of his brother at will. All save the body became George, not Harry.

"There was only one thing that he found had to be considered. He could not remain in permanent possession of the body. If he tried to, his own ego, worn down by the cares of the body, grew weak, while the ego of his brother, waxing angry and powerful in the outer darkness, could come in for a time and drive George out for a few hours, until he had regained his strength.

"He got into the habit, therefore, of relinquishing his hold on this poor body every night at 12 o'clock, turning it over to his brother's own ego until the dawn. It was safe to do so, because when he was outside his body, Harry was in utter darkness, and he was horribly afraid of darkness when in the body. He slept only in a brilliantly lighted room, and since George flouted Harry's friends during the daylight hours, they never sought him out at night, and he dared not brave the black night to go to them. George dismissed all the servants, so that Harry could not wreak his vengeance upon them, and so while Harry's evil and malignant soul for a few hours every night held full possession of his own gross body, he could do none of the evil that was in his mind.

"And so it was, Clarke, that a dead man kept the pledge he had made his dying mother. Yet you say that after this life there is naught but the worms!"

There was a ring of sincerity, a deep undertone of conviction, in my host's voice that could not be ignored, yet the weird and impossible story he had related failed to make an impression on me. It simply transcended belief.

"Your story is interesting, my dear Morton, but you could hardly expect me to accept it as proof of your own ideas regarding life after death," I shrugged smilingly. "It is too far-fetched; it deals with material you could not by any chance know about; it——"

My host leaped from his chair, his eyes blazing.

"You fool!" he shouted, and his dry, harsh voice rang like the screech of a carrion bird. "You utter fool! The real names were not George and Harry, but Thaddeus and Joseph—*and the last name was Morton!* This evil body you see before you is that of Joseph Morton, but the mind that directs it is that of——"

He stopped short as the mellow voice of a church bell in the distant village came stealing through the air. The blood drained suddenly from his face, and he made a quick gesture of despair.

"*God!* Your watch was slow, Clarke; it's midnight! Go! *Go*, man, before it is too late. It is *his* hour, and I can not resist him! Oh, you fool, *go!* Can't you see——"

His voice died in a harsh rattle, and he swayed, staring at me with glassy, lifeless eyes.

Terror-stricken, I had leaped away from my crazed host, but seeing his present condition, I paused for an instant. Would to God I had gone, and never seen what next greeted my eyes!

A sudden and horrible change came over the man's face; it was as though all the evil lineaments of his features were subtly deepened, accented, made more hellishly repulsive. His glassy eyes lit up with the light of an accursed intelligence, and his voice, raised but an instant before in desperate warning, now sank to a throaty murmur.

"My dear Clarke," he said fawningly, "I am sorry I startled you so. It is a—a little weakness of mine, this fear of midnight!" He chuckled evilly, and came slowly closer to me, his eyes alight with a hungry and menacing gleam that caused me to shrink from him, speechless with surprize and fright.

I had the distinct impression that this was not the man I knew at all. He wore the same clothes, had the same face and figure, and the transition, if transition there had been, had occurred before my very eyes, yet I could not force my senses to accept this gloating, leering figure as the kindly old man who had, four or five hours ago, so courteously bidden me welcome.

My God! Could it be possible that the story was true? It was unbelievable, but—*God!* He was coming closer, his arms dangling like a gorilla's, and his bestial head thrust forward ominously. And for the instant, my nerveless legs refused to obey my commands.

"Sit down! What are you afraid of?" he commanded gruffly.

Instead of doing as he ordered, I bolted for the door. Morton leaped after me, curses showering from his slavering mouth.

I flung the door open just in time, slammed it in the face of my pursuer, and spurning the gravel of the drive with flying feet, fairly flew toward the outer gate.

As I swung the rusty and creaking halves of the ancient gate together, I paused for a moment with beating heart to look back at the gloomy old pile I had just quitted.

Morton was standing in the doorway, his figure clearly silhouetted by the streaming yellow light. He had his hands on his hips, and he was shouting and roaring with obscene mirth, like some malicious demon standing on the edge of hell's yawning pit and laughing at the anguish of the damned.

SO FAR as I am concerned, this is the end of the story. I have never called on Morton since that night. At times, when I drive by his place, I see him wandering aimlessly, a pitiful figure, along the desolate and weed-choked drive, or sitting, motionless and alone, on the sagging, rotting porch.

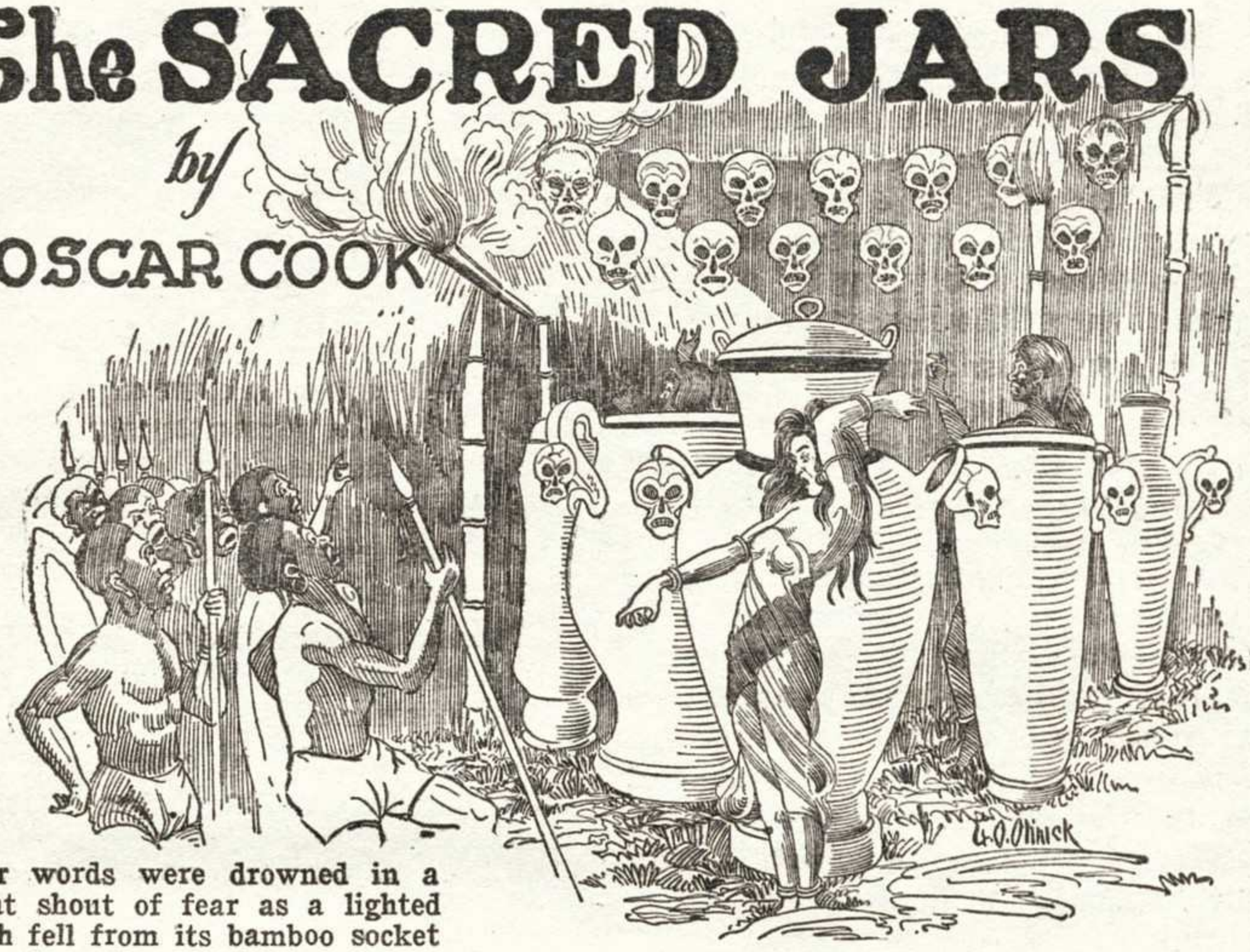
Probably you will not believe the story Morton told me. I do not blame you. Sometimes, I doubt whether I believe it myself.

But when I recall the hideous metamorphosis that changed a friend into a demon seeking my very life, and all in less than the time it takes a church bell to toll the hour of 12—when I live that moment over again, I tell you, friend, *I know!*

The SACRED JARS

by

OSCAR COOK



"Her words were drowned in a great shout of fear as a lighted torch fell from its bamboo socket onto the palm-roofed house."

DENNIS, district officer of the Labuk district in British North Borneo, had been spending a few days "local leave" on Tingling Estate, for Walkely, the manager, and he were great friends. The night before his departure the two men had sat together in the latter's mosquito room, fitted up like a "den," and with pipes well lit had roamed in desultory manner over many fields of conversation.

For the last ten minutes or so there had been silence between them —the silence of friends in complete accord. Dennis broke it.

"Throw me a match, Walley," he said.

Walkely moved as though to comply, then stopped as his "boy" entered, carrying a tray containing whisky and soda, which he placed on a table near his master. He was about to depart when Walkely spoke.

"The *Tuan* is leaving tomorrow before breakfast, Amat. Tell Cookie to make some sandwiches and see the Thermos flask is filled with hot tea."

"*Tuan.*"

"And hand these to the *Tuan.*" Walkely pointed to the matches.

Amat obeyed and went out.

Walkely rose from his long chair, mixed the drinks and held out a glass to Dennis.

"To our next meeting," he said, and raised his glass.

Dennis followed suit.

Then, yawning, Dennis rose, and stretching his arms well above his head, looked sleepily in the direction of his bedroom.

Walkely nodded assent and held open the mosquito door.

A few minutes later the house was in darkness, save for the lights that shone through the open windows of the two bedrooms.

The rooms were on either side of a large dining room, which in turn

opened out from the main veranda, off one side of which was built the mosquito room. At the far end of the dining room were two folding doors that led to a passage and pantry, and thence down some steps to the kitchen and "boys'" quarters at the rear of the house.

As Dennis undressed he sleepily hummed the latest fox-trot record received from England. Then dimming the light he got into bed.

From where he lay he could hear Walkely moving about his room, and could see the reflection his light cast on the exposed *attap* (dried sago leaves) roof of the house. As he idly watched, speculating dreamily on Walley's success as a manager, Walkely's lamp in turn was lowered. Followed the creaking noise of a body turning on a spring mattress—then silence.

Dennis rolled from his left to right side preparatory to sleep.

"Nighty-night, Old Thing," he grunted.

"Night," came back the sleepy reply.

Then all was quiet save for the gentle rustling of the rubber trees and the occasional hoot of an owl.

Presently Dennis awoke to full alertness. He was not strung up; no sound nor fear nor nightmare had aroused him. He was simply and quietly awake. Turning on his side he looked at his watch. The hands pointed to 2 a. m. He closed his eyes, but sleep would not be wooed.

For a long time Dennis lay in the nearly darkened room, watching the waving branch of a rubber tree outside the window, that moved gently to the sighing of the breeze.

Suddenly he heard the sound of feet ascending the steps that led from garden to veranda doors.

But half awake, he listened.

SLOWLY the footsteps mounted the stairs; then came the lifting of the latch that fastened the low wooden gates, and the creaking of moving hinges. The footsteps entered, continued the full length of the veranda, to pass into the dining room beyond. Here for a moment they halted. Then they moved again, shuffling uncertainly—forward, backward, sideways—as those of a person trying to locate something in the dark.

Again they moved with steady tread and reached the intervening doors that shut off the passage.

Dennis listened and waited. What the devil was old Walley doing, he sleepily wondered.

A sudden rush of cool air struck on him over the top of the bedroom wall, billowing out his mosquito net.

Creak—creak—creak—the d o o r s were opening. The footsteps went along the passage and came to a standstill at the end.

"Boy."

The call was clear and decisive, but Dennis failed to quite recognize the voice, though he realized it was an European's.

There came no answer.

"Boy!"

This time the call was sharper, and impatience was in its tone. Still no reply.

In the silence Dennis, wondering greatly, waited, for he was still uncertain whether the voice was Walkely's or another's.

The footsteps sounded again as they descended the stairs that led to the servants' quarters. On the bottom step they halted.

"Boy!"

The call was long, loud and angry. Yet still no answer came.

Up the stairs the footsteps returned. They strode along the passage, paused as the doors were closed and the latch clicked, then swiftly moved through the dining room out

on to the wide veranda. Here for a moment they rested.

Sounded the fumbling for a latch, the squeak of a faulty hinge, and from the sharp banging of a door Dennis knew the footsteps had entered the mosquito room.

He sprang out of bed, and sitting on its edge hurriedly pushed his feet into slippers. Then, as he was about to move, the lamp in the room went out.

"Damn!" he muttered, and fumbled for his matches, but before he found them he was listening to the opening and shutting of drawers.

He struck a match, and by its light crossed to the lamp, the wick of which, however, refused to burn, though he wasted many matches upon it.

In the gathering darkness, for the moon was setting, he moved toward the door, but with his hand upon the knob stood still, for the footsteps were shuffling again and the sharp banging to of the mosquito door made him jump.

Through the veranda the footsteps went, gaining sureness with every stride. The gates creaked and the latch fell to. Down the stairs the footsteps clumped, the sound growing fainter till it became lost in the night.

Three deep-toned notes from the office gong boomed on the air. Dennis shivered, kicked off his slippers and returned to bed. The air was cold, so he drew his blanket well around him.

"Old Walley's walking in his sleep or else indulging in a midnight prowl," he muttered. Half a minute later he was sound asleep.

AS DENNIS' eyes opened to the beauties of a tropic dawn, the clink of silver spoons against china reached his ears and the scent of a cigarette crept into the room.

He plunged his head into a basin of cold water, brushed his hair, and still in his *sarong* and *kabaiah* (sleeping garments) went out on to the veranda where Walkely paused in the act of conveying a cup to his mouth.

"Morning, Dennis," he grunted and continued drinking his tea.

He was never very talkative the first thing in the morning.

Dennis answered and busied himself with the teapot. Then, under cover of meticulously choosing a piece of toast, he studied Walkely, who showed no signs of having spent a sleepless night.

Suddenly Walkely looked up and caught Dennis' eye upon him.

"Well?" he asked; "what is it?"

"Nothing," Dennis curtly replied.

"Then why look at me like that?"

"Sorry, Old Thing," Dennis stammered. "I was only wondering——"

"Yes?"

"What the devil were you up to last night?—walking all over the house and shouting for your boy."

"Then you heard it too?" Walkely asked the question with relief.

"It? What's *it?*" Dennis retorted. "Didn't I hear *you* come up the veranda steps, open the gates and walk to the back? You called 'Boy' three times but got no answer. Then you walked back through the house and down the steps. What was wrong, Walley?"

Walkely looked Dennis full in the eyes as he slowly answered.

"Nothing! Nothing was wrong and I never moved from my room till this morning."

"But—then who the——?"

"I never moved," Walkely repeated. "What you heard was Glister."

"Glister! What on earth do you mean? Who's Glister?"

"You know. The chap who was manager here before Bellamy. He shot himself. Died in your room—on your bed. He's buried in the garden at the foot of the hill below your

window. Great pity but—drink and a native woman—nice chap too.''

Walkely ceased as the light of recollection shone on Dennis' face.

''Yes, I remember,'' he spoke almost to himself. ''I met him once at a Jesselton Race Meeting. A tall, good-looking fellow?''

Walkely nodded and Dennis continued.

''He was awfully keen on a beautiful native woman—a Dusun named Jebee.''

''Yes. She was lured away from Glister by another man. It was a dirty thing to do.''

''The swine! I only hope——''

''You needn't worry,'' Walkely interrupted. ''He rues the day all right, I'll bet, for she's got him body and soul—doped to the eyes—and her temper is that of a fiend incarnate. She is priestess, too, of the *Gusi*, and he daren't call his soul his own.''

''So poor old Glister's loss was really his gain, if only he'd known!'' Dennis' words were gently spoken.

''Yes. But he felt her absence, and in the loneliness that followed, the drink got him again.''

For nearly a minute there was silence between the two. It was as if their memories had recalled Glister's spirit to his old home, almost as if he were sitting at the table with them, while the tinkling of Jebee's anklets sounded from an adjoining room. . . .

Dennis broke the silence.

''And you mean that—that was he, last night?'' he asked.

''Yes.'' The word seemed drawn reluctantly from Walkely's lips.

''But, good Lord, man!—you don't mean?—you can't—it's preposterous.''

''I know.'' Walkely spoke slowly. ''It sounds absurd, doesn't it? But Old Bellamy went through it, saw him and spoke to him and once even shot at him.''

''Bellamy! Bellamy shot him?''

''Yes. And there isn't much mysticism about him—he's as much imagination as a turnip.''

''But——''

''All the 'buts' in the world won't alter matters. Bellamy's seen him. I've seen him, and you've heard him. He's there—and it happens, and it's always the same—only——''

''What?'' The word was wrung from Dennis.

''He's never entered the mosquito room before.''

''You think——?''

''I don't know! How can I? I'm only wondering why he went there—what he was searching for.''

''Drink, perhaps?''

Walkely shook his head.

''No,'' he said. ''The room wasn't built in his days. No; there's something worrying him, something that's caused this variation of his usual walk.''

His eyes met Dennis's and he gave a short, half-ashamed laugh. Then:

''Get on with your tea. When you've finished we'll go and look at his grave. I always inspect it twice a month and put a coolie on cleaning it up and looking after the flowers. We'll have a look today.''

AS DENNIS dressed with unusual slowness, his mind was full of the tragedy so strangely recalled. ''Poor old Glister!'' he muttered. ''What an end!''

An impatient call roused Dennis from his revery and he hastened to the veranda, to find Walkely already on the garden steps conversing with Gaga, the head *mandor* (overseer) of many years' standing.

The three at once set off. Down well-laid cement steps, along a broad path that wound among a profusion of bright-colored flowers they went. Overhead a flaming sun rode in an azure sky, and a faint breeze fanned their faces with its cooling breath, perfumed with the scent of dew and

the fragrant, elusive blossoms of the rubber trees.

At the foot of the hill they turned and went in single file along a narrow path that followed the winding contour of the hill.

The three walked in silence, for speech was difficult along that narrow track. Suddenly the path, dipping down, turned sharply, and Walkely, who was leading, became for an instant lost to view. Dennis, humming a Dusun love song, followed close behind, but as he reached the turn the tune died abruptly on his lips and he stood stone-still.

"Good Lord! What can it mean?"

The words were gasped by Walkely, who stood transfixed, staring with horror-struck eyes straight before him.

Instinctively Walkely turned to Dennis, who, like himself, stood with gaze fixed and staring eyes.

"What can it mean?" he gasped a second time.

For they had reached the grave, and *it was open*. Heaped under the railings surrounding it, which were intact, were piles of fresh-dug earth, and all round lay the scattered flowers, withered and trampled into twisted shapes.

