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SEPTEMBER
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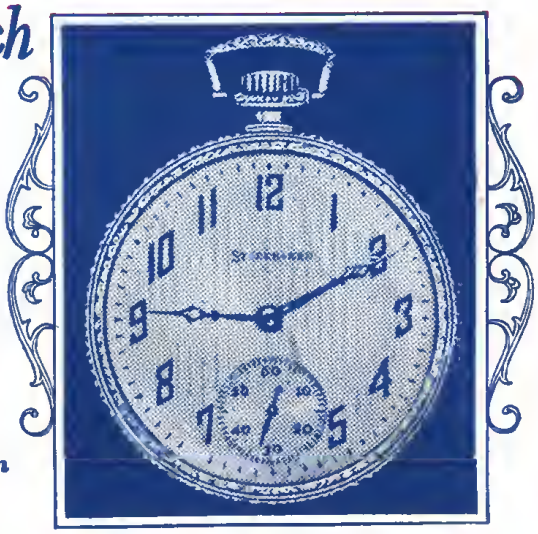

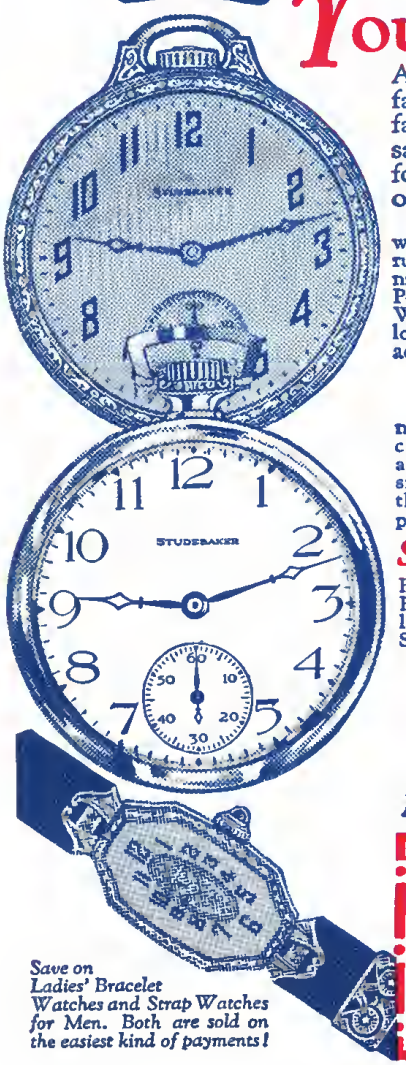

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME X NUMBER 3

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Verse

VARIETY in weird fiction and unusualness of plot—these have been the guiding aims of the editors of WEIRD TALES in selecting the stories that make up this magazine. Even the best stories will surfeit the readers' appetite if these are all of one kind, and it has ever been the purpose of this magazine to give the utmost variety—a well-balanced feast of weird fiction, that does not contain too much of one type of literary food, but provides the best of all kinds, yet keeps the menu in strict accord with the classification "weird" tales.

This issue is an example of the care that is taken to insure variety—and that this policy is appreciated is shown by the constantly rising popularity of the magazine. *The Wolf-Woman* is a vampire-tale, and moreover it is a vampire-tale with a distinctly new and original plot. *The Moon Menace* is an excellent example of the weird-scientific stories for which this magazine has become noted—an invasion of earth from outside, and the terrifying prospect facing mankind of a lightless earth spinning blindly through space, the moon men its masters from pole to pole. *The Beast of the Yungas* is a tale of fear—killing, overwhelming fear—and a prehistoric beast known to science as a diplodocus. Sax Rohmer's story, *Lord of the Jackals,* is a tale of the Egyptian desert, and weird magic. *The Bride of Osiris* is an intriguing mystery-tale of the underground city of Karneter. *The White Lady of the Orphanage* is a strong tale of horror, calculated to pale the cheek and send shudders up the reader's spine. *The Adventure of the Pipe* is a fantastic story, and *The Blue City* is one of those bizarre and exquisitely beautiful gems that are so frequently found in the pages of WEIRD TALES—a Chinese tale of sweetness and light and tender loveliness.

Even in the two ghost-stories there is plenty of contrast, for *The Turret Room* is a ghost-tale of the old-fashioned kind, whereas *The Dead Wagon* is a ghost-story of distinctly new plot, with an original twist that makes it refreshingly different. This story illustrates what we mean by originality:

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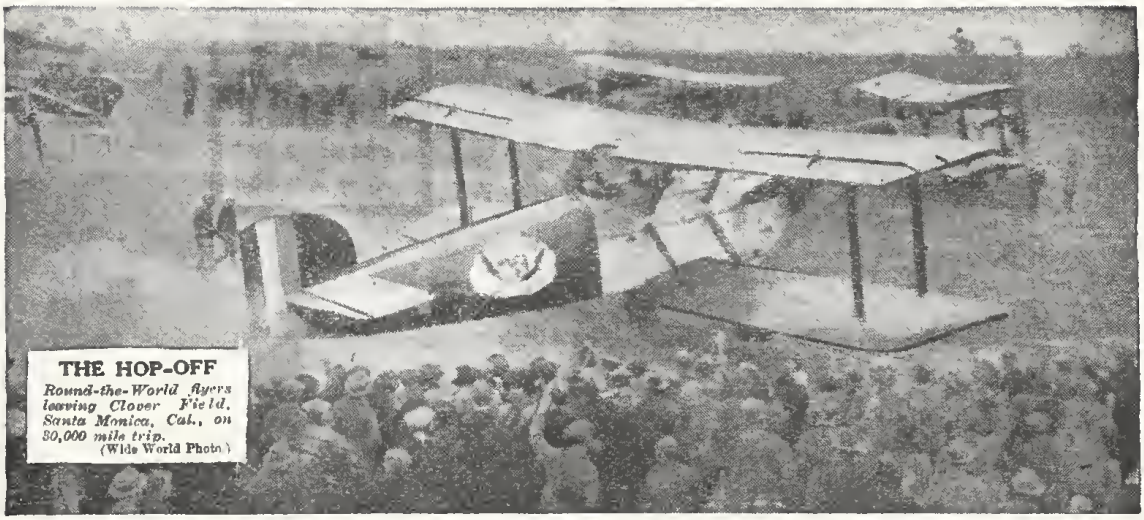

THE HOP-OFF
Round-the-World flyers leaving Clover Field, Santa Monica, Cal., on 30,000 mile trip.
(Wide World Photo)

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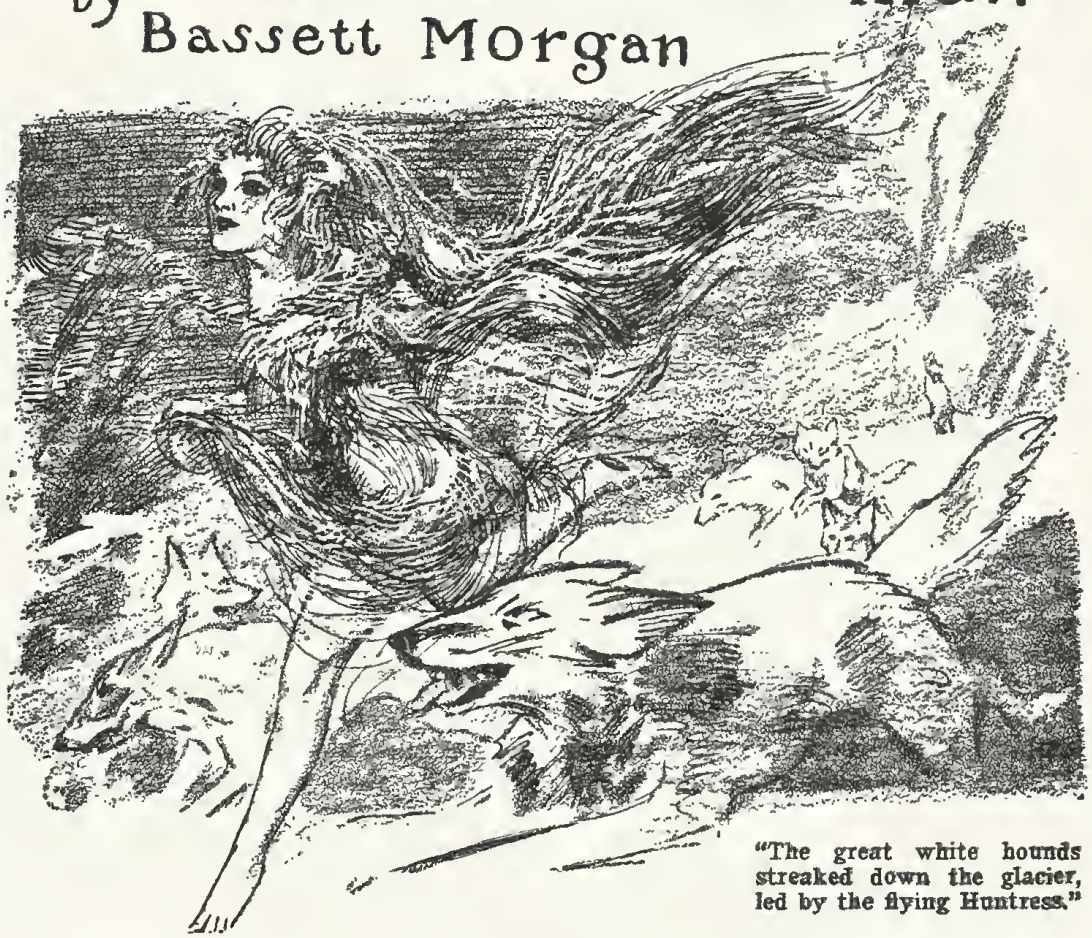
The Wolf-Woman

by Bassett Morgan



"The great white hounds streaked down the glacier, led by the flying Huntress."

BEATEN back by fogs and blizards of the heights, the Stamwell party was camped in a sun-warmed valley at the base of Mount Logan, which lifts its ice-capped head in eternal solitude and awful silence above the most intensely glaciated region of the world.

Three years before, in an attempt to follow MacCarthy, who first ascended Logan, the intrepid mountain-climber Morsey had fallen into a crevasse; and Professor Stamwell was now attempting to recover his body from the glacier and by a process of his own experimentation restore it to life.

His assistant, Lieutenant Cressey, who had been more intrigued by the adventure of the climb than by Stamwell's sanguinary hope of resuscitating flesh entombed and even perfectly preserved in the ice, was reluctant to admit failure. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the sun-warmth of the valley after the terrific frost-fangs and ice-claws of the heights. Along the shores of a little river whose source lay in the glaciers, the dogs romped, catching fish with the dexterity of the husky breed and gorging themselves.