The eyes of Dennis and Walkely met. In each there lurked a question that neither dared to ask. Each heard again the shuffling footsteps of the previous night, and the opening and shutting of the drawers in the mosquito room.

A shadow fell across them as they stood. There came a startled cry, the quick pattering of bare feet, and Gaga flung himself upon his knees, burying his hands in the earth.

"Gaga!"

The word was a sharp command of outraged wrath. But the man did not heed, and his hands continued fumbling, fingering, searching.

Walkely stooped down to seize the kneeling *mandor* by the shoulder, then straightened up as the latter rose and turning, showed a face, pallid under the yellow of his skin, from which stark horror shone.

"The *pandang* (buckle). *Tuan,*" he gasped. "The *pandang!* It has gone!"

Walkely looked at him in stupefaction.

"Gaga," he began, but got no further, for the man, heedless of Walkely's upraised hand, broke in:

"The *pandang, Tuan,* the silver *pandang,* the Jebee used to wear as token of her priesthood of the *Gusi,* has gone. The silver *pandang* is no more!"

He ceased, and for a moment there was silence among the three.

On Walkely's face there showed a blank amazement, but Dennis' brows had gathered in a frown and his lips had closed in a deep, straight line. He was the first to speak.

"Walley," he said, "may I ask Gaga questions?"

Walkely nodded his assent, and Dennis turned to Gaga.

"Gaga, tell me, what makes you say the silver *pandang* is no more?"

"Because," Gaga stammered in his emotion, "because—when Tuan Glister was buried, the *pandang* was buried too—and—now——"

His gaze sought for the coffin for a moment and he fingered a charm of monkey's teeth that hung around his neck.

"Tell me, Gaga," Dennis' voice was very gentle, "all you know. Begin at the beginning."

GAGA looked relieved, for a native resents questioning and loves to tell a story his own way.

"The *Tuans* know," he began, "that Tuan Glister had a *nyai* (a native housekeeper) named Jebee. She came to him when she was very young, but vowed by the oaths of her parents to the priesthood of the *Gusi,* the sacred jars we Dusans worship,

which only our womenkind may tend. But she was young and beautiful and full of life. Her beauty was unmatched in all this land of Sabah (Borneo); her form was lithe, her footsteps light; her waist was small; yet she was vowed in wifehood to a jar, the sacred *Gusi*! Her lips and eyes, though warring with her blood, were innocent of love, till Tuan Glister visited the village in search of coolies for the Estate.

"Then"—Gaga paused, seeming for a moment at a loss to find his words—"then—the *Tuan* was tall and handsome, and possessed golden hair. He had a laughing, winning way and eyes that darted here and there and made the warm blood race within your veins when once his glance had rested on you. His eyes discovered Jebee, and——"

Gaga looked nervously from Dennis and Walkely as he shuffled his feet, frightened of saying too much concerning a white man before others of his race.

Dennis read the meaning of his glance.

"Yes, Gaga. You may speak," he said, "for the *Tuan Besar* (manager) and I are friends and we would give Tuan Glister's wandering spirit peace. Say all that is in your heart. We understand."

"*Tuan!*" Gaga's tone conveyed a depth of grateful meaning. "That night there was dancing and feasting in the village, and pitcher after pitcher of *tapai* (fermented liquor) was consumed. The *Tuan* drank too, but none could stand against him, and one by one they sank into a heavy sleep. Only the *Tuan* remained. He left the headman's house, and going through the village reached Jebee's home.

"It was that darkest hour before dawn when the chill wind blows, yet she was seated on the topmost step. The light of the dying moon seemed focused on the silver buckle that she wore, hung from a rotan girdle round her waist.

"Their eyes met. No word was said. The *Tuan* stretched out his arms and Jebee went to him, and the *Tuan's* arms enfolded her."

Gaga ceased. The silence lengthened till the office gong, booming eight deep notes, shattered the spell.

"How do you know all this, Gaga?" Walkely asked at length. "You never mentioned it before!"

A look of surprize flitted over the *mandor's* face, then he quietly replied:

"The *Tuan* never asked me my story before, nor is it customary for the white man to discuss others of his race with natives. How do I know? Why, *Tuan Besar*, was I not present on that night, and is not Jebee my sister, though of a different mother?

"The *Tuan* had saved my life, and Jebee was young. The warm blood danced in her veins, and her heart cried out for a mate. And so—— The river, *Tuan*, flowed far from the the village. The *Tuan's* boat was there. All in the village slept. The *Tuan* led her to the boat, while I stole up the steps, entered the house and made a bundle of her clothes. Then to the waiting boat I followed. The *Tuan* had covered Jebee with his coat and she was sleeping, but the silver buckle hung round his neck. And from that day it never left him. We three were alone in the boat. The *Tuan* and I picked up the paddles, and as their blades in silence touched the water the moon slipped beneath the earth and the *Burong hantu* (owl) hooted thrice. An evil omen, which the *Tuan* heeded not and Jebee did not hear.

"Till the sun was high we paddled and by noon were far beyond pursuit, for the river flowed very swiftly and one does not wake early from such a sleep as those in the village were sleeping."

Gaga paused, then he added.

"The rest of the story the *Tuans* know. For a little while the *Tuan* and Jebee were happy. But the omen of the *Burong hantu* and the dying moon would not be denied.

"And the shadow of the *Gusi* lay between them. So though the *Tuan* loved her he drank too deeply, and she found favor in another's sight and went away. But the *Tuans* know the rest. I buried him—there was no white man on the Estate—and as he died, he made me promise to bury the buckle with him, hanging round his neck. It was the only thing of Jebee's that he kept."

"And now?"

Dennis put the question sharply and his eyes held Gaga's gaze.

"I am afraid, *Tuan*—sore afraid."

"Of what?"

"I do not know; and the silver *pandang* has been stolen, though its hiding place was unknown. To none has it value, save to my people, and for years now they have let it rest. But, *Tuan*, they never forget, and the *Gusi* is most sacred. In the great blue jar that Jebee used to tend, and should have wedded, Mabago, the bad Spirit, dwells. Of late evil has befallen my people: the buffalos bring forth no young, and the crops refuse to ripen; so, *Tuan*, I am afraid."

GAGA ceased, and once again a silence fell upon the three.

Suddenly it was broken by the hurrying footsteps and labored breathing of a man who ran, and round the bend appeared an *opas*.

All three looked up at his approach and saw stark fear upon his face.

"*Tuan! Tuan!*" he gasped. "Tuan Glister can not be found. His house is empty, and his bedroom disarranged, and on the floor is a pool of blood——"

His eyes caught sight of the open grave. The words faltered on his tongue, then ceased, and he stood silent, trembling like a leaf.

At the mention of that name Dennis started, but before he could speak Walkely answered the question hovering on his lips.

"Young Glister's my new assistant, Dennis," he spoke in a queer, strained voice; "he came only last month; you haven't met him yet."

"But——"

"He's a younger brother of——" Walkely looked toward the grave. "It's horrible!" he muttered.

In a flash the meaning of the rifled grave and Glister's disappearance grew plain, and the frown on Dennis' face grew deeper and his lips grew more compressed. Heedless of Walkely's questionings of the jibbering *opas* he turned to Gaga.

"Gaga," he said, "I see the hand of Maboga stretching out, seeking revenge for the insult of years ago. His arm is long. It stretches from the *Tuan's* grave to a village in the hills. Is it not so?"

"*Tuan?*" Gaga answered.

"It stretches," Dennis continued, "from the village to the new *Tuan's* house as well, for what the white man took must be repaid with interest. What think you, Gaga?"

"That the *Tuan* is wise and reads the Dusun as a book."

"Dennis!" Walkely had dismissed the *opas*, and putting out his hand grasped Dennis' arm. "Dennis," he cried, "what do you mean? Glister has disappeared, there's blood upon his floor and we stand here, while heaven knows what devil's work is being done! What do you mean—with interest?"

"Listen, Walley," Dennis weighed his words and spoke with slow conviction. "I'm in the dark almost as much as you—but I know the Dusuns and the fetish of their *Gusi* worship. When Glister took Jebee from her people, she broke their vows and outraged the sacred jars;

but while the years were plentiful and their calves were strong they did not worry; when, as now, the inevitable lean year comes they seek a reason for their troubles.''

''You mean——?'' asked Walkely, still perplexed.

''That reason is Maboga. They think he will not be appeased unless——''

Dennis did not finish, but his glance wandered to the open grave and back to Walkely's strained white face, on which the dawning light of comprehension showed.

''Good heavens!'' he muttered; ''you really think?''

Dennis nodded; then turned to Gaga.

''Gaga,'' he said, ''tell me exactly what happens at the Feast.''

''The silver buckles of the priestesses, *Tuan,* are hung upon the *Gusi's* lips. Then when the dying moon is half-way set, the mateless wives say prayers and wash the sacred jars, and call upon the spirits to come forth and give their judgment on the village for the year. This year I think Maboga's jar will once again be decked. But who will cleanse the sacred lips I can not think, for while Jebee lives the *pandang* may be worn by no one else. Tuan Glister dared, and paid the price.''

''And Maboga?'' Dennis' voice was low, almost a whisper.

For a moment Gaga hesitated, then he replied: ''The *Tuan,* himself, has said: 'What the white man took must be repaid—with interest'.''

He paused; then he added: ''A white man's head has never yet hung in a Dusun house, but three days hence Maboga will decide.''

The eyes of Dennis and Walkely met. Both seemed to hear again the shufflings in the night, the opening and the shutting of the drawers. Both understood the object of that search.

''I'll borrow Glister's revolver, Walley, for we'll go alone with only Gaga as our guide, and attend this Feast,'' said Dennis.

For hours the booming of gongs had been borne upon the breeze, yet though the three had been steadily ascending, the deep-toned notes still sounded far away.

On the crest of a hill Dennis and his companions halted for a brief rest, and then onward and upward the trio climbed, while the track grew narrower and stonier and the jungle pressed closer on every side, and long trailing thorn-edged creepers, hanging from the trees, whipped their faces and tore their clothes.

The leading beast stopped and Gaga raised his hand. Without a word the two white men drew level, for the path had widened out and they stood upon the border of a glade, dissected by a muddy stream, whose banks were scored with a myriad hoof-marks.

Gaga slipped from his animal and softly spoke.

''We are nearly there, *Tuan.* This is their grazing ground, but all the animals are at the village, for all have ridden to the Feast.''

Dennis nodded and proceeded like the others to tether his beast.

Then on foot the three moved forward, but with a quicker pace, for the gongs were loudly booming with a beat that would not be denied. Even as they crossed the muddy stream, the swaying rhythmic time, rising and falling with the cadence of a dance, gave place to an insistent note that rose and rose, till only one intense vibration, one single throbbing note, beat on the heavy air with a malignant strength, sapping all kindly thoughts and fanning to flame the primal lusts of hate and vengeance.

A little farther and the path rose with a sudden precipitousness that

forced them to mount the well-worn stones as though they climbed a stair. They reached the top, to stand upon a tiny plain, on which the shadows of the encircling trees were slowly lengthening.

Even as they rested to regain their breath that one insistent note ceased, and for an instant silence reigned.

Then from the glade's farther end arose a cry, faint at first, then slowly louder, harsher, stronger, swelling to a mighty pæan, to a tumultuous cry, "Maboga; Maboga! *Aki* (Father) Maboga!" And stillness once again, save for the hurried padding of running feet as the three raced across the shadow-flecked glade.

Panting, they reached a wall of jungle, pierced by a sunken path that twined its short length through the heart of a moss-clad hill, whose riven sides were lit with weird, fantastic lights, thrown from countless torches that burned upon a plateau at its end.

In the shadow of a belt of trees they paused to take stock of their surroundings.

The plateau formed a horseshoe, and at its apex stood a native house built eight feet off the ground, whose length stretched three hundred feet. At either end, leading to the only doors, were rough-hewn steps, carved from solid logs of timber, and from these steps arose two poles, six feet in height, between which was stretched a length of knotted rotan. From this, like a gruesome necklace, hung two rows of ghastly human heads—blackened and dried from the smoke of years—save at each end. And there hung two heads with staring sightless eyes, and bared lips exposing whitened teeth; and from them the red blood dripped.

Upon the ground, placed in a semi-circle, stood the jars — the sacred *Gusi* — ranged in accordance with their height and rank. From either end they tapered up toward the central spot, where side by side rose two of flaming blue, that reached the height of a man's shoulder.

The rim, or lip, of each was of a different hue—one black, one white—while from the neck of those whose lip was black grew four large ears, and in the lobes of each was placed a human skull.

Behind each jar, save one, a woman stood; her thick black hair piled high upon her head, framing her lime-washed face from which her dark eyes shone; her figure swathed from chin to toe in shrouded black, girt at the waist with a girdle of mice and monkey's teeth.

A silver *pandang* hung under the lip of every jar but one, and resting on its swelling shoulder shimmered and winked in the torches' fantastic light.

Facing the jars, the Dusuns sat in rows, immobile and intent. There shone upon the face of every one a strained expectancy, showing in the taut muscles of the back and the restless, twining fingers of the hands. Thus they waited—in that strange, uncanny silence—for the answer to their cry, "Maboga, Maboga, *Aki* Maboga!"

Almost forgetful of the purpose of their errand, Dennis and Walkely watched, fascinated by the scene before them, lit by the waning moon and the lurid flickering torches. Something of its primeval instincts and the tension of the squatting natives crept into their veins and held them spellbound as they gazed upon the colored jars, with their glittering shining buckles, each with its dumb attendant, white-faced woman, backed by the long, unbroken shadow of the palm-roofed house.

While the moon sank slowly in the west, until its lower rim began to kiss the topmost ridge of the roof, the silence lengthened, till it seemed as if nature slept and those rows of squat-

ting natives were graven images devoid of breath.

But all at once there came a creaking sound and the tension snapped. A long, rippling murmur, half sigh, half gasp, filled the air and Gaga's hand gripped Dennis' arm.

"Look, *Tuan*, look!" he whispered, and pointed to a hut which stood alone and almost hidden in the shade of a mighty billian tree.

The two men obeyed, following the line of Gaga's pointing finger.

The hut door opened slowly as the noise increased. But though no light burned within, a shadowy form was faintly visible moving toward the glade. Slowly, silently, though still half-hidden by the shade, the form drew near. Then as all eyes were turned upon it a glinting speck of light winked in the gloom. And as the figure moved the winking light moved too.

Slowly, steadily from the shade into the flickering fringe of torches; from the fringe into the full lurid glare moved the figure and the light.

A QUICK intake of many breaths; a long, loud gasp of terrified surprize. Then silence—and a woman, with a silver buckle hanging from a girdle round her waist, stood before the great blue sacred jar, from under whose deep black lip no silver buckle hung.

Over the silence, that like a living spirit lay upon the glade, Gaga's excited whisper just reached Dennis' and Walkely's ears.

"*Tuan*, it is Jebee, and she wears the silver *pandang* that I buried in Tuan Glister's grave! *Tuan, Tuan*, I am afraid!"

Even as he spoke the woman raised her rounded arms, on which no gleaming bangles shone, and with a single gesture unloosed the coils of her high-wound hair. The long, thick tresses fell around her like a black cloak.

Again she raised her arms, this time in supplication, and her low, clear voice went chanting through the glade.

"*Aki* Maboga of the Sacred *Gusi*, Spirit of Evil who dwelleth in the great blue jar, hear now thy erring daughter, thy forsworn priestess, and forgive. Here in my shame I stand before thee and the assembled people, bearing the silver *pandang*, symbol of thy might and power, which in my youth and wilful love I disgraced.

"Thou, who for long has been neglected, till thy just wrath burst into flame, so that the crops no longer ripen, and the herds cease to bring forth young, lift, I beseech Thee, *Aki* Maboga, the shadow of thy anger from off my race.

"Through me and for my sin my people have been punished; through me, oh *Aki*, pronounce the penance thou dost claim."

She ceased, and as a wailing cry rose from the assembled natives, slipped slowly to her knees, and flinging her arms round the great jar's neck, rested her lips upon its blackened rim.

Walkely stirred, but Dennis' warning hand bade him keep still. Gaga, speechless and with bulging eyes, stared at the kneeling figure.

A wind was stirring in the trees. The moon had sunk completely out of sight, and here and there a flickering torch gutted and burnt out.

Thus in the creeping darkness they waited, while the moments grew to minutes burdened with suspense—waited for Maboga's answer that his deep black lips would whisper in Jebee's listening ear.

At length with infinite grace she rose, and stood clothed in her long black hair behind the great blue jar; for on its swelling shoulders glinting against its deep black lip, the silver *pandang* lay.

The wind was sighing in the trees. The rustling leaves made soft accompaniment to her voice, which trembled with emotion.

"My lips have kissed the sacred *Gusi*—my tears have washed its deep black lip. The silver *pandang* has returned to deck the shrine of the Great Spirit, who has spoken, for my ears have caught his whispering breath."

A murmur rose, then faded, and she continued.

"Rejoice, oh people, for I see the crops on all the hillsides ripening and herds with their young. But for his clemency, Maboga asks a price."

She paused; then stretching out her arms cried in a ringing voice: "What will you give, my people, to allay your desperate plight?"

Quick as the summer lightning, swift as an adder's tongue, came the answer from those rows of waiting natives.

"What the white man took, let him repay, with interest. The head of the white man's brother we will give, as a make-peace to Maboga, and as thy wedding gift."

She raised her hand, and there was silence.

"Thy words are good; thy offering acceptable unto——"

Her words were drowned in a great shout of fear, as a lighted torch fell from its bamboo socket on to the palm-roofed house.

Like running water, fanned by the rising breeze, the flames spread rapidly, till in the twinkling of an eye the wooden house was nothing but three hundred feet of sheeted flame.

Then pandemonium reigned and terror stalked the glade.

But to the watching three, the fire was providential, for the burning house lit up the hut, till now hidden in the gloom, and at its single window they beheld young Glister's blood-stained face.

Under the shadow of the trees, skirting the edge of the tiny plain, they raced. A few more yards and they would reach the door; another second—out of the shadows by the hut a naked figure sprang, her long black hair streaming in the breeze, a glittering, sharp-edged sword in her hand.

With an oath, Walkely forged ahead, but missing his footing on a twisted root, stumbled and fell.

The sudden, instinctive tightening of his fingers, a flare and a sharp report; a cry of pain, a sagging, drooping form—and Jebee lay a crumpled figure across the threshold of the hut.

A YEAR of plenty had elapsed since the Feast of the *Gusi*, and Dennis was going "on leave."

Lolling over the taffrail of the steamer which would take him to Singapore, he talked to Walkely, who had come to see him off.

For a few minutes the two smoked in friendly silence. Then Walkely spoke.

"By the way, Old Thing," he said. "I mustn't forget to give you Gaga's greetings, and young Glister's best salaams."

Dennis grunted thanks. Then his hand fell on Walkely's arm.

"And you, Walley?" he asked.

"Fit as a fiddle," came the irrelevant reply, "for the flowers are growing again on Glister's grave and he no longer haunts the house."

The White Ship

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

I AM Basil Elton, keeper of the North Point light that my father and grandfather kept before me. Far from the shore stands the gray lighthouse, above sunken slimy rocks that are seen when the tide is low, but unseen when the tide is high. Past that beacon for a century have swept the majestic barques of the seven seas. In the days of my grandfather there were many; in the days of my father not so many; and now there are so few that I sometimes feel strangely alone, as though I were the last man on our planet.

From far shores came those white-sailed argosies of old; from far Eastern shores where warm suns shine and sweet odors linger about strange gardens and gay temples. The old captains of the sea came often to my grandfather and told him of these things which in turn he told to my father, and my father told to me in the long autumn evenings when the wind howled eerily from the East. And I have read more of these things, and of many things besides, in the books men gave me when I was young and filled with wonder.

But more wonderful than the lore of old men and the lore of books is the secret lore of ocean. Blue, green, gray, white or black; smooth, ruffled, or mountainous; that ocean is not silent. All my days have I watched it and listened to it, and I know it well. At first it told to me only the plain little tales of calm beaches and near ports, but with the years it grew more friendly and spoke of other things; of things more strange and more distant in space and in time. Sometimes at twilight the gray vapors of the horizon have parted to grant me glimpses of the ways beyond; and sometimes at night the deep waters of the sea have grown clear and phosphorescent, to grant me glimpses of the ways beneath. And these glimpses have been as often of the ways that were and the ways that might be, as of the ways that are; for ocean is more ancient than the mountains, and freighted with the memories and the dreams of Time.

Out of the South it was that the White Ship used to come when the moon was full and high in the heavens. Out of the South it would glide very smoothly and silently over the sea. And whether the sea was rough or calm, and whether the wind was friendly or adverse, it would always glide smoothly and silently, its sails distant and its long strange tiers of oars moving rhythmically. One night I espied upon the deck a man, bearded and robed, and he seemed to beckon me to embark for fair unknown shores. Many times afterward I saw him under the full moon, and ever did he beckon me.

Very brightly did the moon shine on the night I answered the call, and I walked out over the waters to the White Ship on a bridge of moonbeams. The man who had beckoned now spoke a welcome to me in a soft language I seemed to know well, and the hours were filled with soft songs of the oarsmen as we glided away into a mysterious South, golden with the glow of that full, mellow moon.

And when the day dawned, rosy and effulgent, I beheld the green shore of far lands, bright and beautiful, and to me unknown. Up from

the sea rose lordly terraces of verdure, tree-studded, and shewing here and there the gleaming white roofs and colonnades of strange temples. As we drew nearer the green shore the bearded man told me of that land, the Land of Zar, where dwell all the dreams and thoughts of beauty that come to men once and then are forgotten. And when I looked upon the terraces again I saw that what he said was true, for among the sights before me were many things I had once seen through the mists beyond the horizon and in the phosphorescent depths of ocean. There too were forms and fantasies more splendid than any I had ever known; the visions of young poets who died in want before the world could learn of what they had seen and dreamed. But we did not set foot upon the sloping meadows of Zar, for it is told that he who treads them may nevermore return to his native shore.

As the White Ship sailed silently away from the templed terraces of Zar, we beheld on the distant horizon ahead the spires of a mighty city; and the bearded man said to me, "This is Thalarion, the City of a Thousand Wonders, wherein reside all those mysteries that man has striven in vain to fathom." And I looked again, at closer range, and saw that the city was greater than any city I had known or dreamed of before. Into the sky the spires of its temples reached, so that no man might behold their peaks; and far back beyond the horizon stretched the grim, gray walls, over which one might spy only a few roofs, weird and ominous, yet adorned with rich friezes and alluring sculptures. I yearned mightily to enter this fascinating yet repellent city, and besought the bearded man to land me at the stone pier by the huge carven gate Akariel; but he gently denied my wish, saying, "Into Thalarion, the City of a Thousand Wonders, many have passed but none returned. Therein walk only dæmons and mad things that are no longer men, and the streets are white with the unburied bones of those who have looked upon the eidolon Lathi, that reigns over the city." So the White Ship sailed on past the walls of Thalarion, and followed for many days a southward-flying bird, whose glossy plumage matched the sky out of which it had appeared.

Then came we to a pleasant coast, gay with blossoms of every hue, where as far inland as we could see basked lovely groves and radiant arbors beneath a meridian sun. From bowers beyond our view came bursts of song and snatches of lyric harmony, interspersed with faint laughter so delicious that I urged the rowers onward in my eagerness to reach the scene. And the bearded man spoke no word, but watched me as we approached the lily-lined shore. Suddenly a wind blowing from over the flowery meadows and leafy woods brought a scent at which I trembled. The wind grew stronger, and the air was filled with the lethal, charnel odor of plague-stricken towns and uncovered cemeteries. And as we sailed madly away from that damnable coast the bearded man spoke at last, saying, "This is Xura, the Land of Pleasures Unattained."

So once more the White Ship followed the bird of heaven, over warm blessed seas fanned by caressing, aromatic breezes. Day after day and night after night did we sail, and when the moon was full we would listen to soft songs of the oarsmen, sweet as on that distant night when we sailed away from my far native land. And it was by moonlight that we anchored at last in the harbor of Sona-Nyl, which is guarded by twin headlands of crystal that rise from the sea and meet in a resplendent arch. This is the Land of Fancy, and we walked to the verdant shore upon a golden bridge of moonbeams.

In the Land of Sona-Nyl there is neither time nor space, neither suffering nor death; and there I dwelt for many æons. Green are the groves and pastures, bright and fragrant the flowers, blue and musical the streams, clear and cool the fountains, and stately and gorgeous the temples, castles, and cities of Sona-Nyl. Of that land there is no bound, for beyond each vista of beauty rises another more beautiful. Over the countryside and amidst the splendor of cities can move at will the happy folk, of whom all are gifted with unmarred grace and unalloyed happiness. For the æons that I dwelt there I wandered blissfully through gardens where quaint pagodas peep from pleasing clumps of bushes, and where the white walks are bordered with delicate blossoms. I climbed gentle hills from whose summits I could see entrancing panoramas of loveliness, with steepled towns nestling in verdant valleys, and with the golden domes of gigantic cities glittering on the infinitely distant horizon. And I viewed by moonlight the sparkling sea, the crystal headlands, and the placid harbor wherein lay anchored the White Ship.

It was against the full moon one night in the immemorial year of Tharp that I saw outlined the beckoning form of the celestial bird, and felt the first stirrings of unrest. Then I spoke with the bearded man, and told him of my new yearnings to depart for remote Cathuria, which no man hath seen, but which all believe to lie beyond the basalt pillars of the West. It is the Land of Hope, and in it shine the perfect ideals of all that we know elsewhere; or at least so men relate. But the bearded man said to me, "Beware of those perilous seas wherein men say Cathuria lies. In Sona-Nyl there is no pain nor death, but who can tell what lies beyond the basalt pillars of the West?" Natheless at the next full moon I boarded the White Ship, and with the reluctant bearded man left the happy harbor for untraveled seas.

And the bird of heaven flew before, and led us toward the basalt pillars of the West, but this time the oarsmen sang no soft songs under the full moon. In my mind I would often picture the unknown Land of Cathuria with its splendid groves and palaces, and would wonder what new delights there awaited me. "Cathuria," I would say to myself, "is the abode of gods and the land of unnumbered cities of gold. Its forests are of aloe and sandalwood, even as the fragrant groves of Camorin, and among the trees flutter gay birds sweet with song. On the green and flowery mountains of Cathuria stand temples of pink marble, rich with carven and painted glories, and having in their courtyards cool fountains of silver, where purl with ravishing music the scented waters that come from the grotto-born river Narg. And the cities of Cathuria are cinctured with golden walls, and their pavements also are of gold. In the gardens of these cities are strange orchids, and perfumed lakes whose beds are of coral and amber. At night the streets and the gardens are lit with gay lanthorns fashioned from the three-colored shell of the tortoise, and here resound the soft notes of the singer and the lutanist. And the houses of the cities of Cathuria are all palaces, each built over a fragrant canal bearing the waters of the sacred Narg. Of marble and porphyry are the houses, and roofed with glittering gold that reflects the rays of the sun and enhances the splendor of the cities as blissful gods view them from the distant peaks. Fairest of all is the palace of the great monarch Dorieb, whom some say to be a demigod and others a god. High is the palace of Dorieb, and many are the

turrets of marble upon its walls. In its wide halls may multitudes assemble, and here hang the trophies of the ages. And the roof is of pure gold, set upon tall pillars of ruby and azure, and having such carven figures of gods and heroes that he who looks up to those heights seems to gaze upon the living Olympus. And the floor of the palace is of glass, under which flow the cunningly lighted waters of the Narg, gay with gaudy fish not known beyond the bounds of lovely Cathuria."

Thus would I speak to myself of Cathuria, but ever would the bearded man warn me to turn back to the happy shores of Sona-Nyl; for Sona-Nyl is known of men, while none hath ever beheld Cathuria.

And on the thirty-first day that we followed the bird, we beheld the basalt pillars of the West. Shrouded in mist they were, so that no man might peer beyond them or see their summits—which indeed some say reach even to the heavens. And the bearded man again implored me to turn back, but I heeded him not; for from the mists beyond the basalt pillars I fancied there came the notes of singer and lutanist; sweeter than the sweetest songs of Sona-Nyl, and sounding mine own praises; the praises of me, who had voyaged far under the full moon and dwelt in the Land of Fancy.

So to the sound of melody the White Ship sailed into the mist betwixt the basalt pillars of the West. And when the music ceased and the mist lifted, we beheld not the Land of Cathuria, but a swift-rushing resistless sea, over which our helpless barque was borne toward some unknown goal. Soon to our ears came the distant thunder of falling waters, and to our eyes appeared on the far horizon ahead the titanic spray of a monstrous cataract, wherein the oceans of the world drop down to abysmal nothingness. Then did the bearded man say to me, with tears on his cheek, "We have rejected the beautiful Land of Sona-Nyl, which we may never behold again. The gods are greater than men, and they have conquered." And I closed my eyes before the crash that I knew would come, shutting out the sight of the celestial bird which flapped its mocking blue wings over the brink of the torrent.

Out of that crash came darkness, and I heard the shrieking of men and of things which were not men. From the East tempestuous winds arose, and chilled me as I crouched on the slab of damp stone which had risen beneath my feet. Then as I heard another crash I opened my eyes and beheld myself upon the platform of that lighthouse whence I had sailed so many æons ago. In the darkness below there loomed the vast blurred outlines of a vessel breaking up on the cruel rocks, and as I glanced out over the waste I saw that the light had failed for the first time since my grandfather had assumed its care.

And in the later watches of the night, when I went within the tower, I saw on the wall a calendar which still remained as when I had left it at the hour I sailed away. With the dawn I descended the tower and looked for wreckage upon the rocks, but what I found was only this: a strange dead bird whose hue was as of the azure sky, and a single shattered spar, of a whiteness greater than that of the wave-tips or of the mountain snow.

And thereafter the ocean told me its secrets no more; and though many times since has the moon shone full and high in the heavens, the White Ship from the South came never again.

DROME

A Weird-Scientific Serial

By JOHN MARTIN LEAHY

The Story So Far

MILTON RHODES and Bill Carter, following an "angel" and her ape-bat "demon" (which has killed Rhoda Dillingham on Mount Rainier), penetrate into the subterranean caverns beneath the mountain. There they are attacked by the ape-bat, which they slay, and they rescue the "angel" from being dragged down to her death by its death-struggles. In company with the "angel" and four of her companions from some underground city, they begin the descent to Drome.

CHAPTER 24

WHAT NEXT?

FOR a mile or more, the way led amongst pillars and stalagmites. Oh, the wonders that we saw in that great cavern! The exigencies of space, however, will not permit me to dwell upon them. There is, I may remark, no deposition of sinter going on now; undoubtedly many centuries have rolled over this old globe since the drip ceased, perhaps thousands upon thousands of years. Who can say? How little can scientists ever know, even when their knowledge seems so great, of those dim lost ages of the earth!

"One thing that puzzles me," I remarked, "is that each of these Hypogeans has nothing but a canteen. So far as I can see, the whole party hasn't the makings of a lunch for a ladybug. Can it be that we have not far to go, after all?"

"I think, Bill, that we'll find the way a long one. My explanation is that, on starting for the bridge, they disencumbered themselves of the provision-supply (if they were not in camp) so that, of course, they could make greater speed. That the angel had a companion back there, we know. We know, too, that that companion—in all likelihood it was one of the girls—went for help."

"What on earth were they doing there, with the men off some place else?"

"I wish I could tell you, Bill. And what was the angel doing up in the Tamahnowis Rocks all by her lovely lonesome? I wish you could tell me that."

"I wish that I could. And that isn't the only thing that I wish I could tell you. What on earth are *they* doing *here?* And what at the Tamahnowis Rocks?"

"What, Bill, are we?"

"But women!" said I. "Our explorers don't take women along."

"Lewis and Clark took a woman along and took her papoose to boot. And this isn't *our* world, remember. Things may be very different here. Maybe, in this subterranean land, the lady is the boss."

"Where," I exclaimed, "isn't she the boss? You don't have to come down here to find a—what do you call it?—a gynecocracy. Which reminds me of Saxe."

"What does Saxe say, sweet misogynist?"

"This, sweet gyneolator:

"Men, dying, make their wills,
But wives escape a work so sad;
Why should they make, the gentle dames,
What all their lives they've had?"

"Bravo!" cried Milton Rhodes.

And I saw the angel, who, with the older man, was leading the way, turn and give us a curious look.

"And that," said Rhodes, "reminds *me*."

"Of what?"

"Who is the leader of this little party—that man or our angel?"

"I'd say the angel if I could only understand why *she* should be the leader."

At length we passed the last pillar and the last stalagmite. All this time we had been descending at a gentle slope. The way now led into a tunnel, rather wide and lofty at first. The going was easy enough for a mile or so; the descent was still gentle, and the floor of the passage was but little broken. The spot was then reached where that tunnel bifurcates; and there were the packs of our Hypogeans—or, rather, their knapsacks. There were five, one for each, the men's being large and heavy.

"You see, Bill?" queried Milton. "Evidently our little hypothesis was correct."

"I see," I nodded. "We have far to go."

"Very far, I fancy."

Also, in this place were the phosphorus-lamps of the Dromans, one for each. These were somewhat similar to the ones that Rhodes and I carried, save that the Droman lamps could be darkened, whereas the only way we could conceal the light of ours was to put them into their cylinders. As was the case with our phials, the light emitted by these vessels was a feeble one. Undoubtedly, though, they would remain luminous for a long period, and hence their real, their very great value. Besides the lanterns, oil-burning, of which the Dromans had three, the phosphorus-lamps were pale and sorry things; but, when one remembered that they would shed light steadily for months perhaps, while the flames of the lanterns were dependent upon the oil supply, those pale, ghostly lights became very wonderful things.

"The light," I said as we stood examining one of these objects, "is certainly phosphorescent. But what is that fluid in the glass?"

"I can't tell you, Bill. It may be some vegetable juice. There is, by the way, a Brazilian plant, called *Euphorbia phosphorea*, the juice of which is luminous. This may be something similar. Who knows?"*

The men unbent their bows and thrust them into the quivers; each took up his or her knapsack, and we were under way again. It was the right branch of the tunnel into which the route led us. That fact Rhodes put down in his notebook. I could see no necessity for such a record, for surely we could not forget the fact, even if we tried.

"We'll record it," said Milton, "certitude to the contrary notwithstanding. And we'll keep adding to the record as we go down, too. There's no telling, remember. It may not be so easy to find the way out of this place as it seems."

"You said," I reminded him, "that we may never want to return."

"And I say it again. But I say this too: we may be mighty glad indeed to get out!"

Soon the slope of the passage was no longer gentle. An hour or so, and the descent was so steep and difficult that we had to exercise every caution and care in going down it. "Noon" found us still toiling down that steep and tortuous way. We then halted for luncheon. The Dromans ate and

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* "One dark night, about the beginning of December, while passing along the streets of the Villa de Natividada, I observed some boys amusing themselves with some luminous object, which I at first supposed to be a kind of large firefly; but on making inquiry, I found it to be a beautiful phosphorescent fungus, belonging to the genus *Agaricus*. . . . The whole plant gives out at night a bright phosphorescent light, of a pale greenish hue, similar to that emitted by the larger fireflies, or by those curious soft-bodied marine animals, the *Pyrosomae*. From this circumstance, and from growing on a palm, it is called by the inhabitants 'Flor de Coco.' The light given out by a few of these fungi in a dark room was sufficient to read by."—George Gardner.

drank very sparingly—though this work gives one a most remarkable appetite. Rhodes and I endeavored to emulate their example.

As we sat there resting, the Dromans held a low and earnest colloquy. The girls, though, had but very little to say. The subject of the dialogue was an utter mystery to us. Only one thing could we tell, and that was that the matter which they were revolving was one of some gravity. Once and only once did we hear the word "Drome."

Also, it was then that we first heard the name of our angel. We could not be certain at the time that was *her* name, but there was no uncertainty about the name itself—Drorathusa. Ere the afternoon was far advanced, however, we saw our belief become a certitude. Drorathusa! I confess that there was in my mind something rather awesome about that name, and I wondered if that awesome something was existent only in my mind. Drorathusa. It seemed to possess some of that Sibylline quality which in the woman herself was so indefinable and mysterious.

Drorathusa. Sibylline certainly, that name, and beautiful too, I thought.

In our world, it would, in all likelihood, be shortened to Drora or Thusa. But it was never so here. No Droman, indeed, would be guilty of a barbarism like that. It was always Drorathusa—the accent on the penultimate and every syllable clear and full. Drorathusa. Milton Rhodes declared it was the most beautiful name he had ever heard in all his life!

It was about 4 o'clock when we issued from that passage, steep to the last, and found ourselves in a great broken cavern. The rock was granite, the place jagged and savage-looking as though seen in some strange and awful dream.

Here we rested for a while, and I, for one, was glad enough to do so. I was tired, sore and stiff from head to foot—especially to foot.

Just by the tunnel's mouth, there was some writing on the wall. Before this, Drorathusa and the older man (his name, we had learned, was Narkus) stood for some moments. This examination, and the short dialogue which followed it, left them, I noticed, even more grave of aspect and demeanor than we had ever seen them. I wondered what it could mean. I felt a vague uneasiness; a nameless forboding was creeping over me.

It was futile to think and wonder what it meant, and yet I could not help doing it. Glad had I been to stop, but, strangely enough, glad I was to get under way once more. For 'twas only so that we could hope to get the answer.

Well, we got it—an answer that I wish never to know again.