Baptiste, the big half-breed Canadian guide who looked after the comforts of the men, had been roving all day. At supper time he returned,

tossing his cap in the air and yelling excitedly.

"*M'sieus,*" he shouted, "I have find wan funny mans what makes t'ings of ivory. You come an' see. You lak heem ver' much."

Nothing loth to leave the discussion of their defeat, Stamwell and Cressey followed the exuberant Baptiste for a mile or two along the river to a stoutly timbered cabin beside which an old man watched his supper cooking over a fire outside. At sight of him, Cressey laughed, while Baptiste explained his new acquaintance.

"Hees name ees Jo. He ees half Indian, half Eskimo. An' I savvy hees talk ver' fine."

While Baptiste talked in tribal jargon, Cressey's amusement mounted. The old man was toothless and wrinkled. A beaded band kept the lank hair from obscuring his sight, and as his jaw wagged constantly on a quid of chewing tobacco, two knobbed knucklebones of seals thrust through slits in his cheeks gave the appearance of tusks. Ragged wolfskin trousers and elk-hide moccasins completed his attire, but he smiled grotesquely as he led the way inside the cabin. There he lighted a wick floating on a dish of oil, threw wide a window-shutter and let in sunlight, which revealed a collection of carved ivory objects on shelves about the walls.

Baptiste was even more eager than the carver to display his skill. He handed Stamwell a figure copied from comic supplements of newspapers and familiar in homes from the arctic circle to the Florida Keys. A moment later he brought forth its mate. Stamwell held in his hands cleverly chiseled likenesses of Mutt and Jeff. Flattered by the interest of these white men, Jo showed them the source of his inspiration, a sheaf of old newspapers from the pages of which he took his ivory models. Baptiste, convulsed with mirth, laid in Cressey's hand a figure which brought a responsive laugh.

"She got bellyache!" he shouted. Even Professor Stamwell chuckled at his description of a lovely little "September Morn."

They spent a good deal of time with the contents of the shelf before Jo took up the oil dish and threw a flickering light on a recumbent figure in the cabin corner. Stamwell went on his knees, and Cressey gasped at the beauty of a woman, carved in ivory, lying as if asleep with one arm under her head and her long hair draped over her shoulder. The figure was almost life-size, and the ivory block showed no seam or joint. Stamwell touched the slender leg with gentle fingers, then looked at Cressey.

"Cressey, this ivory is of different texture from the small figurines. I should say it was fossilized, but where on earth would the old fellow obtain such a huge block of material?"

"And the woman-model!" exclaimed Cressey. "A white woman, undoubtedly. Look at the sensitive nostrils and straight nose, and the rounded cheeks. No Kogmollyc or Indian squaw posed for this. The old fellow didn't create her, either. He couldn't. You can see he has only a great skill in imitating and copying. Baptiste, ask Jo where he saw such a woman, asleep."

Baptiste's conversation with the old man occupied some time, and before it ended the big guide was fingering his scapular.

"Jo, he say dees woman froze een iee. He git dees big chunk' ivory from ver' beeg land-whale, also froze een ice."

"A land-whale! Cressey, he means a mammoth. We've come across real treasure. Baptiste, tell Jo we would like to see this land-whale."

Baptiste interpreted. The ivory-carver nodded good-naturedly and

started at once to lead them to the source of his art-material.

"Jo, he say," offered Baptiste when the dogs were harnessed and food on the sled in case of an overnight trip, "he say dees womans ees froze een ice long tam. Maybe dis summer fetch her out. She come down ver' fast. Long tam ago, Jo see her ver' high up. Jo say more as hunderd snows when he first see her."

"Frozen in the glacier more than a hundred years ago! Preposterous! The old fellow exaggerates." Stamwell waved aside Jo's veracity. "We've evidently stumbled on a tragedy. Snow madness makes its victims strip naked, usually, which would account for her nudity, and Jo looks aged, but I don't credit his hundred-year memory."

"Her hair must have touched the ground, Professor. That dates her pretty far back."

For some hours the ice-trail, steep though not perilous, claimed their attention. The sun swung down to the horizon for the brief moments of northern midnight, then began its upward arc. They found that Jo had cut steps on the glacial river which wound down from the grim sides of Mount Logan. Mounting steadily, they reached a terrace which led to lofty pinnacles of ice so clearly blue it was like a fairy palace, where steps led to an outstanding archway and natural grotto of rock that had been broken from its base and carried down.

Inside the grotto the light was weirdly blue, the ice underfoot clear as glass. Jo pointed and Cressey knelt, and a moment later his cry echoed from the grotto walls. Under the crystal shell lay the carver's model, more beautiful than the carved ivory, a woman, young, lovely, golden hair half robing her form, tawny eyelashes on her rounded cheeks. Near by, as if they had lain down to sleep and been caught by instant and painless death, were seven large hounds or wolves, with snow-white pelts.

Baptiste, plagued by superstitious fear, gazed long and earnestly, then leaped from the cave with a wild cry and ran down the steps which led to the broken end of the lower terrace. Cressey and Stamwell, engrossed by the sight beneath their feet, did not miss Baptiste until he returned, holding his nose and grimacing.

"Name of a Name! She smell ver' dead, dat land-whale!"