CHAPTER 25

THE LABYRINTH—LOST

We soon saw that we had entered not a cavern but a perfect labyrinth of caverns. I could never have imagined a place like that. It was bewildering, dreadful, forsooth, in the possibilities that it limned on the canvas of one's imagination. How on earth could anyone ever have found his way through it? But somebody had, for these were the inscriptions and signs on the wall. For these Dromans kept a keen watch, and the relief evinced whenever one was sighted showed what a frightful thing it might be to lose the way.

An hour passed, another, and still we were moving in that awful maze.

"Great Erebus," said I, "do you think that we can ever find our way back through this?"

"I've got it all down here, Bill," returned Rhodes, tapping his note-

book. "The angel, *the* leader now, is finding her way through it: what she can do can't we do also?"

"She isn't through it yet! It is some time, too, since we saw one of those directions on the wall. The fact is, unless I am greatly mistaken, our Dromans are becoming uneasy."

"Think so, Bill? I confess I thought that myself, but I was not sure that it wasn't only a fancy."

"I wish that I could believe so."

As Rhodes had remarked, Drorathusa was the leader now. And a striking sight it was—her tall white figure leading the way, the shadows quivering, swaying, rushing over the broken, savage walls and deepening to inky blackness in the secret places we passed.

Farther and farther we went, deeper and deeper; but never another inscription was seen. The advance became broken, irresolute. Then suddenly there was a halt. And at that instant the last vestige of uncertainly vanished: Drorathusa had lost the way.

There was a sudden panicky fear in the eyes of the girls, but it soon was gone. The little party met this most unpleasant truth with exemplary philosophy. There was a short consultation, and then we began to retrace our way. The object was, of course, to return to the last mark on the wall. If we missed it, then heaven help us!

"Perhaps," I thought, "it will be heaven help us, anyway!"

And it was.

We reached our objective without misadventure, and then a new start was made. Rhodes and I were greatly puzzled, for it was patent that neither the angel nor anyone else knew how they had gone astray. And, not knowing that, how could anyone tell which way to go?

"Better get it clear in that notebook," I admonished Rhodes. "It's a queer business, and I don't pretend to understand it at all."

We came along for a half-mile or so, carefully and with no little apprehension, and then, hurrah, there was a sign on the wall! The route to Drome again! But for how long?

Drorathusa quickened her pace. She was moving along now as though in confidence, certitude even. I have never been able to explain what followed. For a time, an hour or more, that confidence of hers certainly was fully justified. Then came the change. Suddenly we became aware of an unpleasant fact—there was something wrong. Not that we remained in doubt as to what that something was which was wrong. A few minutes, and we had a fact even more unpleasant presented to our contemplation—again we had gone astray.

Once more there was a consultation, and once more we retraced our steps—I mean we started to retrace them. Neither I, nor anyone else, could tell how it happened. Not that I marveled at our failure to return, even though I could not explain just how we had missed the way. However, it was no longer possible to blink the fact that we were utterly lost in this maze of passages, caverns and chambers.

I raised my canteen and shook it; my heart sank at that feeble wish-wash sound. The canteen was almost empty. Nor was any one of the others, in this respect, much more fortunate than myself. Our position truly was an unpleasant one—appalling even in the grisly possibilities which it presented to the mind.

CHAPTER 26

THROUGH THE HEWN PASSAGE

I COULD set down no adequate record of those hours which followed. It was late now, and yet on and on

we went, mile after mile, deeper and deeper, but only, it seemed, to involve ourselves the more hopelessly in the dread mysteries of that fearsome place. I wondered if it was my imagination that made it so, but certainly the confusion of those chambers and caverns seemed to become only confusion worse confounded.

At last and suddenly came the discovery.

We had entered a long and narrow chamber and were drawing near the end, wondering if we should find an exit there. Of a sudden there was a sharp exclamation from the lips of Drorathusa, who was some distance in advance—an exclamation that fetched me up on the instant. She had stopped and was pointing toward the left-hand wall, her attitude and the look upon her face such that I started and a sudden fear shot through me.

"What on earth can it be?" I said.

Rhodes made no answer. He was moving forward. I followed. A moment, and he was beside the Dromans, his light turned full upon the wall.

"Look at that, Bill!" said he.

I moved to his side, and we stood there gazing, for some moments motionless and silent.

"Well, Bill," he queried at last, "what do you think of that? We are not the first humans to stand in this spot."

"But probably thousands of years have passed since any human being stood here and gazed upon that entrance—went into it. I wonder what it leads to. Why should men have cut that passage into the living rock? In such a horrible place!"

The entrance was about four feet in width by eight in height. Above it there was some striking sculpturing, evidently work of a mystical character. Its meaning was an utter mystery to Rhodes and me but not, I thought, to our Dromans. Very little dust had accumulated, though, as I had good reason to believe, many, many centuries had passed since that spot was abandoned to unbroken blackness and silence.

Many were the pictures that came and went as we stood there and looked and wondered. Who had cut this passage into the living rock? In what lost age of a people now perhaps lost as well? And for what purpose had they hewn it?

Well, probably the answer to that last awaited us there within.

Rhodes and I moved over and peered into the tunnel.

"About fifty feet long," he observed, "and evidently it enters another chamber."

We started in, but when we had taken a few steps we stopped and turned our look to the Dromans. Why did they stand hesitant, with that strange look in their eyes and upon their faces? Even the angel was affected. Affected by what? The mere mystery of the place?

"I wonder what is the matter with them," I said.

"Superstitious dread or something, I suppose," returned Rhodes. "Well, it ill becomes a scientist to let superstition stay his steps, and so on we go."

And on we went into the passage. When we were nearly through it, I glanced back. The Dromans had not moved.

"Look here!" said I, coming to an abrupt stop.

"What is it now, Bill?"

"Maybe this is a trap."

"A trap? How can it be a trap?"

"How on earth do I know that? But to me the whole business has a queer and suspicious look, I tell you."

"How so?"

"How so? Why, maybe they *brought* us to this hole. We don't know what's in there. Maybe *they* do. Maybe they aren't lost at all. Why didn't they come in, too? What

are they standing out there for, standing and waiting—waiting for what? Probably for their chance to steal away and leave us to our fate!''

''My gosh, Bill,'' said Milton, ''your imagination goes like a jumping-jack!''

''Heaven help us if that's what you think when a man would be cautious and watchful!''

''Cautious and watchful. Yes, certainly we want to be cautious and watchful. After all, there may be something in what you say. But not much, I think. No, Bill; this is not a trap. There is no faking about it: they *are* lost.''

''I don't like it,'' I told him. ''Why won't they come in?''

''Goodness knows, Bill. Why won't some people sit down to the table if the party numbers thirteen? And why should *we* stand hesitant? Suppose that they do plan to steal away from us. I don't believe it, but suppose that they do. What then? Are we going to run after them, like lambs after little Bo-peep? Not I, old *tillicum*. If they are as treacherous as that, the quicker we part company the better. For, sooner or later, their chance would come.''

''There may be something in that,'' I admitted. ''Lead on, Macduff.''

A second or two, and we had stepped from the passage out into a great and lofty chamber.

''Great heaven!'' I cried, my right hand going to my revolver. ''What is that thing?''

Rhodes made no answer. He stood peering intently.

''Look out!'' I cried, pulling out my weapon and drawing back toward the entrance. *''It's moving!''*

CHAPTER 27

THE MONSTER

RHODES made no response. Still he stood there, peering toward the end of the chamber. Then of a sudden, to my inexpressible surprize and horror, he began moving *forward*—moving toward that monstrous thing which reared itself up out of the gloom and the shadows, up and up, almost to the very roof itself.

''What are you doing?'' I cried. ''I tell you, I saw it move!''

Rhodes paused, but he did not look back.

''It didn't move,'' he said. ''How *could* it move? It must have been only the shadows that you saw, Bill.''

''Shadows!''

''Just so—shadows.''

He moved his light slowly back and forth.

''See that? A certain way you look at it, that thing up there seems to be moving instead of the shadows.''

''But what on earth can it be?'' I asked, slowly advancing to his side. ''And what is that white which, though so faint, yet gleams so horribly? It looks like *teeth*.''

''It *is* teeth,'' said Milton, whose eyes were better than mine. ''But the thing, of course, is not animate, even though you did think that you saw it move. It is simply a carven monster, like the great Sphinx of the Pyramids or the Colossi of Thebes.''

We were moving toward it now.

''And look at all those horrors along the walls,'' I said, ''dragons, serpents, horrors never seen on land, in air or in the sea. And look there. There is a demon—I mean a sculptured demon. And that's what the colossus itself is—a monstrous ape-bat.''

''Not so, Bill. See, it is becoming plainer, and it is unequivocally a dragon.''

Yes; it was a dragon. And a monster more horrible than this thing before us never had been fashioned by even the wildest imagination of artist or madman.

The dragon (not carven from the rock but made of bronze) crouched

upon a high rock, its wings outspread. At the base of this rock—upon which base rested the hind claws of the monster—was a platform some twenty feet square and raised five or six feet above the floor of the cavern. In the front and on either side of this platform there were steps, and, in the center of it, a stone of curious shape—a stone that sent a shudder through me.

And up above rose the colossal dragon itself, its scaly fore claws gripping the edge of the rock, twenty-five feet or so above the platform. The neck curved forward and down. The head hung over the platform, forty feet or more up in the air—the great jaws wide open, the forked tongue protruding hungrily, the huge teeth and the huge eyes sending back the rays from our lights in demoniacal, indescribably horrible gleams.

"Talk about Gorgons, Chimeras and Hydras dire!" I exclaimed, and it was as though unseen things, phantom beings, so eery were the echoes, repeated the words in mockery and in gloating. "Why should men create such a Gorgonic nightmare? And worship it—worship the monster of their own creating? Look at that stone there in the center of the platform. Ugh! The things that must have taken place in that spot—the thought makes the flesh creep and the blood itself turn cold in one's veins!"

"What a dark and fearsome cavern, after all, is the skull of man," said Milton Rhodes, "a place where bats flit and blind shapes creep and crawl!"

I turned toward him with a look of surprize.

"That from the man whom I have so often heard sing the Song of the Mind; that from a scientist, one who reveres Hipparchus, Archimedes, Galileo, Newton and Darwin; from one who so often has said that the only wonderful thing about man is his mind and that that mind, in its possibilities, is simply godlike."

"And so say I again, and so shall I always say. In its possibilities, remember! But man is a sort of dual creature, a creature that achieves the impossible by being in two places at the same time: his body is in this the Twentieth Century, his mind is still back there in the Pleistocene, with cave-bears, hyenas and saber-toothed tigers."

I uttered a vehement dissent.

"But 'tis so, Bill," said Rhodes, "or at least back there beyond the year 1492. The world knows but one Newton, one Archimedes, one Galileo, one Darwin, one Edison; but heaven has sent the world thousands."

"I don't believe it. There are no mute, inglorious—Shakespeares."

"No; there are no mute, inglorious Shakespeares, no mute, inglorious Newtons: the world, this glorious *mind* that we hear so much about destroyed them."

"Or," said I, "they destroyed themselves."

"You are not making the mind's case any the brighter, Bill, by putting it that way. Yes, the mind, the glorious human mind destroyed them and turned forthwith to grovel in the dust before monsters like this one before us—before Prejudice, Ignorance, superstition and worse."

"What a horrible piece of work, then, is man!"

"Take the average of the human mind," went on Milton Rhodes, "not the exceptions, so brilliant and so wonderful, but the average of all the human minds in all the world today, from our Newtons—if we have any now—to your savage groveling in the dust before some fetish or idol made of mud; do that, and the skull of man is found to be just what I said—a dark and fearsome cavern, a habitat for bats and ghostly **nameless** things."

"What a strange, a horrible idea!" I exclaimed.

"The world is proud of its Newtons now," said Rhodes. "But was it proud of them when they came? Whenever I see a man going into ecstasy over the wonders of the beauties and the glories of the human mind, I think of these words, written by the Philosopher of Ferney: 'When we reflect that Newton, Locke, Clarke and Leibnitz would have been persecuted in France, imprisoned at Rome, and burned at Lisbon, what are we to think of human reason?' "

"Alas, poor, poor humans," said I, "you are only vile Yahoos!"

Milton Rhodes smiled wanly.

"Don't misunderstand me, Bill. The mind of man is a fearful thing, but it is wonderful too, as wonderful as it is dreadful—and the more wonderful, perhaps, than it intrinsically is because of the very grossness and sordidness that it has to conquer. We are prone, some of us, to think the record of the intellect a shabby one; but, after all, the record is not, all things considered, so bad as it may seem at a first glance. It might have been better; but we should rejoice that it is not worse, that the mind, the hope of the world, has made even the slight advance that it has. Mind is on his way at last! And, with Science on his right hand and Invention on his left, he can not fail to conquer the ape and the tiger—to win to a future brighter even than the most beautiful of our brightest dreams."

"Well," said I, turning and seating myself on one of the steps, up which steps perhaps many victims had been dragged to sacrifice, "this is a fine time truly and a fine place indeed in which to discuss man and the glorious destiny that may await him, in view of the fact that some spot in these cursed caverns may soon be our tomb.

"And," I added, "there come the Dromans."

Never shall I forget that look of awe and horror upon their white faces when at last they stood there in a huddled group before, almost under, the great dragon. Rhodes had seated himself beside me, and it was obvious that this temerity on our part was a source of astonishment to the Dromans. What dread powers they feared the monster might possess, I can only conjecture; but I do know that we could never have induced even Drorathusa herself to thus, on the very steps of his altar, hazard the wrath of an offended deity.

CHAPTER 28

I ABANDON HOPE

At last Milton and I arose and proceeded to examine carefully this chamber of carven horrors. By the altar, another passage was discovered. Like the great chamber itself and the passage by which we had entered, this tunnel had been hewn out of the living rock by the hand of man. It was some sixty feet in length and conducted us into a small but most remarkable grotto—or, rather, a series of grottoes. We advanced, however, but a little way there; a few minutes, and we were again in the hall of the dragon.

We continued, and finished, our examination of the place. Another passage was discovered, in the roof and leading to we knew not where. Then there were those stone horrors ranged along either wall; but I shall not attempt to describe those nightmare monstrosities, some of which, by the way, had two heads.*

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* "The Chevalier d'Angos, a learned astronomer, carefully observed, for several days, a lizard with two heads, and assured himself that this lizard had two wills independent of each other, and possessing nearly equal power over the body, which was in one. When a piece of bread was presented to the animal, in such a manner that it could see it with one head only, that head wished to go toward the bread, while the other head wished the body to remain still."—Voltaire.

The Dromans had drawn back some distance from the altar, and all had sunk down to a seat upon the floor, all save Drorathusa.

Our examination ended, we moved toward the little group. Milton looked at his watch.

"Midnight," said he.

As we drew near, Drorathusa suddenly raised a hand and made a significant motion toward the entrance. Those seated rose from the floor with an alacrity that astonished me. Evidently they were very anxious to quit this chamber of horrors. I was not sorry to do so myself.

"Shades of the great Ulysses," said I as we moved along in the rear, "are we going to keep up this wandering until we drop?"

"Just what I was wondering myself, Bill. I fancy, though, that our Dromans are beginning to think that a rest would not be inexpedient."

Shortly after issuing from the passage, the party came to a halt, and Drorathusa, to my profound thankfulness, announced that the time for rest and sleep had come.

"Sleep?" said I to myself. "Who can sleep in such a place and at such a time?"

From his pack, Narkus took a small silklike bundle; like the tent that Captain Amundsen left at the South Pole, one could have put it into a fair-sized pocket. The white-haired girl handed Narkus the sort of alpenstock which she carried, and, lo and presto, there was a tent for the ladies!

Rhodes and I betook ourselves off to a hollow in the wall, where we halted and disposed ourselves for rest. This disposition, however, was a very simple affair: we simply removed our packs and sat down on the floor—the softness of which by no means vied with that of swan's-down.

I drank a little water, but it seemed to augment rather than assuage my burning thirst. For a time I sat there, my aching body leaning back against the rock wall, my fevered, tortured mind revolving the grisly possibilities that confronted us. Meditation, however, only served to make our situation the more appalling. With an exclamation of despair, I lay down, longing for sleep's sweet oblivion. At this moment Narkus and the young man—whose name, by the way, was Thumbra—were seen approaching. They laid themselves down near by, their lanterns extinguished. We had shut off the electric lights, but our phosphorus-lamps, and those of the Dromans, shed their pale and ghostly light around.

Rhodes was sitting up, engaged in bringing his journal forward, as carefully and coolly as though he were in his library at home, instead of in this mysterious and fearful abode of blackness and silence, thousands of feet below the surface of the earth, far—though how far we could only guess—below the level of the sea itself.

When I closed my eyes, pictures came and went in a stream—pictures swaying, flashing, fading. The amazing, the incredible things that had happened, the things that probably were to happen—oh, was it all only a dream?

I opened my eyes and raised myself up on an elbow. I saw Milton Rhodes bent over his book, writing, writing; I saw the recumbent forms of the two Dromans, whose heavy breathing told me that already they slept; over there was the tent, in it the beautiful, the Sibylline Drorathusa and her lovely companions—and I knew, alas, that it was not a dream!

I sank back with an inward groan and closed my eyes again. Oh, those thoughts that came thronging! If I could only go to sleep! A vision of treachery came, but it was not to trouble me now. No; Rhodes was right; our Dromans *were* lost. If

only those other visions could be as easily banished as that one!

Ere long, however, those thronging thoughts and visions became hazy, confused, began to fade; and then suddenly they were blended with the monsters and the horrors of dreams.

It was 6 o'clock when I awoke. Rhodes was sitting up. He had, he told me, just awakened. One of the Dromans was stirring in his sleep and muttering something in cavernous and horrible tones. As I sat there and listened, a chill passed through me, so terrible were the sounds.

"I can't stand that," I exclaimed. "I'm going to wake him up. It's time we were moving, anyway."

"Yes," nodded Milton. "Surely, though, we'll find water today."

"Today! Where is your *day* in this place? It's night eternal. And for us, I'm afraid, it is good-night with a vengeance."

Ere long we were again under way. My canteen was now as dry as a bone, and I felt mighty sad. However, since I could not banish them, I endeavored to mask those dark and dire forebodings. When we set forth, it was with the hope that we might find, and be conducted by it to safety, the road by which those old worshipers had journeyed to and from that hall of the dragon. But not a vestige of such a route could we discover.

Hours passed. On and on we went, deeper and deeper. Noon came. No change. No one had a drop of water now. Rhodes and I estimated the distance traveled since quitting the temple of the dragon at ten miles and the descent at something like four thousand feet. This estimate, or rather guess, may, however, have been wide of the truth. We still were involved in the maddening intricacies of the labyrinth.

I confess that our situation began to assume an aspect that made my very soul turn sick and cold. Rhodes, however—divining perhaps what was in my mind—pointed out that we had not been lost very long, and that surely we would find water some place. A man, said he, in the equable temperature of this subterranean world, could live for quite a time without water. I had no doubt that a man could—if he were lying in bed! But we were not doing that; we were in constant motion. The arduous exercise that we were undergoing, our fatigue, the anxieties and fears that preyed upon the mind—each was contributing its quota to the dire and steady work of enervation.

No, I would fight against despair; but certainly I could imbibe no consolation, no strength, either mental or physical, from a deliberate blinking of facts. And one of the facts was that, unless we soon found water, ours would be that fate which has overtaken so many of those who have gone forth to search out the secrets of mysterious places.

DURING that halt for lunch—and what an awful lunch that was! —Milton brought forward his journal, and Drorathusa, by means of pictures drawn in the book, made it clear to us that they would never have missed the route had it not been for the loss of their beloved demon. That, of course, made Rhodes and me very sorry; but, if the demon had not been killed, we certainly should have been even more sorry—and, I'm afraid, in a worse place than this in which we now found ourselves.

This strange intelligence, too, reminded me of Grandfather Scranton's wonder as to how *his* angel and her demon had journeyed over rock, snowfield and glacier to the Tamahnowis Rocks through that dense, blinding vapor. I understood that now—they were guided by the wonderful instinct of the ape-bat. How truly wonderful that instinct is, we were yet to learn. Little wonder that Drorathusa mourned the

loss of her dear, beloved and hideous demon!

The bat has in all ages been the personification of repulsiveness, gloom and horror; and yet it is in many ways a very wonderful creature. For instance, it can fly through intricate passages with ease and certitude *when blinded,* avoiding any obstacle in or across its way as though in possession of perfect vision. No marvel, therefore, that some scientists have declared that the bat must possess a sixth sense! The accepted explanation, however, is that the creature discovers the objects, in the words of Cuvier, "by the sole diversity of aerial impressions."

However that may be, this wonderful faculty is possessed by the great ape-bats of Drome. Not that it is for this that they are valued by the Dromans. It is because it is impossible for an ape-bat to get lost. It matters not how long, how devious, how broken, savage, mysterious the way; the demon is never uncertain for one single moment. And a singular feature of this most singular fact is that the creature does not have to retrace the route itself, and it does not matter what time has elapsed. It may be a month, years; it is all the same to the demon. He may return to the point of departure by the outward trail, or he may go back in a bee-line or in a line as closely resembling a bee-line as the circumstances will permit.

From this it may easily be inferred how greatly the Dromans value these dreadful, repulsive creatures. When venturing out into the "lands of shadows" or into the caverns of utter darkness, these beasts are simply invaluable. In the "lands of shadows," they never fail to give warning of the approach of the wild ape-bats (those wolves of the air) or of other monsters; whilst, in the dark caverns —into which the wild bats sometimes wander for considerable distances—a man, though he may be utterly lost himself, knows that his demon will guide him safely back to the world of light.

In other ways, however, save as veritable Cerberi, they are of little use, are, indeed, objects of distrust and not a little dread. For they are, as a rule, of a most savage and uncertain temper. Not that the owner fears attack upon himself, though instances are not wanting in which master or mistress has been set upon. To its owner, a demon is truly doglike; but other people had better be careful.

"Since the loss of a demon on such a journey as this may spell disaster, I wonder," I said, "why they didn't bring along more than one."

"Food, Bill, food," returned Rhodes. "I am no authority, of course, on demonian dietetics, but I don't imagine that they feed the monster on canary-bird seed."

On we went, blindly and in desperation, on and on and deeper and deeper into the earth. At length there was a change, whether for good or ill we could not know; but we welcomed it, nevertheless — simply because it *was* a change. At last we were emerging from the labyrinth. But what lay ahead?

Yes, soon we were no longer in a maze of caverns, grottoes, passages, but in a wide and lofty tunnel. We had made our way down it but a little distance when an inscription was discovered on the right-hand wall. The discovery was made by Rhodes, who happened to be in the rear. A rectangular space, perhaps three feet by six, had been hewn perfectly smooth, and upon this rock tablet were many chiseled characters, characters utterly unlike any we had seen. Before this spot we clustered in hope and questioning. It was at once patent, however, that our Dromans could make nothing whatever of the writing. But we regarded this discovery

as a happy augury and pressed on with a lighter step. On to bitter disappointment.

Hours passed. We were still toiling down that awful tunnel.

At last—it was then 9 o'clock—the way became very difficult. The rock had been broken, rent, smashed by some terrible convulsion. The scene was indescribably weird and savage. And there we halted, sank down upon the rocky floor. Rhodes and Drorathusa evinced an admirable nonchalance, but in the eyes of the others burned the dull light of despair. And perhaps, too, in my own. I tried to hide it, but I could not disguise it from myself—the numbing, maddening fact that I had abandoned hope.

For a time I lay watching Rhodes, who was writing, writing in his journal. How could he do it? Who could ever find the record? At any rate, even though found, it could never be read, for the finder would be a Droman. It made me angry to see a man doing a thing so absurd. But I bridled speech, curbed that rising and insensate anger of mine, rolled over, closed my eyes and, strange to say, was soon asleep.

But that sleep of mine was an unbroken succession of horrors—horrors at last ended by an awakening as horrible.

Once more I was in that hewn chamber, once more I stood before the great dragon. But we had been wrong: the monster was alive. Down he sprang as I turned to flee, sank his teeth into my shoulder, raised his head high into the air and shook me as a cat shakes a mouse. Then suddenly I knew that it was not all a dream.

Teeth *had* sunk into my shoulder. I struggled madly, but the jaws only closed the harder. And, horror of horrors, the spot in which I had lain down was now in utter blackness. Then I was wide-awake: the teeth were Rhodes' fingers, and I heard his voice above me in the darkness:

"Not a word, Bill—unless guarded."

"What is it?" I whispered, sitting up. "And where are our phosphorus-lamps?"

"In their cylinders," was Rhodes' low answer. "We want to see without being seen, that is why. I can turn on the electric, of course, at any instant. I wish the Dromans had been nearer, on this side of that rock mass; I would have darkened theirs too."

"Without being seen?" I queried. "In heaven's name, Milton, what does it mean?"

"I don't know. Got your revolver handy?"

"Yes."

"Good! Keep it so!"

"But what is it?"

"Did you," said he, "notice that passage in the opposite wall, a few yards back?"

I whispered that I had.

"Well," said Milton Rhodes, "there is something in there. And it's coming this way!"

CHAPTER 29

THE GHOST

We waited, listening intently; but the place was as silent as the tomb.

"What," I asked, "did you hear?"

"I have no idea, Bill, what it is."

"What were the sounds like?"

"I don't know."

"Were they loud or faint?"

"Faint—mysterious."

"Great heaven!" said I; "what can it be? How long since you first heard it?"

"Only a few minutes. I can't imagine why the sounds have ceased. I wonder if it *has* discovered our presence."

"Hadn't we better wake the Dromans?"

"I see no necessity for it. When the thing comes—and it *was* coming, I know—they may be awakened suddenly enough. The men are farther from the passage than we are, the ladies farther still. It must pass us before it can reach them; and we have our revolvers."

"Yes; we have our revolvers. But we don't know what's coming."

"There!" Rhodes exclaimed, his voice a whisper. "We'll soon know. Did you hear *that?*"

"I heard it. And there it is again!"

"It's coming, Bill!"

It *was* coming. What were we to see issue from that passage? I gripped my revolver and waited in a suspense that was simply agonizing. The sound ceased—came again. It was a *pad-pad*, and once or twice another sound was heard—as though produced by something *brushing along the wall.*

"Look!" I said, crouching forward. "Light!"

The rays grew stronger, casting long shadows — shadows swaying, shaking, crawling. Then of a sudden the light itself appeared and a tall figure came gliding out of the passage.

"Drorathusa!" exclaimed Milton Rhodes.

This sudden lurch from agonized suspense and Gorgonic imagination to glad reality left me for some seconds speechless.

"Well, well," laughed Milton Rhodes, pressing the button and flooding the place with light, "isn't imagination a wonderful thing?"

"But," said I, "what on earth does this mean?"

"Look there, Bill, *look!*" cried Rhodes. "Look at that!"

Drorathusa was moving straight toward us, a strange smile on that Sibylline face of hers.

"What do you mean?"

"The canteen! Look at her canteen!" Milton cried, pointing excitedly.

Drorathusa stopped and raised the canteen, which was incased in canvaslike stuff. It was wet—yes, wet and dripping.

"Water!" I cried, springing up and rushing toward her.

"*Narranawnzee!*" said Drorathusa, reaching the canteen toward my clutching fingers.

Great Pluvius, how I did drink! I'd be drinking yet if Rhodes hadn't seized the vessel and wrested it from me.

"You must be careful," said he. "We mustn't drink too much at first."

And he raised the canteen forthwith and proceeded to swallow a couple of quarts.

"For heaven's sake," I told him, "leave some for the others!"

"Yes," said Rhodes, handing the water to Drorathusa. "We have been kind of ungallant, Bill—hoggish. But I was as dry as a burnt cork."

Ere he had ceased speaking, Drorathusa was moving toward her companions. How wonderful was that change, that rush from out the black depths of despair! And yet our situation was still truly a terrible one, for we were *lost.* But we did not think of that. Water, water! We had water now, and we rejoiced as though we had been caught up and set down in the loveliest of all the lovely glades of Paradise.

A few minutes, and we all (with tent and packs) were following Drorathusa through the passage, were hurrying toward the stream or pool that she had discovered. What whim, what freak of strange chance had led that mysterious woman forth whilst others slept the sleep of despair, forth into that particular passage? Even now I do not know the answer.

After following its sinuosities for several hundred feet, we suddenly stepped out of the passage and into a great chamber. This, like our sleeping place, was weird and savage in the extreme. Broken rock masses rose up, in all directions. There were distorted pyramids, fantastic pinnacles, spires, obelisks—even pillars, but they were pillars grotesque and awful as though seen in a dream.

Wider and wider grew the place, more and more broken and savage. Soon even the walls were involved in darkness. The roof, as we advanced, became more and more lofty. Clearly this cavern was one of enormous extent. I began to glance about with some apprehension. How had Drorathusa found her way into such a place—and out again? I marveled that she had not got lost. But she had not, and evidently there was no likelihood that that could happen. She was moving forward, into that place of savage confusion, with never a sign of hesitation, with the certitude of one following a well-beaten path.

Suddenly Drorathusa stopped, and, after making a sign of silence, she said, pointing into the blackness before us: "*Narranawnzee.*"

Narranawanzee! Yes, there it was, the faint murmur and tinkle of water.

We hurried forward, the wall of the cavern merging from out the darkness. And there it was, a large spring of the purest, coolest water gushing out from the base of the rock, to fall in a gentle cascade and then flow away to a great pool gleaming dark and sullen in the feeble rays that found their way to it.

IT WAS near 9 o'clock of the day following when we left that spot. Rhodes and I were smooth-shaven again; yes, he had brought along a razor—one of your old-fashioned, antediluvian scrapers. Narkus and Thumbra too had gladly availed themselves of this opportunity to get rid of their beards, which, however, they had kept trimmed close with clippers. Your Droman has a horror of mustaches, beard or whiskers. As for the ladies, they were now radiant and lovely as Dians.

We were following the stream. An hour passed, another. We had advanced five miles or so and had descended probably half a thousand feet. And then we lost our guide; the stream flowed into a cleft in the rock, to burst forth again perhaps far, far down, in some black cavern that has never known, and indeed never may know, the tread of any human foot.

For some minutes we lingered there, as though reluctant to quit the spot; and then, with a last lingering look at those pellucid waters, flashing dark and sullen, however, as the light moved from them, we pressed grimly on and soon were involved in a cavern so rugged and smashed that we actually began to despair of ever getting through it. But we did get through, to step suddenly out into a place as smooth almost as a floor. The slope was a gentle one, and we pressed forward at a rapid rate.

We had gone perhaps a mile and a half when Rhodes, who was walking in advance with Drorathusa, abruptly halted, cried out and pointed.

Something white was dimly visible off in the darkness. We moved toward it, the Dromans evincing a tense excitement. A cry broke from them, and they made a rush forward.

It was a mark upon the wall, a mark which they themselves had placed there. We had found the way to Drome.

"And let us hope," said I to Rhodes in the midst of the rejoicing, "that we don't lose it again."

Drorathusa turned her look upon Rhodes and me and pointed down the cavern.

"*Narranawnzee,*" she said.

We understood that and took a drink upon it.

Again Drorathusa pointed.

"Drome," said she.

That too we understood—that is, we thought we knew what she meant by Drome.

It was a few minutes past 7 (p. m.) when we reached the *narranawnzee,* a fine deep pool without any discoverable inlet or outlet, and there we halted for the night.

In this spot the Dromans had left a food-depot, and right glad were we to see this accession to the larder. There was also a supply of oil.

That evening (I find it convenient to use these inaccurate terms) I fished out my journal and carefully brought it forward, up to the hour, to the very minute. I felt blithe as a lark, and so, indeed, did everybody else, everybody save Drorathusa, and even she was somberly happy. I thought that our troubles were over!

Of a sudden Rhodes slapped down his journal and, to the surprize of the Dromans and, forsooth, to my own, made a dive at an oil-container, which Narkus had just emptied.

"At last—our depth, Bill!" he cried.

And he proceeded to ascertain the boiling point of water, the heat being furnished by Drorathusa's lamp and that of Siris, the older of the young women. Delphis, by the way, was the name of the other, the white-haired girl.

It was a strange, a striking picture truly—Milton Rhodes bending over his improvised hypogemeter, the Dromans looking on with curiosity, perplexity and strange questionings in their looks.

At last Rhodes was satisfied with the result, that it was as near accuracy as the circumstances would permit.

"We are," said he after computing for some moments in his journal, "at a depth of a little more than twelve thousand feet. The exact figures are 12,260 feet—though we can not, of course, claim for our determination any high degree of accuracy. I feel confident, however, that it is near the truth. Call it twelve thousand feet."

"Twelve thousand feet! Below the level of the sea?"

"Yes, Bill; below the level of the sea."

"Great Erebus, I knew that we had descended a long way, but I would never have believed that we had gone down over two miles. Two miles below sea-level. That is a record-smasher."

"Rather," Milton smiled. "Before us, no man (of our sunlit world) had penetrated into the crust of the earth to a greater depth than 3,758 feet below the level of the sea. That is the depth of the mine at St. John del Rey, Minas Geraes, Brazil."

"Two miles—over two miles down!" said I.

"And probably we are only started."

"But the pressure. We can't go down very far into this steadily increasing pressure, increasing in a geometrical ratio whilst the depth increases only in an arithmetical one."

"But," Milton said, "I showed you that there is something wrong with the law."

"Then how do you know that we have reached a depth of twelve thousand feet and over—if the law breaks down?"

"I don't believe that it has broken down yet. It will hold good for this slight descent which we have made. And, of course, if fact is found to

coincide with theory, then our descent will be arrested at no great depth.''

''And,'' I said, ''unless the discrepancy between fact and theory is a remarkable one, we will have no means of knowing whether the law has broken down or not.''

''We shall have no means of knowing, Bill—unless, as you say, truth and theory are remarkably divergent. Of course, in that case, we should not long remain unaware of the fact. Of the depth, then, we can not be certain; but the boiling point will always give us the atmospheric pressure.''

''That isn't what is worrying me,'' I told him; ''it is the pressure itself.''

''The pressure *itself*,'' Milton returned, ''would produce no dire effects. It is not the diminution of pressure that produces the dreaded mountain sickness, as was clearly shown by Dr. Paul Bert. Of educated people, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand will tell you that the acceleration of the pulse as one ascends to lofty heights, the short, troubled breathing, the disordered vision, extreme weakness, nausea, vertigo, bleeding at nose and lungs, in short, all the symptoms of the terrible *mal des montagnes*, are caused by the diminution of the atmospheric pressure. The average human being—such is their explanation—having a surface of about fifteen square feet, sustains an atmospheric pressure of more than thirty thousand pounds; at an elevation of eighteen thousand feet, the pressure is but one-half of that; is it any wonder, then, that a man gets mountain sickness?''

''Shades of ten thousand Gullivers,'' I exclaimed, ''do you mean to say that those nine hundred and ninety-nine are wrong?''

''Certainly they are wrong, so wrong as to cause Dr. Bert to write: 'It is amazing to find a theory so plainly at variance with elementary physical laws accepted by eminent men.' ''

''Well, well,'' was my sage remark, ''I suppose the next thing on the program will be the statement that it is not the fire that makes the pot boil; it is the heat.''

''If it doesn't rain, Bill, tomorrow will be Monday. However, Dr. Bert (Professor in the Paris Faculty of Sciences) proved 'that the lessening of the barometric pressure,' to use his own words, 'is of no account, mechanically, in the production of the phenomena.' Yes, he proved that, to use his own words again, 'it is not the lowering of mechanical pressure that produces the symptoms, but the low tension of the oxygen of the dilated air, which low tension prevents the oxygen from entering the blood in sufficient quantity.' Dr. Bert not only experimented on sparrows but entered the air-chamber himself. As the pressure was reduced, he experienced all the symptoms of mountain sickness. 'But,' he says, 'all these symptoms disappeared as by enchantment as soon as I respired some of the oxygen in the bag; returning, however, when I again breathed the air of the cylinder.'

''In one of his experiments, the pressure was reduced to 246 millimeters—9.7 inches. 'This,' he says, 'is exactly the pressure on the highest summit of the Himalayas—the same degree of pressure which was so near proving fatal to Glaisher and Coxwell; I reached this point without the slightest sense of discomfort, or, to speak more accurately, the unpleasant sensations I felt at the beginning had entirely disappeared. A bird in the cylinder with me was leaning on one side, and very sick. It was my wish to continue the experiment till the bird died, but the steam-pump, conspiring, as I suspect, with

the people who were watching me through glass peep-holes, would not work, and so I had to return to normal pressure.'

"So, you see, Bill, it is the low tension of the oxygen and not the diminished pressure that produces the distress and suffering and even death."

"All this is very interesting, but our problem is not one of rarefied air; the atmosphere here is *compressed.*"

"And, in compressed air," said Milton Rhodes, "it is the oxygen again that produces the symptoms. Subject a sparrow to a pressure of twenty atmospheres, and the bird is thrown into convulsions, stronger than those produced by tetanus or strychnin, convulsions which soon end in death. If pure oxygen is used, a pressure of only five atmospheres kills the sparrow. But—and mark this—if the air be deficient in oxygen, the pressure of twenty atmospheres does not produce even a tremor. So, you see, Bill," he concluded, "we could descend to a very great depth in an atmosphere poor in oxygen."

"But how do we know that the atmosphere down there is poor in oxygen? It may be nothing of the kind. It may be saturated with it."