They followed him to the terrace, below which lay the enormous carcass of a hairy mammoth in advanced stages of putrefaction, smelling, as Baptiste had said, "very dead."

One great tusk lay on the tundra, the other had been sawn off, proving Jo's assertion about the source of his ivory. Cressey was staring at the mass below in absorbed silence, when Stamwell clutched his arm and exclaimed: "Cressey, we did not find Morsey. But we've found this woman. By heaven, we'll take her and the dogs from their ice-tomb!"

"But—but what a pity!" cried Cressey. "The air will finish them in no time, like that mammoth. And she is beautiful in death!"

"Another summer would bring her down to that finish anyway," argued Stamwell. "And what if it isn't death? What about its being merely suspended animation? Here is our chance to test my discovery. I meant to try it on Morsey. We can't do that for him, but what a triumph to bring this woman back to life after God alone knows how many years of sleep; a Diana of eld and her hunting pack!"

"But aren't you interested in this mammoth at all, Stamwell?"

"What is a mammoth, decayed at that?" Stamwell's eyes burned with the passion of a zealot. "Mammoths

have been found everywhere, their skeletons mounted and their existence traced. We shouldn't have even the satisfaction of originality. But to carry out a living woman who has been buried in the ice, no one can say how long—Cressey, look at those hounds!" Stamwell was hurrying to the cave and growing more excited every moment. "Do you know of a living breed of dogs like them? They are true wolf, even larger than the timber wolves. And albinos. It is stupendous, staggering, the antiquity revealed under this shell of ice. And to think, if we had been a year later this superb discovery would have moved down with the glacier and broken off at the terrace, the prey of wild animals, the bones scattered. That will happen next year unless we rescue her!"

Cressey did not answer. The idea of taking this frozen beauty from the ice and restoring her to life sounded like the talk of a man demented. Yet, as he heard the calculating plan of Stamwell unfold, Cressey admitted to himself that it was a new and alluring adventure. At Stamwell's succinct commands, he accompanied Baptiste to the valley camp to bring back their packs and establish a camp in the grotto which penetrated the floe for a hundred feet or more and would serve admirably as a shelter.

By the time Baptiste had made beds of pine boughs and started a fire with wood hauled from below, Cressey found that Stamwell had made remarkable progress in chipping the ice from the entombed woman and her dogs. The guide cooked breakfast. The cave had assumed an appearance of comfort exceeding their valley tents, and after a meal of flapjacks they slept.

Cressey was wakened by the noise of Stamwell's pick on the ice.

"What if that hammering should start an avalanche?" he asked.

"There isn't much danger. The sun warmth melting the ice also welds it, and the floe is less crisp here than in higher altitudes. Don't think up discouragements, Cressey. Get busy and help me."

They worked all day, cutting a rectangular space which included the entire group. Baptiste and the half-breeds had slept huddled in parkas, in the tents erected outside the grotto, which they refused to enter except to carry out the broken ice. It was apparent to both Stamwell and Cressey that their men regarded this disturbance of the ice-entombed woman as a sacrilege that would brew trouble, and Baptiste solemnly voiced prophetic warning.

"Dogs!" he snorted. "Who ever see dogs lak dem? Dey look more lak ghost-wolf, the *loup-garou*. Me, I don' lak dees bisniss. I come for to climb mountain, not dig up dead womans." Nor would be gaze into the deepening hole where Stamwell and Cressey labored until only a thin shell of ice covered the bodies of the woman and hounds, when Stamwell called a halt.

"We must prepare things for her resuscitation, Cressey. Help me with these packs."

They toiled until Cressey reeled with weariness, preparing ice slabs covered with furs, arranging apparatus, pulmonary respirators, hypodermics, bottles of precious distillations known only to Professor Stamwell, blankets and kettles of hot water.

"If you should be tempted to give an account of this to the world, Cressey, I trust you will guard the secret of my process," said Stamwell that night.

"Obviously," answered Cressey, "since I haven't the faintest idea of success in such a preposterous attempt to cheat death."

Buoyed up by excitement, Stamwell seemed unwearied, but Cressey was glad to lie down, and it seemed

only a few moments of sleep when again he was awakened by Stamwell's chipping ice in the task of extricating one of the white hounds. By noontime, they were lifting it from the hole and placing it on a fur-covered slab of ice to roll in blankets and be gradually warmed with hot water cans until the nine-inch length of fur fell wet and limp as it thawed.

It was some time before the flesh grew pliable, for the beast measured eleven feet from snout to tail-tip and was all the two men could manage. With sweat pouring down his face, Cressey obeyed the crisp commands of Stamwell with trained military precision while the professor applied one after another of his processes and both took turns in expanding and contracting the great fur-clad chest by sheer strength, and manipulating the hypodermic of fluid which started heart action. Then Cressey felt a twitching of the body muscles and saw the legs jerk. He could scarcely credit his sight as Stamwell poured small doses of prepared broth down the dog's throat, and it swallowed them with a faint, gurgling whimper. Stamwell's cry held triumph.

In vain Baptiste announced mealtime. The sun had dipped and begun another day before the great hound was swathed in blankets and furs and the two white men took the hot coffee they sorely needed.

"Eureka!" shouted Stamwell, beside himself with joy.

"And now that the beast is alive, what will we do with him?" was Cressey's rejoinder.

"Take excellent care of him. Take him down to the valley as soon as possible, where Baptiste can feed and look after him."

After a brief three hours of sleep, Stamwell roused Cressey and they exhumed another hound, going through the same laborious work as before, to be rewarded eventually by a whimpering whine and the signs of recurring animation. By that time the first hound was able to take boiled meat and showed ravenous greed, and after the meal it attempted to struggle to its feet but was still weak. In three days it left the blankets and took a few staggering steps, then lifted its magnificent head and howled mournfully again and again, a sound at which Baptiste made the sign of the cross and muttered Chippewan incantations against evil.

When ten days were gone, Baptiste was delegated to escort a pack of seven white hounds, for which stout leather collars and light chains were provided, to the valley. With him went all the half-breeds except one who remained to cook for the white men in the grotto. Baptiste had orders to hunt game and feed the hounds and keep the sled dogs on leash at the cabin of the ivory-carver for greater safety.

With the grotto cleared of the dogs, Stamwell turned his attention to the central block of ice. The hypodermic needles were carefully sterilized, and the greatest care and precautions taken as they lifted the crystal casket from the hole and carefully thawed the ice embedding the woman. Sweat poured off both men while they worked, and their breaths came in sharp hisses long before the first sign of life was evinced in a whispered sigh from the pale lips.

Stamwell's eyes were shadowed to the cheekbones and he seemed to have aged years when the muscular twitching of her slender legs began and a sigh of agony quivered into the silence.

"If you've had your flesh frozen and thawed, you will understand the pain she feels," said Stamwell. "I almost regret inflicting this suffering upon her, but when she pulls through and realizes that she is alive, then, Cressey, I shall be repaid."

Cressey's thoughts denied that potential gratitude. Suppose this woman had been dead any great length of time and found none of her own generation alive in the world, would she thank them? Cressey doubted it, but she was so lovely that he lost all sense of dread and felt only a vast pity in his heart for the beautiful creature lying in the red blankets, her golden hair spread like a silken veil on the colored wool.

It was almost midnight when her eyelids fluttered open and the two men saw eyes of purple softness which moved slowly as she seemed aware of the two men and firelight illuminating the dark ice of the cave. The blueness left her fingernails and color returned to her lips as she was fed hot milk and broth; then her eyelids closed and her body relaxed in sleep. Stamwell was like a man insane with fear until he applied a stethoscope to her breast.

"Thank God, it is sleep!" he cried. "But there will be no peace for me until she is out of danger. While I watch her, you had better rest. Cressey, do you realize that I have brought the dead to life?"

To Cressey his cry was a challenge, a sacrilege. He felt something of the same uncanny fear which Baptiste had displayed at Stamwell's assumption of supernatural power, and wondered if it were beneficence or crime to restore that lovely creature to life after her long sleep.

His sleep was troubled because in the valley the great hounds howled all night. Dozing, waking to curse them, he saw Stamwell beside the woman's couch, and rising he bade the professor sleep while he watched. He made coffee and carried a steaming cup to his seat beside the sleeping beauty, sipping it as he gazed at the sun-gold creeping down the glacier to the grotto door. A sigh roused him. A white hand touched his wrist. Turning, Cressey was aware that the violet eyes of the woman gazed at him and she smiled, then her fingers touched the tin cup he held as if she was thirsty.

"I can't give you that," he found himself telling her as if she understood his talk. He reached for a bowl of broth simmering on the alcohol stove, heavy with meat juices and nourishing tonic medicines, and fed her. Color tinted her throat and cheeks. She seemed momentarily to gain strength. Cressey was thrilled and awed by the miracle happening before his eyes, and shocked at the languorous coquetry of her glance and the white fingers clinging to his hand.

Again he fed her, aware that she was ravenously hungry, until the broth was finished. He thought she was again asleep until her hand lifted her golden hair and trailed it across his face and a low-toned, throaty laugh startled him. Feeling helpless in face of a crisis, he replaced the golden tress on the couch and felt his fingers tingling as from a light galvanic shock at its touch. He leaned forward and instantly his neck was circled by her arms and she pressed her face against his throat. Cressey was so astonished that he did not try to draw back, and an instant later he felt her teeth on the flesh of his neck.

Alarm and swift revulsion seized him. He was afraid to tear her arms away for fear of bruising the tender skin. He knew her heart beat under the forced stimulation of Stamwell's drugs and feared a sudden shock might halt its action, then while he hesitated a strange drowsiness clouded his senses and stole over his body. He felt no pain where her teeth pierced the skin of his throat; her arms were satin-smooth, the warmth of her lips tempted him to rest in the alluring embrace.

Then a cry from Stamwell roused Cressey from drowsiness that nearly swung into blissful unconsciousness. He was wrenched from her arms and felt the sting of flesh her teeth released. Glancing at her, he saw her lips moist and crimson-stained, and she was struggling in the clutch of Stamwell.

"Fill that hypo with the medicine in the third bottle, quickly, Cressey. She is so strong I can scarcely control her."

Cressey obeyed, even to inserting the needle into the skin of her arm. Her scream was piercing as she fought Stamwell, who held her until the drug took effect and she sank back, relaxed. Then Stamwell turned to Cressey.

"Good God, man, I trusted you to stay awake and watch."

Cressey did not reply. Stamwell was disinfecting the wound on his neck, to which he applied a pad of cotton gauze and adhesive tape. Cressey could not even smile, nor would he tell Stamwell how she had coquetted with him before catching him in her arms.