"Of course, we don't know. All we know is that we know nothing. And that reminds me of Socrates. That is what he said—that all he knew was that he didn't know anything. Arcesilaus declared that Socrates didn't even know that! However, hope is as cheap as despair. And, remember, here are our Hypogeans. They can ascend to our world, to a height of eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, and that, so far as we know, without suffering the slightest inconvenience."

"Something queer about that," was my comment.

"It *is* queer, Bill. However, we know that they can live in the (to them) rarefied air of our world; why, then, think that conditions down there, whether five miles down or fifty miles, will prove fatal to *us?*"

ON THE following morning, we were under way at an early hour. The route led down a great tunnel; we could not have got lost now if we had tried. Shortly before noon, the welcome sounds of *narranawnzee* were heard, and there was a large stream gushing out of the wall. At times, as we advanced, the stream would move along dreamy and silent; then it would be seen rushing and glancing and again growling and foaming in lovely cascades.

Steadily, save for the noon halt, we toiled our onward and downward way. It was half past 7 when we halted—the eery silence of the place broken by the soft, musical murmuring of the *narranawnzee.* Again Rhodes ascertained the boiling-point of water. It was 251° Fahrenheit. We were, therefore, under a pressure of two atmospheres; we had reached the depth of 18,500 feet. In other words, we were three miles and a half below the level of the sea!

It seems strange that I awoke, for I was dreaming the loveliest dream—a dream of fairy landscapes, birds and flowers, with lovely Cinderella in the midst of them. Nor do I know why I turned over onto my right side, for I was very comfortable as it was. But turn I did. And I was just going to close my eyes, to return to the dreamland of the fairies. But I did not close them. Instead, my heart gave a wild leap, and I opened them wide. The next instant I was sitting up, straining my eyes as I

looked into the darkness. Fear had its grip upon me, and I felt my hair begin to stand on end.

For there was something in that blackness, something visible—*moving!*

Scarcely had my eyes fallen upon this amorphous, ghostly thing when it rose into the air, slowly and without the faintest sound. Up it rose and up, whilst I sat watching, immovable, speechless, as though in the clutch of some uncanny charm.

Up! Up to the very roof of the cavern! Of a sudden there was a fearful change in its form. Then the ghost, now of monstrous shape, was coming down—*coming down straight toward me!*

Fantastic adventures, terrific dangers, strange and horrible monsters, *loopmukes* and *gogrugrons*, make the next installment of "Drome" one of eery thrills and shivery fascination.

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

*Lazarus**

By LEONID ANDREYEFF

WHEN Lazarus left the grave, where for three days and three nights he had been under the enigmatical sway of death, and returned alive to his dwelling, for a long time no one noticed in him those sinister things which made his name a terror as time went on. Gladdened by the sight of him who had been returned to life, those near to him made much of him, and satisfied their burning desire to serve him, in solictude for his food and drink and garments. They dressed him gorgeously, and when, like a bridegroom in his bridal clothes, he sat again among them at the table and ate and drank, they wept with tenderness. And they summoned the neighbors to look at him who had risen miraculously from the dead. These came and shared the joy of the hosts. Strangers from far-off towns and hamlets came and adored the miracle in tempestuous words. The house of Mary and Martha was like a beehive.

Whatever was found new in Lazarus' face and gestures was thought to be some trace of a grave illness and of the shocks recently experienced. Evidently the destruction wrought by death on the corpse was only arrested by the miraculous power, but its effects were still apparent; and what death had succeeded in doing with Lazarus' face and body was like an artist's unfinished sketch seen under thin glass. On Lazarus' temples, under his eyes, and in the hollows of his cheeks, lay a deep and cadaverous blueness; cadaverously blue also were his long fingers, and around his finger-nails, grown long in the grave, the blue had become purple and dark. On his lips, swollen in the grave, the skin had burst in places, and thin reddish cracks were formed, shining as though covered with transparent

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* Translated from the Russian.

mica. And he had grown stout. His body, puffed up in the grave, retained its monstrous size and showed those frightful swellings in which one sensed the presence of the rank liquid of decomposition. But the heavy corpselike odor which penetrated Lazarus' grave-clothes and, it seemed, his very body, soon entirely disappeared, the blue spots on his face and hands grew paler, and the reddish cracks closed up, although they never disappeared altogether. That is how Lazarus looked when he appeared before people, in his second life, but his face looked natural to those who had seen him in the coffin.

In addition to the changes in his appearance, Lazarus' temper seemed to have undergone a transformation, but this circumstance startled no one and attracted no attention. Before his death Lazarus had always been cheerful and carefree, fond of laughter and a merry joke. It was because of this brightness and cheerfulness, with not a touch of malice and darkness, that the Master had grown so fond of him. But now Lazarus had grown grave and taciturn, he never jested, nor responded with laughter to other people's jokes; and the words which he very infrequently uttered were the plainest, most ordinary and necessary words, as deprived of depth and significance as those sounds with which animals express pain and pleasure, thirst and hunger. They were the words that one can say all one's life, and yet they give no indication of what pains and gladdens the depths of the soul.

Thus, with the face of a corpse which for three days had been under the heavy sway of death, dark and taciturn, already appallingly transformed, but still unrecognized by anyone in his new self, he was sitting at the feast-table among friends and relatives, and his gorgeous nuptial garments glittered with yellow gold and bloody scarlet. Broad waves of jubilation, now soft, now tempestuously sonorous surged around him; warm glances of love were reaching out for his face, still cold with the coldness of the grave; and a friend's warm palm caressed his blue, heavy hand. Music played—the tympanum and the pipe, the cithara and the harp. It was as though bees hummed, grasshoppers chirped and birds warbled over the happy house of Mary and Martha.

2

One of the guests incautiously lifted the veil. By a thoughtless word he broke the serene charm and uncovered the truth in all its naked ugliness. Ere the thought formed itself in his mind, his lips uttered with a smile: "Why do you not tell us what happened yonder?"

All grew silent, startled by the question. It was as if it occurred to them only now that for three days Lazarus had been dead, and they looked at him, anxiously awaiting his answer. But Lazarus kept silence.

"You do not wish to tell us," wondered the man; "is it so terrible yonder?"

And again his thought came after his words. Had it been otherwise, he would not have asked this question, which at that very moment oppressed his heart with its insufferable horror. Uneasiness seized all present, and with a feeling of heavy weariness they awaited Lazarus' words, but he was sternly and coldly silent, and his eyes were lowered. As if for the first time, they noticed the frightful blueness of his face and his repulsive obesity. On the table, as if forgotten by Lazarus, rested his bluish-purple wrist, and to this all eyes turned, as if it were from it that the awaited answer was to come. The musicians were still playing, but now the silence reached them too, and even as water extinguishes scattered

embers, so were their merry tunes extinguished in the silence. The pipe grew silent; the voices of the sonorous tympanum and the murmuring harp died away; and as if the strings had burst, the cithara answered with a tremulous, broken note. Silence.

"You do not wish to say?" repeated the guest, unable to check his chattering tongue. But the stillness remained unbroken, and the bluish-purple hand rested motionless. And then he stirred slightly and everyone felt relieved. He lifted up his eyes, and lo! straightway embracing everything in one heavy glance, fraught with weariness and horror, he looked at them—Lazarus who had arisen from the dead.

It was the third day since Lazarus had left the grave. Ever since then many had experienced the pernicious power of his eye, but neither those who were crushed by it forever, nor those who found the strength to resist in it the primordial sources of life, which is as mysterious as death, never could they explain the horror which lay motionless in the depth of his black pupils. Lazarus looked calmly and simply with no desire to conceal anything, but also with no intention to say anything; he looked coldly, as one who is infinitely indifferent to those alive. Many carefree people came close to him without noticing him, and only later did they learn with astonishment and fear who that calm stout man was that walked slowly by, almost touching them with his gorgeous and dazzling garments. The sun did not cease shining, when he was looking, nor did the fountain hush its murmur, and the sky overhead remained cloudless and blue. But the man under the spell of his enigmatical look heard no more the fountain and saw not the sky overhead. Sometimes he wept bitterly, sometimes he tore his hair and in frenzy called for help; but more often it came to pass that apathetically and quietly he began to die, and so he languished many years, before everybody's eyes, wasted away, colorless, flabby, dull, like a tree silently drying up in a stony soil. And of those who gazed at him, the one who wept madly sometimes felt again the stir of life; the others never.

"So you do not wish to tell us what you have seen yonder?" repeated the man. But now his voice was impassive and dull, and deadly gray weariness showed in Lazarus' eyes. And deadly gray weariness covered like dust all the faces, and with dull amazement the guests stared at each other and did not understand wherefore they had gathered here and sat at the rich table. The talk ceased. They thought it was time to go home, but could not overcome the weariness which glued their muscles, and they kept on sitting there, yet apart and torn away from each other, like pale fires scattered over a dark field.

But the musicians were paid to play, and again they took their instruments, and again tunes full of studied mirth and studied sorrow began to flow and to rise. They unfolded the customary melody, but the guests harkened in dull amazement. Already they knew not why it is necessary, and why it is well, that people should pluck strings, inflate their cheeks, blow in thin pipes, and produce a bizarre, many-voiced noise.

"What bad music!" said someone.

The musicians took offense and left. Following them, the guests left one after another, for night was already come. And when placid darkness encircled them and they began to breathe with more ease, suddenly Lazarus' image loomed up before each one in formidable radiance: the blue face of a corpse, grave-clothes gorgeous and resplendent, a cold look, in the depths of which lay mo-

tionless an unknown horror. As though petrified, they were standing far apart, and darkness enveloped them, but in the darkness blazed brighter and brighter the supernatural vision of him who for three days had been under the enigmatical sway of death. For three days had he been dead: thrice had the sun risen and set, but he had been dead; children had played, streams murmured over pebbles, the wayfarer had lifted up hot dust in the highroad, but he had been dead. And now he is again among them, touches them, looks at them, and through the black disks of his pupils, as through darkened glass, stares the unknowable Yonder.

3

No one was taking care of Lazarus, for no friends, no relatives were left to him, and the great desert, which encircled the holy city, came near the very threshold of his dwelling. And the desert entered his house, and stretched on his couch, like a wife, and extinguished the fires. No one was taking care of Lazarus. One after the other, his sisters—Mary and Martha—forsook him. For a long while Martha was loth to abandon him, for she knew not who would feed him and pity him. She wept and prayed. But one night, when the wind was roaming in the desert and with a hissing sound the cypresses were bending over the roof, she dressed noiselessly, and secretly left the house. Lazarus probably heard the door slam; it banged against the side-post under the gusts of the desert wind, but he did not rise to go out and look at her that was abandoning him. All the night long the cypresses hissed over his head and plaintively thumped the door, letting in the cold, greedy desert.

Like a leper he was shunned by everyone, and it was proposed to tie a bell to his neck, as is done with lepers, to warn people against sudden meetings. But someone remarked, growing frightfully pale, that it would be too horrible if by night the moaning of Lazarus' bell were suddenly heard under the windows, and so the project was abandoned.

And since he did not take care of himself, he would probably have starved to death, had not the neighbors brought him food in fear of something that they sensed but vaguely. The food was brought to him by children; they were not afraid of Lazarus, nor did they mock him with naive cruelty, as children are wont to do with the wretched and miserable. They were indifferent to him, and Lazarus answered them with the same coldness; he had no desire to caress the black little curls, and to look into their innocent shining eyes. Given to Time and to the desert, his house was crumbling down, and long since had his famishing goats wandered away to the neighboring pastures. His bridal garments became threadbare. Ever since that happy day when the musicians played, he had worn them unaware of the difference of the new and the worn. The bright colors grew dull and faded; vicious dogs and the sharp thorns of the desert turned the tender fabric into rags.

By day, when the merciless sun slew all things alive, and even scorpions sought shelter under stones and writhed there in a mad desire to sting, he sat motionless under the sun's rays, his blue face and the uncouth, bushy beard lifted up, bathing in the fiery flood.

When people still talked to him, he was once asked: "Poor Lazarus, does it please you to sit thus and to stare at the sun?"

And he had answered: "Yes, it does."

So strong, it seemed, was the cold of his three days' grave, so deep the

darkness, that there was no heat on earth to warm Lazarus, nor a splendor that could brighten the darkness of his eyes. That is what came to the mind of those who spoke to Lazarus, and with a sigh they left him.

And when the scarlet, flattened globe would lower, Lazarus would set out for the desert and walk straight toward the sun, as if striving to reach it. He always walked straight toward the sun, and those who tried to follow him and to spy upon what he was doing at night in the desert, retained in their memory the black silhouette of a tall stout man against the red background of an enormous flattened disk. Night pursued them with her horrors, and so they did not learn of Lazarus' doings in the desert, but the vision of the black on red was forever branded on their brains. Just as a beast with a splinter in its eye furiously rubs its muzzle with its paws, so they too foolishly rubbed their eyes, but what Lazarus had given was indelible, and Death alone could efface it.

But there were people who lived far away, who never saw Lazarus and knew of him only by report. With daring curiosity, which is stronger than fear and feeds upon it, with hidden mockery, they would come to Lazarus who was sitting in the sun and enter into conversation with him. By this time Lazarus' appearance had changed for the better and was not so terrible. The first minute they snapped their fingers and thought of how stupid the inhabitants of the holy city were; but when the short talk was over and they started homeward, their looks were such that the inhabitants of the holy city recognized them at once and said: "Look, there is one more fool on whom Lazarus has set his eye;" and they shook their heads regretfully, and lifted up their arms.

There came brave, intrepid warriors, with tinkling weapons; happy youths came with laughter and song; busy tradesmen, jingling their money, ran in for a moment, and haughty priests leaned their crosiers against Lazarus' door, and they were all strangely changed, as they came back. The same terrible shadow swooped down upon their souls and gave a new appearance to the old familiar world.

Those who still had the desire to speak, expressed their feelings thus:

"All things tangible and visible grew hollow, light and transparent, similar to lightsome shadows in the darkness of night;

"For that great darkness, which holds the whole cosmos, was dispersed neither by the sun nor by the moon and the stars, but like an immense black shroud enveloped the earth and like a mother embraced it;

"It penetrated all the bodies, iron and stone, and the particles of the bodies, having lost their ties, grew lonely; and it penetrated into the depth of the particles, and the particles of particles became lonely;

"For that great void, which encircles the cosmos, was not filled by things visible, neither by the sun, nor by the moon and the stars, but reigned unrestrained, penetrating everywhere, severing body from body, particle from particle;

"In the void, hollow trees spread hollow roots threatening a fantastic fall; temples, palaces, and houses loomed up and they were hollow; and in the void men moved about restlessly, but they were light and hollow like shadows;

"For time was no more, and the beginning of all things came near their end: the building was still being built, and builders were still hammering away, and its ruins were already seen and the void in its place; the man was still being born, but already funeral candles were burning at his head, and now they were extinguished, and there was the

void in place of the man and of the funeral candles;

"And wrapped by void and darkness the man in despair trembled in the face of the horror of the infinite."

Thus spake the men who had still a desire to speak. But, surely, much more could those have told who wished not to speak, and died in silence.

4

At that time there lived in Rome a renowned sculptor. In clay, marble and bronze he wrought bodies of gods and men, and such was their beauty that people called them immortal. But he himself was discontented and asserted that there was something even more beautiful, that he could not embody either in marble or in bronze. "I have not yet gathered the glimmers of the moon, nor have I my fill of sunshine," he was wont to say, "and there is no soul in my marble, no life in my beautiful bronze." And when on moonlight nights he slowly walked along the road, crossing the black shadows of cypresses, his white tunic glittering in the moonshine, those who met him would laugh in a friendly way and say:

"Are you going to gather moonshine, Aurelius? Why then did you not fetch baskets?"

And he would answer, laughing and pointing to his eyes:

"Here are the baskets wherein I gather the sheen of the moon and the glimmer of the sun."

And so it was: the moon glimmered in his eyes and the sun sparkled therein. But he could not translate them into marble, and therein lay the serene tragedy of his life.

He was descended from an ancient patrician race, had a good wife and children, and suffered from no want.

When the obscure rumor about Lazarus reached him, he consulted his wife and friends and undertook the far journey to Judea to see him who had miraculously risen from the dead. He was somewhat weary in those days and he hoped that the road would sharpen his blunted senses. What was said of Lazarus did not frighten him: he had pondered much over Death, did not like it, but he disliked also those who confused it with life. "In this life are life and beauty," thought he; "beyond is Death, and enigmatical; and there is no better thing for a man to do than to delight in life and in the beauty of all things living." He had even a vainglorious desire to convince Lazarus of the truth of his own view and restore his soul to life, as his body had been restored. This seemed so much easier because the rumors, shy and strange, did not render the whole truth about Lazarus and but vaguely warned against something frightful.

Lazarus had just risen from the stone in order to follow the sun which was setting in the desert, when a rich Roman, attended by an armed slave, approached him and addressed him in a sonorous voice: "Lazarus!"

And Lazarus beheld a superb face, lit with glory, and arrayed in fine clothes, and precious stones sparkling in the sun. The red light lent to the Roman's face and head the appearance of gleaming bronze: that also Lazarus noticed. He resumed obediently his place and lowered his weary eyes.

"Yes, you are ugly, my poor Lazarus," quietly said the Roman, playing with his golden chain; "you are even horrible, my poor friend; and Death was not lazy that day when you fell so heedlessly into his hands. But you are stout, and, as the great Cæsar used to say, fat people are not ill-tempered; to tell the truth, I don't understand why men fear you. Permit me to spend the night in your

house; the hour is late, and I have no shelter.''

Never had anyone asked Lazarus' hospitality.

''I have no bed,'' said he.

''I am somewhat of a soldier and I can sleep sitting,'' the Roman answered. ''We shall build a fire.''

''I have no fire.''

''Then we shall have our talk in the darkness, like two friends. I think you will find a bottle of wine.''

''I have no wine.''

The Roman laughed.

''Now I see why you are so somber and dislike your second life. No wine! Why, then we shall do without it: there are words that make the head go round better than the Falernian.''

By a sign he dismissed the slave, and they remained alone. And again the sculptor started speaking, but it was as if, together with the setting sun, life had left his words; and they grew pale and hollow, as if they staggered on unsteady feet, as if they slipped and fell down, drunk with the heavy lees of weariness and despair. And black chasms grew up between the words, like far-off hints of the great void and the great darkness.

''Now I am your guest, and you will not be unkind to me, Lazarus!'' said he. ''Hospitality is the duty even of those who for three days were dead. Three days, I was told, you rested in the grave. There it must be cold . . . and thence comes your ill habit of going without fire and wine. As to me, I like fire; it grows dark here so rapidly. . . . The lines of your eyebrows and forehead are quite, quite interesting: they are like ruins of strange palaces, buried in ashes after an earthquake. But why do you wear such ugly and queer garments? I have seen bridegrooms in your country, and they wear such clothes—are they not funny?—and terrible? . . . But are you a bridegroom?''