A few minutes later they saw Baptiste toiling up the glacial drift, and from outside the grotto door he called to them.

"*M'sieus*, I can not hold dose dog, dey grow so beeg, so strong, an' my men ees scare' dey break dem chain. I am ver' scare' of dose dog my own self. Me, I am good dog-man, but not dat kind of dog. I feed heem nineteen rabbit, seven coyote, wan elk and much fish in wan week. All my men do ees hunt for feed dose dog. Me, I am 'bout ready quit my job. I tak sled dogs an' tie heem across rivaire cause eef dose white dog git loose—well, we walk back outside."

"Cressey, the white hounds must not kill our sled dogs and Baptiste must be pacified, for if he deserted we should never get our menagerie out alive. I think we can take the woman down to the valley by tomorrow. Suppose you go down now and look after the camp."

"The oil-dish threw a flickering light on a recumbent figure in the cabin corner, carved out of ivory."

FOLLOWING Baptiste down the ice-trail, Cressey saw the ivory-carver industriously sawing off the remaining tusk of the mammoth, and watching him a moment, he slipped and fell headlong. He was only slightly stunned, but a worse calamity had befallen, for in extricating his foot from a small fissure, he felt the snapping of bone and a dull pain. Cressey cursed.

"Baptiste, I've snapped a bone!" The warm-hearted Baptiste lifted him to his shoulder and made his way down to the valley, where their arrival started a terrific din of howling dogs and answering yelps of the sled huskies leashed across the river. Baptiste muttered oaths.

"Eef dose white dog git loose, dey swallow my dog lak I swallow loche-liver without chew heem," he commented and grumbled his distaste of the whole business of the grotto miracle. Baptiste was about ready to desert, and it occurred to Cressey that he had better summon Stamwell at once. The great white hounds leaped the length of their chains and the sturdy pine trees were swaying and jerking from the lunge of their powerful bodies.

"Baptiste, you had better fetch Professor Stamwell and his packs down at once, and we'll make a start outside," he said. Again Baptiste took the trail to the grotto, while Cressey soaked his foot in hot water, then bound it with wet moss and cotton. The cook was preparing supper, the other men had gone to assist old Jo to fetch his big mammoth tusk to his cabin, then they all came to where Cressey sat and one of the breeds translated Jo's talk.

"*M'sieu,* he say eet ees not good to stay where devils come to life. Dees white wolf ees devil-wolf. Dis woman ees devil-woman. Jo, he say we better froze de dogs and womans again and go out, queeck."

"He's a timid, superstitious old man," said Cressey. "The dogs are savage but the woman can not harm anyone."

Yet as he spoke Cressey felt uneasy. The gauze pad on his neck was a reminder of his personal experience with the woman. He ate supper and waited impatiently for the coming of Stamwell, but it was nearly midnight when he saw Baptiste coming down swiftly, alone. The big guide broke into excited cries as he ran toward Cressey.

"*M'sieu! Le professeur* ees dead, an' *la femme,* she ees gone!"

"Gone! Stamwell dead!" echoed Cressey. Baptiste crossed himself and muttered broken snatches of Chippewan mingled with Roman Catholic prayers, looking apprehensively at the hounds. The dogs stood silent but alert, ears stiffly pointed, and sniffing the wind.

"*M'sieu,* een de cave ev'ting toss dees way an' dat. *Le professeur* he ees lay on floor and hees t'roat ees got bite. Hees hands dey look lak dey soak in water long tam."

Like a blow from a bludgeon the explanation crashed on Cressey. When Stamwell dozed, the woman had caught him as she seized Cressey, possibly drained his blood like vampire bats of southern caves, and with renewed strength had left the grotto. He remembered that she was unclad and the air of the ice-fields bitterly cold. With his injured foot he was hampered in reaching the glacier, and nothing he could say or do would persuade Baptiste and his men to search and bring the woman to the valley.

Stamwell's death had come so suddenly he could not yet realize the tragedy. Then he noticed that the dogs were rousing to uncanny excitement, whining and growling, tugging strenuously at their chains. Cressey began to regret bitterly what had been done and longed to break camp and escape from the weird influences

loosed by Stamwell and himself. Baptiste saw him look toward the ivory-carver's cabin.

"Good, *M'sieu*. We camp tonight een Jo's house. Eet ees not good to be here. *Non!*"

UNDER Baptiste's commands the men toiled to carry everything to the cabin, then they set about strengthening it with a barricade of young firs quickly cut down and heaped about the log walls.

"The good priest, he say all trees ees made by *le bon Dieu,*" explained Baptiste, "an', Name of a Name! we need Heem dis night to keep us safe." Cressey could only nod assent, for as he dropped on a couch of freshly cut pine branches, he was aware that stealing over him was that same blissful unrest he had felt in the arms of the death-delivered woman of the glacier. He felt possessed of a wild desire to find her and thrill again to the touch of her satin arms and her mouth warm on his flesh. He knew it for an evil thing, a worse craving than whisky or dope, and found himself battling the weakness of flesh with arguments prompted by reason which his lips betrayed to Baptiste.

"It is cruel to let the woman wander alone on the ice. If you do not go and find her, Baptiste, I will."

The breed's dark face was grim with dogged determination.

"*M'sieu,* you do not leave dis cabin, not eef we must chain you lak wan dog. Me, I t'ink you have evil curse on you!"

And Baptiste barred both door and window of the cabin which held eight men, until within an hour of midnight the air had grown hot and foul and Cressey demanded fresh air. Reluctantly, Baptiste threw open the window-shutter and admitted a bar of diminishing sunlight. The white hounds were giving tongue in unearthly howlings, mournful as dog-wailings which to the superstitious folk announce death, and the blood of Cressey was leaping as at the cry of a hunting pack. He hobbled to the window and looked toward the glacier where Stamwell lay. Even now he could scarcely realize that his friend was dead, and again he urged Baptiste to open the door.

"No, for my life, *M'sieu*. Look!" There in the river of slow-moving ice stood the huntress, poised daintily on her toes as if in a dance, her arms uplifted to cup her hands at her lips, her long golden hair blowing about a body as softly rounded as a young girl. And on the midnight silence came a clear, ringing cry.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose among the white hounds. Their howls were deafening and the clank of chains made wild, metallic music, and they leaped, and fell back, and leaped again. With their heads thrust through the window opening, Baptiste and Cressey watched, leaning back against men crowded behind them, as one of the hounds snapped his chain and raced like a white cloud in great, swift bounds toward the glacier.

Within a few moments they were all free and flying to the heights, where they leaped about the woman with joyous yelps until she was hidden by a frenzied tumult of gigantic hounds. Then, seemingly at her command, their yelps ceased and they were squatted on their haunches at her feet, pink eyes shining like rubies in the soft twilight, red tongues lolling and quivering from white-fanged jaws. Again she cupped hands to her lips and sent out her hunting cry. At the sound, Cressey shivered. In every nerve he felt the piercing lure of that wail. She was calling him forth, and some hell-born desire to answer and go to her was fighting every prompting of reason. Again came her call, and Cressey plunged from the window toward the door.

Baptiste was too quick for him and thrust his own great bulk against the timbers, flinging Cressey aside.

"*Non! M'sieu,* are you crazee? Look!" Baptiste had snatched a small silver crucifix from inside his shirt and clamped it against Cressey's forehead. He felt it searing his skin, like white-hot metal, and he sank to the pine couch, shuddering, sweat breaking out on his face. At Baptiste's command the men held Cressey down, and again Baptiste flattened the crucifix over his breast and repeated bits of prayers strangely mixed with the incantations of his Chippewan mother's teachings. The sweat grew clammy on his body before Baptiste released him and gave him whisky from an emergency flask.

A somber group of men waited in the cabin until the sun was sailing high and the last faint howling of the white hounds had dwindled to silence. Cressey slept and wakened to see the door open and feel the warm wind blowing through the cabin, then Baptiste brought him coffee and flapjacks hot from the pan.

"*M'sieu,* I say to Jo that we use wan sled to carry out hees beeg tusk. We have sled to spare now we don' carry out medicine packs. Today we break camp."

Cressey considered in silence, his mind quite clear, the horror of the night-frenzy vanished with the sunlight. He could not, would not go outside and leave Stamwell's body without decent burial and said so.

"*M'sieu,* what happen hees body makes no nev' mind. Me, Baptiste, say you do not go to dat cave no more. Eet ees *la Chasse du Diable!*"

"Call it what you will, Baptiste. I do not leave here without placing the body of my friend out of reach of wolves. Perhaps already the white hounds have found it. If so, I shall be haunted for life."

"Me, I t'ink dat ees happen already, *M'sieu,*" commented Baptiste, "but now dey are gone, maybe we go fetch down *le professeur.*" Baptiste had clashed wills with Cressey before, and met defeat, yet when they dragged Cressey up the ice-trail on a sled the breed wore crucifix and scapular in full view on his breast and every man did likewise.

They found no trace of the hounds, not even pad-marks on the snow. The grotto showed signs of a struggle, but fortunately Stamwell had packed his medicines and instruments. His body lay on the couch, relaxed before rigor mortis set in, and his face had even the semblance of a smile, but on his throat was an ominous white mark of strong, even teeth, and the visible skin was puckered as if his veins were empty. Otherwise the corpse was unmolested, at which Cressey marveled until he remembered that the white hounds had been supplied with meat by the men. The gaping ice-hole presented a solution of a temporary tomb, and Professor Stamwell, blanket-wrapped, was laid deep, the broken ice shoveled in, and heated water poured until the grave was filled and already freezing, safe against depredation.

It was while that task engrossed him that Cressey felt the force of the tragedy and a growing desire to avenge the murder of Stamwell, and he forgot the weird spell of the night in which the untombed woman had tempted him to follow her by the memory of her beauty and blissful languor of her caress. It was cowardly to run away now, nor had he any proof of the tale he must tell of Stamwell's death when he was again outside. Then he remembered that since the conquest of Mount Logan by MacCarthy, other parties had set out, and he knew approximately the location of three groups headed for that ascent, all hard-headed mountain-climbers and scientists. Giving orders to Baptiste to dispatch men in search

of these expedition-groups, he started up the glacier in spite of the vehement protests of the guide, who, just before leaving on the valley trail, tossed over Cressey's head the deerskin thong holding the crucifix.

"Wan ver' good priest bless it, *M'sieu*. You take care of heem for Baptiste."

Irreligious himself, Cressey respected the faiths of other men and humored Baptiste. Then, drawn on a sled by two breeds, he adventured the heights, watching for a glimpse of the woman.