The sun had already disappeared, a monstrous black shadow came running from the east, it was as if gigantic bare feet began rumbling on the sand, and the wind sent a cold wave along the backbone.

''In the darkness you seem still larger, Lazarus, as if you have grown stouter in these moments. Do you feed on darkness, Lazarus? I would fain have a little fire—at least a little fire, a little fire. I feel somewhat chilly, your nights are so barbarously cold. Were it not so dark, I should say that you were looking at me, Lazarus. Yes, it seems to me you are looking. . . . Why, you are looking at me, I feel it—but there you are smiling.''

Night came, and filled the air with heavy blackness.

''How well it will be, when the sun will rise tomorrow anew. . . . I am a great sculptor, you know; that is how my friends call me. I create. Yes, that is the word . . . but I need daylight. I give life to the cold marble, I melt sonorous bronze in fire, in bright hot fire. . . . Why did you touch me with your hand?''

''Come,'' said Lazarus. ''You are my guest.''

They went to the house. And a long night enveloped the earth.

The slave, seeing that his master did not come, went to seek him, when the sun was already high in the sky. And he beheld his master side by side with Lazarus: in profound silence they were sitting right under the dazzling and scorching rays of the sun and looking upward. The slave began to weep and cried out: ''My master, what has befallen you, master?''

The very same day the sculptor left for Rome. On the way Aurelius was pensive and taciturn, staring attentively at everything—the men, the ship, the sea, as if trying to retain something. On the high sea a storm burst upon them, and all through it

Aurelius stayed on the deck and eagerly scanned the seas looming near and sinking with a dull boom.

At home his friends were frightened at the change which had taken place in Aurelius, but he calmed them, saying meaningly: "I have found it."

And without changing the dusty clothes he wore on his journey, he fell to work, and the marble obediently resounded under his sonorous hammer. Long and eagerly he worked, admitting no one, until one morning he announced that the work was ready and ordered his friends to be summoned, severe critics and connoisseurs of art. And to meet them he put on bright and gorgeous garments, that glittered with yellow gold—and scarlet byssus.

"Here is my work," said he thoughtfully.

His friends glanced, and a shadow of profound sorrow covered their faces. It was something monstrous, deprived of all the lines and shapes familiar to the eye, but not without a hint at some new, strange image.

On a thin, crooked twig, or rather on an ugly likeness of a twig, rested askew a blind, ugly, shapeless, outspread mass of something utterly and inconceivably distorted, a mad heap of wild and bizarre fragments, all feebly and vainly striving to part from one another. And, as if by chance, beneath one of the wildly-rent salients a butterfly was chiseled with divine skill, all airy loveliness, delicacy, and beauty, with transparent wings, which seemed to tremble with an impotent desire to take flight.

"Wherefore this wonderful butterfly, Aurelius?" said somebody falteringly.

"I know not," was the sculptor's answer.

But it was necessary to tell the truth, and one of his friends who loved him best said firmly: "This is ugly, my poor friend. It must be destroyed. Give me the hammer."

And with two strokes he broke the monstrous man into pieces, leaving only the infinitely delicate butterfly untouched.

From that time on Aurelius created nothing. With profound indifference he looked at marble and bronze, and on his former divine works, where everlasting beauty rested. With the purpose of arousing his former fervent passion for work and awakening his deadened soul, his friends took him to see other artists' beautiful works, but he remained indifferent as before, and the smile did not warm up his tightened lips. And only after listening to lengthy talks about beauty, he would retort wearily and indolently: "But all this is a lie."

By day, when the sun was shining, he went into his magnificent, skilfully built garden, and having found a place without shadow, he exposed his bare head to the glare and heat. Red and white butterflies fluttered around; from the crooked lips of a drunken satyr, water streamed down with a splash into a marble cistern, but he sat motionless and silent, like a pallid reflection of him who, in the far-off distance, at the very gates of the stony desert, sat under the fiery sun.

5

And now it came to pass that the great, deified Augustus himself summoned Lazarus. The imperial messengers dressed him gorgeously, in solemn nuptial clothes, as if Time had legalized them, and he was to remain until his very death the bridegroom of an unknown bride. It was as if an old, rotting coffin had been gilded and furnished with new, gay tassels. And men, all in trim and bright attire, rode after him, as if in bridal procession indeed, and those

foremost trumpeted loudly, bidding people to clear the way for the emperor's messengers. But Lazarus' way was deserted: his native land cursed the hateful name of him who had miraculously risen from the dead, and people scattered at the very news of his appalling approach. The solitary voice of the brass trumpets sounded in the motionless air, and the wilderness alone responded with its languid echo.

Then Lazarus went by sea. And his was the most magnificently arrayed and the most mournful ship that ever mirrored itself in the azure waves of the Mediterranean Sea. Many were the travelers aboard, but like a tomb was the ship, all silence and stillness, and the despairing water sobbed at the steep, proudly curved prow. All alone sat Lazarus exposing his head to the blaze of the sun, silently listening to the murmur and splash of the wavelets, and afar seamen and messengers were sitting, a vague group of weary shadows. Had the thunder burst and the wind attacked the red sails, the ships would probably have perished, for none of those aboard had either the will or the strength to struggle for life. With a supreme effort some mariners would reach the board and eagerly scan the blue, transparent deep, hoping to see a naiad's pink shoulder flash in the hollow of an azure wave, or a drunken gay centaur dash along and in frenzy splash the wave with his hoof. But the sea was like a wilderness, and the deep was dumb and deserted.

With utter indifference Lazarus set his feet on the street of the eternal city, as if all her wealth, all the magnificence of her palaces built by giants, all the resplendence, beauty, and music of her refined life were but the echo of the wind in the wilderness, the reflection of the desert quicksand. Chariots were dashing, and along the streets were moving crowds of strong, fair, proud builders of the eternal city and haughty participants in her life; a song sounded; fountains and women laughed a pearly laughter; drunken philosophers harangued, and the sober listened to them with a smile; hoofs struck the stone pavements. And surrounded by cheerful noise, a stout, heavy man was moving, a cold spot of silence and despair, and on his way he sowed disgust, anger, and vague, gnawing weariness. Who dares to be sad in Rome? the citizens wondered indignantly, and frowned. In two days the entire city already knew all about him who had miraculously risen from the dead, and shunned him shyly.

But some daring people there were, who wanted to test their strength, and Lazarus obeyed their imprudent summons. Kept busy by state affairs, the emperor constantly delayed the reception, and seven days did he who had risen from the dead go about visiting others.

And Lazarus came to a cheerful Epicurean, and the host met him with laughter: "Drink, Lazarus, drink!" he shouted. "Would not Augustus laugh to see you drunk?"

And half-naked drunken women laughed, and rose petals fell on Lazarus' blue hands. But then the Epicurean looked into Lazarus' eyes, and his gayety ended forever. Drunkard remained he for the rest of his life; never did he drink, yet forever was he drunk. But instead of the gay revery which wine brings with it, frightful dreams began to haunt him, the sole food of his stricken spirit. Day and night he lived in the poisonous vapors of his nightmares, and Death itself was not more frightful than its raving, monstrous forerunners.

And Lazarus came to a youth and his beloved, who loved each other and were most beautiful in their passions. Proudly and strongly embrac-

ing his love, the youth said with serene regret: "Look at us, Lazarus, and share our joy. Is there anything stronger than love?"

And Lazarus looked. And for the rest of their life they kept on loving each other, but their passion grew gloomy and joyless, like those funeral cypresses whose roots feed on the decay of the graves and whose black summits in a still evening hour seek in vain to reach the sky. Thrown by the unknown forces of life into each other's embraces, they mingled tears with kisses, voluptuous pleasures with pain, and they felt themselves doubly slaves, obedient slaves to life, and patient servants of the silent Nothingness. Ever united, ever severed, they blazed like sparks and like sparks lost themselves in the boundless Dark.

And Lazarus came to a haughty sage, and the sage said to him: "I know all the horrors you can reveal to me. Is there anything you can frighten me with?"

But before long the sage felt that the knowledge of horror was far from being the horror itself, and that the vision of Death was not Death. And he felt that wisdom and folly are equal before the face of Infinity, for Infinity knows them not. And it vanished, the dividing-line between knowledge and ignorance, truth and falsehood, top and bottom, and the shapeless thought hung suspended in the void. Then the sage clutched his gray head and cried out frantically: "I can not think! I can not think!"

Thus under the indifferent glance for him, who miraculously had risen from the dead, perished everything that asserts life, its significance and joys. And it was suggested that it was dangerous to let him see the emperor, that it was better to kill him, and having buried him secretly, to tell the emperor that he had disappeared no one knew whither. Already swords were being whetted and youths devoted to the public welfare prepared for the murder, when Augustus ordered Lazarus to be brought before him next morning, thus destroying the cruel plans.

If there was no way of getting rid of Lazarus, at least it was possible to soften the terrible impression his face produced. With this in view, skilful painters, barbers, and artists were summoned, and all night long they were busy over Lazarus' head. They cropped his beard, curled it, and gave it a tidy, agreeable appearance. By means of paints they concealed the corpselike blueness of his hands and face. Repulsive were the wrinkles of suffering that furrowed his old face, and they were puttied, painted, and smoothed; then, over the smooth background, wrinkles of good-tempered laughter and pleasant, carefree mirth were skilfully painted with fine brushes.

Lazarus submitted indifferently to everything that was done to him. Soon he was turned into a becomingly stout, venerable old man, into a quiet and kind grandfather of numerous offspring. It seemed that the smile, with which only a while ago he was spinning funny yarns, was still lingering on his lips, and that in the corner of his eye serene tenderness was hiding, the companion of old age. But people did not dare change his nuptial garments, and they could not change his eyes, two dark and frightful glasses through which the unknowable Yonder looked at men.

6

LAZARUS was not moved by the magnificence of the imperial palace. It was as if he saw no difference between the crumbling house, closely pressed by the desert, and the stone palace, solid and fair, and indifferently he passed into it. The hard marble of the floors under his feet grew similar to the quicksand of the desert,

and the multitude of richly dressed and haughty men became like void air under his glance. No one looked into his face, as Lazarus passed by, fearing to fall under the appalling influence of his eyes; but when the sound of his heavy footsteps had sufficiently died down, the courtiers raised their heads and with fearful curiosity examined the figure of a stout, tall, slightly bent old man, who was slowly penetrating into the very heart of the imperial palace. Were Death itself passing, it would be faced with no greater fear: for until then the dead alone knew Death, and those alive knew Life only—and there was no bridge between them. But this extraordinary man, although alive, knew Death, and enigmatical, appalling, was his cursed knowledge. "Wo!" people thought; "he will take the life of our great, deified Augustus;" and then sent curses after Lazarus, who meanwhile kept on advancing into the interior of the palace.

Already did the emperor know who Lazarus was, and prepared to meet him. But the monarch was a brave man, and felt his own tremendous, unconquerable power, and in his fatal duel with him who had miraculously risen from the dead he wanted not to invoke human help. And so he met Lazarus face to face.

"Lift not your eyes upon me, Lazarus," he ordered. "I heard your face is like that of Medusa and turns into stone whomsoever you look at. Now, I wish to see you and talk with you, before I turn into stone," he added in a tone of kingly jesting, not devoid of fear.

Coming close to him, he carefully examined Lazarus' face and his strange festal garments. And although he had a keen eye, he was deceived by his appearance.

"So. You do not appear terrible, my venerable old man. But the worse for us, if horror assumes such a respectable and pleasant air. Now let us have a talk."

Augustus sat, and questioning Lazarus with his eye as much as with words, started the conversation: "Why did you not greet me as you entered?"

Lazarus answered indifferently: "I knew not it was necessary."

"Are you a Christian?"

"No."

Augustus approvingly shook his head.

"That is good. I do not like Christians. They shake the tree of life before it is covered with fruit, and disperse its odorous bloom to the winds. But who are you?"

With a visible effort Lazarus answered: "I was dead."

"I had heard that. But who are you now?"

Lazarus was silent, but at last repeated in a tone of weary apathy: "I was dead."

"Listen to me, stranger," said the emperor, distinctly and severely giving utterance to the thought that had come to him at the beginning, "my realm is the realm of Life, my people are of the living, not of the dead. You are here one too many. I know not who you are and what you saw there; but, if you lie, I hate your lies, and if you tell the truth, I hate your truth. In my bosom I feel the throb of life; I feel strength in my arm, and my proud thoughts, like eagles, pierce the space. And yonder in the shelter of my rule, under the protection of laws created by me, people live and toil and rejoice. Do you hear the battle-cry, the challenge men throw into the face of the future?"

Augustus, as if in prayer, stretched forth his arms and exclaimed solemnly: "Be blessed, O great and divine Life!"

Lazarus was silent, and with growing sternness the emperor went on: "You are not wanted here, miserable remnant, snatched from under

Death's teeth, you inspire weariness and disgust with life; like a caterpillar in the fields, you gloat on the rich ear of joy and belch out the drivel of despair and sorrow. Your truth is like a rusty sword in the hands of a nightly murderer, and as a murderer you shall be executed. But before that, let me look into your eyes. Perchance only cowards are afraid of them, but in the brave they awake the thirst for strife and victory; then you shall be rewarded, not executed. . . . Now, look at me, Lazarus."

At first it appeared to the deified Augustus that a friend was looking at him, so soft, so tenderly fascinating was Lazarus' glance. It promised not horror, but sweet rest, and the Infinite seemed to him a tender mistress, a compassionate sister, a mother. But stronger and stronger grew its embraces, and already the mouth, greedy of hissing kisses, interfered with the monarch's breathing, and already to the surface of the soft tissues of the body came the iron of the bones and tightened its merciless circle, and unknown fangs, blunt and cold, touched his heart and sank into it with slow indolence.

"It pains," said the deified Augustus, growing pale. "But look at me, Lazarus, look."

It was as if some heavy gates, ever closed, were slowly moving apart, and through the growing interstice the appalling horror of the Infinite poured in slowly and steadily. Like two shadows entered the shoreless void and the unfathomable darkness; they extinguished the sun, ravished the earth from under the feet, and the roof from over the head. No more did the frozen heart ache.

"Look, look, Lazarus," ordered Augustus, tottering.

Time stood still, and the beginning of each thing grew frightfully near to its end. Augustus' throne, just erected, crumbled down, and the void was already in the place of the throne and of Augustus. Noiselessly did Rome crumble down, and a new city stood on its site and it too was swallowed by the void. Like fantastic giants, cities, states and countries fell down and vanished in the void darkness, and with uttermost indifference did the insatiable black womb of the Infinite swallow them.

"Halt!" ordered the emperor.

In his voice sounded already a note of indifference, his hands dropped in languor, and in the vain struggle with the onrushing darkness his fiery eyes now blazed up, and now went out.

"My life you have taken from me, Lazarus," said he in a spiritless, feeble voice.

And these words of hopelessness saved him. He remembered his people, whose shield he was destined to be, and keen salutary pain pierced his deadened heart. "They are doomed to death," he thought wearily. "Serene shadows in the darkness of the Infinite," thought he, and horror grew upon him. "Frail vessels with living, seething blood, with a heart that knows sorrow and also great joy," said he in his heart, and tenderness pervaded it.

Thus pondering and oscillating between the poles of Life and Death, he slowly came back to life, to find in its suffering and in its joys a shield against the darkness of the void and the horror of the Infinite.

"No, you have not murdered me, Lazarus," said he firmly, "but I will take your life. Begone."

That evening the deified Augustus partook of his meats and drinks with particular joy. Now and then his lifted hand remained suspended in the air, and a dull glimmer replaced the bright sheen of his fiery eye. It was the cold wave of Horror that surged at his feet. Defeated, but not undone, ever awaiting its hour, that Horror stood at the emperor's bedside, like a black shadow all

through his life, it swayed his nights, but yielded the days to the sorrows and joys of life.

The following day, the hangman with a hot iron burned out Lazarus' eyes. Then he was sent home. The deified Augustus dared not kill him.

LAZARUS returned to the desert, and the wilderness met him with hissing gusts of wind and the heat of the blazing sun. Again he was sitting on a stone, his rough, bushy beard lifted up; and the two black holes in place of his eyes looked at the sky with an expression of dull terror. Afar off the holy city stirred noisily and restlessly, but around him everything was deserted and dumb. No one approached the place where lived he who had miraculously risen from the dead, and long since his neighbors had forsaken their houses. Driven by the hot iron into the depth of his skull, his cursed knowledge hid there in an ambush. As if leaping out from an ambush it plunged its thousand invisible eyes into the man, and no one dared look at Lazarus.

And in the evening, when the sun, reddening and growing wider, would come nearer and nearer the western horizon, the blind Lazarus would slowly follow it. He would stumble against stones and fall, stout and weak as he was; would rise heavily to his feet and walk on again; and on the red screen of the sunset his black body and outspread hands would form a monstrous likeness of a cross.

And it came to pass that once he went out and did not come back. Thus seemingly ended the second life of him who for three days had been under the enigmatical sway of death, and rose miraculously from the dead.

Fairy Lullaby*

By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(*Reprint*)

You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts, and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

Weaving spiders, come not here:
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence;
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm, nor snail, do no offense.

CHORUS

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby:
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh:
So, good night, with lullaby.

* From "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

WE SURELY started something when we put the question to you, the readers, in The Eyrie for January: "Shall we continue to use one reprint story in each issue, or do you wish nothing but new stories?" The answer is decidedly in favor of a continuance of the reprints—one in each issue. The quotation from Peter O'Dactylle's letter in The Eyrie of the same issue has made the Edgar Allan Poe fans writhe and chew up several lengths of the parlor carpet. "For the sake of a long-suffering public," wrote Mr. O'Dactylle, "please don't print any more of Poe's tales, as they leave us with a taste in our mouth like a yellow dog. If *Ligeia* is his best, then God have pity on his worst!"

"Please do not ever discontinue the *Weird Story Reprint* department," writes Harvey W. Flink, of Centre Hall, Pennsylvania. "This is the department in your wonderful magazine that I like best. Almost every writer of note has tried his hand at writing a weird tale. Some of these are mediocre; some are very good. One of the missions of WEIRD TALES is to sort out the good ones and publish them. Only in this way can the magazine help us to become familiar with the world's best weird fiction. I suggest that you discontinue including Poe's stories; there are many others, not as well known, but just as good."

A contrary view is expressed by Charles T. Hamilton, of Leavenworth, Kansas, who writes: "As to the reprints, for God's sake, stop them! They only take up valuable space that could be used to better advantage." And he adds: "We have formed a club here in Leavenworth called 'The Weird Tales Club' to discuss the stories in WEIRD TALES, and in our opinion *The Last Horror* is a wonderful piece of work, one of the best, if not *the* best, that Colter ever wrote, so give it first place in the January issue."

W. L. Mason, Jr., of St. Louis, writes: "I would like to suggest that instead of having Weird Story Reprints you would have a section in which readers might exchange weird experiences, such as weird dreams, etc. I think such a column would find great favor with WEIRD TALES readers."

Writes Carlisle D. Scott, of Colfax, Illinois: "I have never written to The Eyrie before, but when I saw the 'rap' made by a certain gentleman in Detroit about Poe's story, *Ligeia,* I decided to write right away, at once, immediately. If he has read Poe's stories and does not like them he is perfectly free to 'rap' (for himself), but I do not think that he has any license to make any statement about 'a suffering public,' for I am sure that I can find as many people who do like some of his stories as he can find people who do

not like any of them. I am sure that Poe was one of the greatest story writers who ever wrote in English. Continue the reprints, by all means. Some of the stories that have made the greatest impression with me have been your reprints. Among the best that you have printed I will mention *The Upper Berth* by Crawford, *The Mask of the Red Death* by Poe, and *The Horla* by Guy de Maupassant. *The Horla* was my introduction to Maupassant, and since reading it I have been looking up his works and now have three books of his short stories in my possession. I think the reprints should be continued because of their great literary value."

A. Burnard, of Providence, Rhode Island, complains that "the December reprint would not have frightened an elderly spinster—and I am a 16-year-old bookworm. Think that over! Remember the war-cry of your readers—Keep Them Weird! I certainly like Jules de Grandin with that little explanatory 'I say to me' of his. I can find but one fault with the January W. T.—you do not make your 'favorite' section of your readers' ballot large enough."

Writes Ernest Francis, of Hampton Bays, New York: "I have read your magazine for almost twelve months and have never had cause to regret it. I write today because of the special enchantment of reading *The Last Horror*, by Eli Colter. Let me congratulate you on printing that truly marvelous story. I like it for its utter magnificence."

H. C. Newman, of San Diego, California, writes to The Eyrie: "Two short years ago I first bought WEIRD TALES, and I've not missed a copy since. I've taken the magazine to logging camps, citizens' military training camps, and now I am in the Navy. Everywhere I go, your magazine is popular, from the way my 'buddies' grab it after I have read every story. I don't like *The Star Shell* for the reason that it is such an interesting story that I can hardly wait for the installments. Give us more animal and insect stories like *The City of Spiders.*"

Writes Lennart Larson, of Seattle: "Your readers have sent letters to The Eyrie saying they want WEIRD TALES to stay weird. I'm with them. Although I am only thirteen years old I like stories that are different and imaginative. My vote for the best story in WEIRD TALES for the last twelve issues is *Wolfshead,* by Robert E. Howard. As one of your readers, I ask for more werewolf stories. Quinn, I think, is the best of all your authors."

Charles C. Hampel, of Los Angeles, sends to The Eyrie a letter in verse. We are sorry that we have not room to print all of it, but a quotation will give you the gist of the poem:

"Tales of witchcraft, tales of horror,
Tales that make your blood run cold,
Tales that fairly chill your marrow,
Tales the weirdest ever told;
In the dead of night I read them,
Jump at every little sound,
In the rustlings and the creakings,
In my thoughts, there, ghosts abound."

"Speaking of good stories," writes E. Hoffmann Price, author of *The Peacock's Shadow,* "I nominate for the 1926 hall of fame *The Supreme Witch* in the October issue, for it combined the weirdness essential to the magazine with the difficult trick of making the characters human, and acting and think-

ing like human beings. There you have the quintessence of art. If the author can duplicate that feat, let him try it; but first threaten him with crucifixion if he tries and fails."

"In the January magazine you gave us a modern version of *Leonora,*" writes Mrs. Ray E. Adcock, of Willcox, Arizona, and adds: "Why not give us the original legend sometime in the near future? In *The Horror at Red Hook* the author mentions Lilith several times. Why not give us the full story or legend of Lilith, too? I know nothing of her except that she was the first wife of Adam, and I should like to know all about her."

Writes Grace Stiles, of Minneapolis: "I think that *Drome* is a thriller. I can hardly wait to receive the next copy. The man who wrote that story must have a master-mind."

"Give us more poems," writes John B. Woodhouse, of Washington, D. C. "Such poems as *The Dance of Death, Starkey Strang, The Caves of Kooli-Kan, Grave Chains* and *The Ballade of Phantom Ships* are as good as the stories. Please cut out the reprint stories. They are not as good as the new stories. I am an admirer of your scientific and weird-scientific stories; they are the best. *The Night Wire* is just about the best story you have published since I have been reading W. T."

"I have been reading WEIRD TALES from the first issue published," writes Helmuth B. Stiller, of Milwaukee. "It was always great reading and is becoming greater still, inasmuch as it adapts itself to the wishes of the readers in giving them the kind of stories they want. *The Horror at Red Hook,* by H. P. Lovecraft, is in my opinion the best in the January issue, with *The Last Horror,* by Eli Colter, a close second; the new serial, *Drome,* also promises to be excellent. You can never give me too many of Lovecraft's yarns."

Readers, your favorite story in the January issue, as shown by your ballots, was *The Last Horror,* by Eli Colter, with the new serial, *Drome,* by John Martin Leahy, in second place. What is your favorite story in the present issue?

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE MARCH WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)_____	_____
(2)_____	_____
(3)_____	_____

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The Blood-Flower

(Continued from page 330)

ly till it was nearly twice its normal size, her nose seemed lengthening, becoming more pointed, and crooking sharply at the end. Her eyes, of sweet cornflower blue, were widening, becoming at once round and prominent, and changing to a wicked, phosphorescent green. I stared and stared, unable to believe the evidence of my eyes, and as I looked she raised her hands from beneath the covers, and I went sick with the horror of it. The dainty, flowerlike pink-and-white hands with their well-manicured nails were transformed into a pair of withered, corded talons armed with long, hornlike, curved claws, saber-sharp and hooked like the nails of some predatory bird. Before my eyes a sweet, gently bred woman was being transfigured into a foul hell-hag, a loathsome, hideous parody of herself.

"Quickly, Friend Trowbridge, seize her, bind her!" de Grandin called, thrusting a handful of the limber withes into my grasp and hurling himself upon the monstrous thing which lay in Edith Evander's place.

The hag fought like a true member of the wolf pack. Howling, clawing, growling and snarling, she opposed tooth and nail to our efforts, but at last we lashed her wrists and ankles firmly with the wooden cords and bore her, struggling frantically, down the stairs and placed her within the mystic circle de Grandin had drawn on the dining room floor.

"Inside, Friend Trowbridge, quickly!" the Frenchman ordered as he dipped the hyssop into the boiling liquid in the kettle and leaped over the chalk marks. "Mademoiselle Ostrander, Monsieur Evander, for your lives, leave the house!"

Reluctantly the husband and nurse left us and de Grandin began showering the contorting, howling thing on the floor with liquid from the boiling kettle.

Swinging his hyssop in the form of a cross above the hideous changeling's head, he uttered some invocation so rapidly that I failed to catch the words, then, striking the wolf-woman's feet, hands, heart and head in turn with his bundle of twigs, he drew forth a small black book and began reading in a firm, clear voice: *"Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord; Lord hear my voice. . . ."*

And at the end he finished with a great shout: *"I know that my redeemer liveth . . . . I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live!"*

As the words sounded through the room it seemed to me that a great cloud of shadow, like a billow of black vapor, rose from the dark corners of the apartment, eddied toward the circle of lamps, swaying their flames lambently, then suddenly gave back, evaporated and disappeared with a noise like steam escaping from a boiling kettle.

"Behold, Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin ordered, pointing to the still figure which lay over the sign of Mercury at his feet.

I bent forward, stifling my repugnance, then sighed with mingled relief and surprize. Calm as a sleeping child, Edith Evander, freed from all the hideous stigmata of the wolf-people, lay before us, her slender hands, still bound in the wooden ropes, crossed on her breast, her sweet, delicate features as though

they had never been disfigured by the curse of the blood-flower.

Loosing the bonds from her wrists and feet the Frenchman picked the sleeping woman up in his arms and bore her to her bedroom above stairs.

"Do you summon her husband and the nurse, my friend," he called from the turn in the stairway. "She will have need of both anon."

"WH—WHY, she's herself again!" Evander exclaimed joyfully as he leaned solicitously above his wife's bed.

"But of course!" de Grandin agreed. "The spell of evil was strong upon her, *Monsieur,* but the charm of good was mightier. She is released from her bondage for all time."

"I'll have your fee ready tomorrow," Evander promised diffidently. "I could not arrange the mortgages today—it was rather short notice, you know."

Laughter twinkled in de Grandin's little blue eyes like the reflection of moonlight on flowing water. "My friend," he replied, "I did make the good joke on you last night. *Parbleu,* to hear you agree to anything, and to announce that you did trust to my methods, as well, was payment enough for me. I want not your money. If you would repay Jules de Grandin for his services, continue to love and cherish your wife as you did last night when you feared you were about to lose her. Me, *morbleu!* but I shall make the eyes of my *confrères* pop with jealousy when I tell them what I have accomplished this night. *Sang d'un poisson,* I am one very clever man, *Monsieur!*"

"IT'S all a mystery to me, de Grandin," I confessed as we drove home, "but I'm hanged if I can understand how it was that the man was transformed into a monster almost as soon as he wore those flowers, and the woman resisted the influence of the things for a week or more."

"Yes," he agreed, "that is strange. Myself, I think it was because werewolfism is an outward and visible sign of the power of evil, and the man was already steeped in sin, while the woman was pure in heart. She had what we might call a higher immunity from the virus of that sinful blood-flower."

"And wasn't there some old legend to the effect that a werewolf could only be killed with a silver bullet?"

"Ah bah," he replied with a laugh. "What did those old legend-mongers know of the power of modern firearms? *Parbleu,* had the good St. George possessed a military rifle of today, he might have slain the dragon without approaching nearer than a mile! When I did shoot that wolf-man, my friend, I had something more powerful than superstition in my hand. *Morbleu,* but I did shoot a hole in him large enough for him to have walked through!"

"That reminds me," I added, "how are we going to explain his body to the police?"

"Explain?" he echoed with a chuckle. "*Nom d'un bouc,* we shall not explain: I, myself, did dispose of him this very afternoon. He lies buried beneath the roots of an ash tree, with a stake of ash through his heart to hold him to the earth. His sinful body will rise again no more to plague us, I do assure you. He was known to have a habit of disappearing. Very good. This time there will be no reappearance. We are through, finished, done with him for good."

We drove another mile or so in silence, then my companion nudged me sharply in the ribs. "This curing of werewolf ladies, my friend," he confided, "it is dry work. Are you sure there is a full bottle of brandy in the cellar?"

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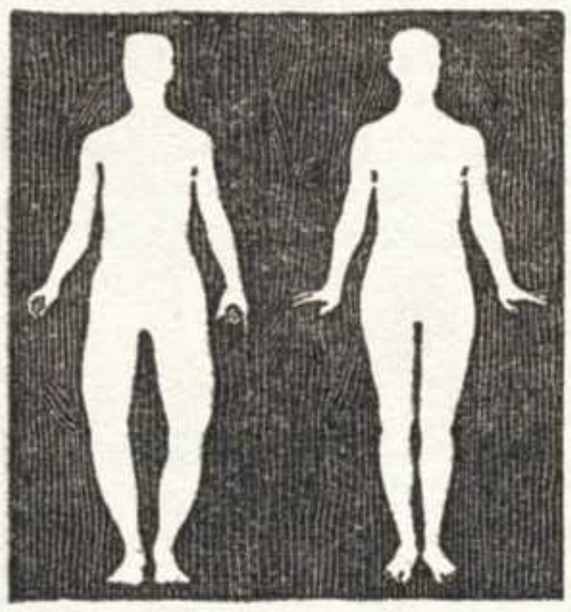

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The City of Glass

(Continued from page 316)

ing, followed by a tremendous crackling.

Looking down the avenue I saw a huge smudge rising between the houses. Almost at once there came an indescribable stench which filled our little chamber and sent us choking and gasping to the doors.

"We can burn it out," said the professor, "but this gaseous matter produced by the burning fungi will soon smother us. If we could create a draft of some sort or provide a means for the smudge to escape—ah, I have it; we'll cut a few holes in the great glass dome which surrounds Atlantis."

I had forgotten for the time being that Atlantis was enclosed in glass. Between us and the heavens above was a thick dome of solid glass barely visible in the thick, steamy Atlantean atmosphere. For a moment I wondered what new idea he had hit upon; the glass was quite out of reach so far as we were concerned. But his trained scientific mind had seen the possibility immediately. Without another word he began pulling the levers anew, and I saw the great lens slowly swing about. But the concentrated beam, instead of shooting upward, had turned down. Then I noticed for the first time a series of huge glass prisms which were built into a steel framework just beneath the lens. These, as I was shortly to see, would bend the ray until it could be played against the skies.

The ray was now turned toward the heavens. For a moment it rested there and then the professor swung it around in a great circle. Presently there came an ear-splitting crash not unlike that which comes on the heels of a bright flash of lightning. Something hurtled down out of the air before us, smashing against the roof-

tops with the sound of a thousand cymbals. The ray had cut a circular piece from the dome above us. On the heels of the crash there came a light pattering on the pavement outside.

"Why, it's raining," I shouted, running to the door.

"Don't go out," admonished the professor. "That isn't rain; it's molten glass falling from the dome. Luckily we're protected."

Six more disks the professor cut from the dome before turning the force of the beam back upon the spreading fungi. By this time the stuff was gathering like great drifts of soiled snow in the square below us. We had found our weapon none too soon! The beam from the lens now turned back into the street leading to the bridge; there came another hissing and crackling, followed by the same stench. This time, however, the smudge rolled upward and dispersed in the heavens.

Professor Lorne held the beam in the same spot for three hours before we could see our way clear to the bridge, moving it only occasionally to burn back the stuff which threatened to creep and engulf us from below.

"I think we had better be starting now," he announced, finally. "These Atlanteans were great chemists. I have no doubt there are vast stores of chemicals situated in different parts of the city. The fungus to the west is now dried up to the point where it is slowly burning. Should it reach some of these stored chemicals we might be all blown into the heavens. And the road to the bridge is now open."

With that we climbed quickly down the ladder and made our way through a veritable canyon of burnt fungi toward the bridge of the city. On either side there was a hissing and roaring as the dried fungi smoldered away without the aid of the sun-glass.

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The heat was well-nigh unbearable. Undoubtedly all of us would have perished were it not for the chemically treated garments in which the Atlanteans had clothed us from the beginning. As it was, we reached the bridge that spanned the moat, the professor and I carrying Constance between us.

"Hurry," he urged. "We can not pause, even here. Should the fire reach the chemicals we would surely be destroyed."

And he was right! Scarcely had we reached the rim of encircling hills when a huge ball of white vapor, clearly discernible in the thick smudge, arose over the doomed city. For an instant it hovered there and then shot upward like a gigantic rubber ball pushed by some unseen hand from the inferno below.

PIMPLES

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Quickly on the heels of it there came a terrific explosion which rocked the earth about us until we reeled drunkenly against the rocks. Then came a blast of livid air that hurled us over backward on the sands. In the short second between the shock and the blast I had my last picture of Atlantis—a picture well in keeping with the horrors of that thrice-accursed land. The monster pall of smoke had mushroomed out in the heavens until it took on the form of a gigantic cobra, upraised on its scaly belly, the hood outspread and menacing. The crash came, the hooded head struck at the heavens.

When I arose and looked again, only a thin veil of black vapor on the horizon marked the spot where once had flourished this, the strangest of cities. And as I gazed, even this faded against the blue and was lost forever.

I MIGHT continue my account in a description of the hardships that were yet to be our lot before we were finally picked up, almost dead from thirst, by a caravan in the desert. But these events were of so prosaic and commonplace a nature compared with what we had just been through that I have seen fit to end my story here.

So far as I know, no one but us escaped from Atlantis. Oddly enough we could find not a single trace of the debris when we returned on a second expedition, though in one of the gullies which must have been under the palace walls we came upon a skeleton, the bones of which were curiously torn and mangled. Luckily, Constance, who had now become Mrs. Garth, was not a member of our party, and so Professor Lorne and I buried the bones in the gully where we found them, raising a cairn of stones above the spot, on which we marked the name of Colin Penfield.

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The Seventh Symphony

(Continued from page 336)

then, without waiting for any reply, he resumed his walk, muttering to himself all the while. We covered some six blocks more. Again the doctor stopped. He clapped his hands to his head, dislodging his hat, but made no effort to recover it. When I handed it to him he clapped it on wrong side foremost. Suddenly he rushed at me, grasped my hands in his, and began working them like a pump-handle in his excitement. I had never seen him in so exuberant a mood before.

"'And the children shall be wise,'" he cried, "'and the wise men shall be as children.' How does the quotation run?" Then, linking his arms through mine, he solemnly turned me round, as though upon parade, and we started back again at a prodigious rate of speed.

"What is it? Have you solved the problem?" I asked.

The doctor came to a full halt once more.

"Do you mean to tell me you don't know?" he cried. And when I admitted my ignorance he burst into peals of mighty laughter. He hurried me along breathlessly. And yet I knew in my heart that his happiness was not for the solution which he had found, but for the sake of Celaye. We reached the apartment at last, and the astonished elevator boy, more sleepy than ever, took us up and deposited us at Celaye's door. We rang six times before Celaye came out, wild-eyed and haggard. He stared at us, not in anger, but amazement.

"You—you were here before—were you not?" he gasped. "My mind must be unhinged. Yes, I remember it. You could not help me.

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And what was it I said to you, doctor? Something unpleasant? If so, forgive me."

The doctor flung his arm around the young man's shoulder and fairly dragged him into the room. The cello still stood propped against the wall.

"You wouldn't let me touch it this evening," cried Brodsky, snapping his fingers playfully in the man's face. "A fig for your whims. Play it yourself. Play the piece your wife loved so well—play her transcription of the 'Heartbeat March' from the seventh symphony." He swung Celaye round until he faced him. "Play it," he repeated, looking into his eyes.

Celaye's face grew fixed. He could no longer resist. Mechanically he walked across the room, took the bow from the floor, where it still lay, drew up a chair, and settled himself before the instrument. He drew the bow across the strings.

And again that rush of thunderous discords broke from the cello. It squeaked and groaned, and the bow rattled and scraped and whined. Celaye's eyes opened almost as wide as mine; he dropped the bow and sprang from his chair as though there were a nail in it.

"Well, sir," said Brodsky slowly, though his eyes twinkled, "ghosts have been blamed and doctors called impostors for better reasons than that. How in thunder do you expect even the grandest living player to bring forth music when you forget to tune your cello? And look at that bow! You've left them for months, sir, and expect them to prove serviceable. Get a new bow, sir, and tune those strings, and don't blame your own negligence upon those who are not responsible."

NOTE.—The next story in this series, ***The Chairs of Stuyvesant Baron,*** will be published in WEIRD TALES next month.

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(Signed) L. G. Stransky,
Vice-President.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of November, 1926.

(Signed) Ernest Henegar,
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