They had traversed a considerable distance, had seen ptarmigan tame as chickens, and edelweiss growing through the snow. Halting to pluck one of these brave little blooms, Cressey saw something glittering over a flower that seemed withered in first unfolding, and he picked from it a long, glistening thread of golden hair that curled, by some attraction of warm blood, about his fingers.

The snow-glare was blinding, the wind whistled keen as whip-lashes, and to eat their meal sheltered from its cutting blast, Cressey ordered a detour toward a group of ice-spires which on closer inspection proved a labyrinthine entrance of shining columns leading to a second grotto. Leaning on a stout fir branch used as a cane, he limped down the passage, then halted in alarm. Low, menacing growls and clanking metal told of the hounds within, and a moment later they had leaped forth, a cloud of white death!

Cressey turned to run, knowing how meager was his chance for life. His revolver was in his hand, but as shots rang out, the hounds circled past him, apparently untouched, while he reeled in shocked amazement that he had missed a hit at such close range. Screams from the ice entrance brought his heart to his throat, cries of the two breeds that were drowned in the bay of wolves on the kill. Cressey stood paralyzed, unable to prevent the dreadful carnage, unable to save his men even while he pumped lead into that swirling, milling cloud of destruction now fighting fiercely over the mangled remains of their victims.

Weakly, he leaned against the ice wall, his senses reeling as he reloaded his revolver with trembling fingers, knowing lead was impotent against these ghost-wolves. For he knew them, now, to be more than flesh and blood. They were some infernal incarnation invulnerable to man-dealt destruction.

A high-pitched, ringing call, clear as a bugle, brought his gaze to the grotto and he saw the woman standing against the blue gloom, golden hair wind-blown, poised on her toes. She glided, dazzlingly lovely, toward him with arms outstretched, and in his last moment of reason Cressey threw one wrist up to shield his eyes from that dread allure. Then again he felt the fierce desire of her and flung out his arms. She came within five feet of him and halted, a puzzled expression on her features, her hands sweeping and weaving as if she tried to tear from between them some barrier invisible to Cressey. When he tried to seize her, she retreated, still fighting at the space separating them until man and woman reached the entrance to the ice passage, where the dogs leaped back from too close a contact, and with a gesture of despair she turned and ran, calling in her ringing voice and leading her pack to the heights. Cressey fell on his knees beside the gnawed bones of his men and heard his own cries imploring her to return.

Sweat rained from his face, his body quivered; he was a man corroded by the poison of an evil desire. After a long time his head lifted and he clutched at the crucifix on his breast, then reason gradually conquered and as he pressed it to his

head and lips he felt the sun-warmth and cool wind and knew he was himself. Slowly, painfully, he retraced his trail down the glacier and found Baptiste had reached the lower grotto and was searching for him, frantic with fear.

"The two men are dead, eaten by the white hounds," he told Baptiste, and shuddered at the breed's cry of horror. "Take me down and bind me in the cabin, Baptiste. I am a man accursed."

"Help will come wit' dose men I send out, *M'sieu,*" comforted Baptiste.

But they waited for three days, seeing nothing of the white hounds and woman, until one man returned, a trapper old on the trails, and with chattering teeth told a tale of horror.

"White wolves broke into the first camp I git to, *M'sieu,* an' I find only wan man alive. He tell me of *La Chasse du Diable,* then he die. *M'sieu,* I am ver' old man. But I hear when I was babee, of this *Chasse du Diable,* from my gran'-gran'-pere, an' hees gran'-pere tell heem."

For a week they waited the return of the second man sent out, then one morning Baptiste reported men coming up the valley, and Cressey hobbled to meet them.

"Thank God you've come!" he cried. "My name is Cressey. My companion, Professor Stamwell, is dead, and I have a tale to tell almost beyond belief."

"I'm Johnson," said the leader of the newcomers, "and I think I know something of your story. Your man told us a little and we found the Stillwell camp ravaged—a terrible sight. I'm worried about another party toward the west, for we had a friendly wager as to who would first climb Logan. But I am amazed at the hunger of wolves in summer, that they attack men."

"These are more than wolves, Johnson, as Baptiste will tell you." Cressey began to relate his adventures, omitting nothing, not even his own accursed desire which had recurred each night and which Baptiste fought with incantation and holy symbol.

"Laugh if you will. To me it is horrible," he ended.

"I'm not even smiling. Your face shows the strain, Cressey. But have you nerve enough to accompany me and the men to the grotto again?"

"Of course. Waiting here is hell."

Johnson and Baptiste held weighty consultations while Cressey lay on the grass, too pain-racked to take part. His lips twisted in a sneer when the men made rude crosses of wood and gathered a blanket full of windflowers, those pale blooms which Indian converts say "spring up where angels' tears have fallen," and loaded sleds. Cressey was oblivious to everything but the fact that he was returning to the grotto where he had seen the Huntress, and with a low cunning that shamed him he was plotting a meeting with her that should cradle him in her arms.

They threaded the passageway of ice turrets, carrying pine torches which gave smoky light to the blueness of the grotto as Johnson examined it, then flung himself on the ice floor with a cry.

"Cressey, for God's sake, look! Here's a mammoth, as I'm alive! And other beasts. Lord, man, some mighty convulsion of nature must have herded your huntress, her wolves, and other denizens of her long-departed era into close quarters and caught them. Good heavens, if your secret process will restore the woman and wolves, why not try it on bigger game?"

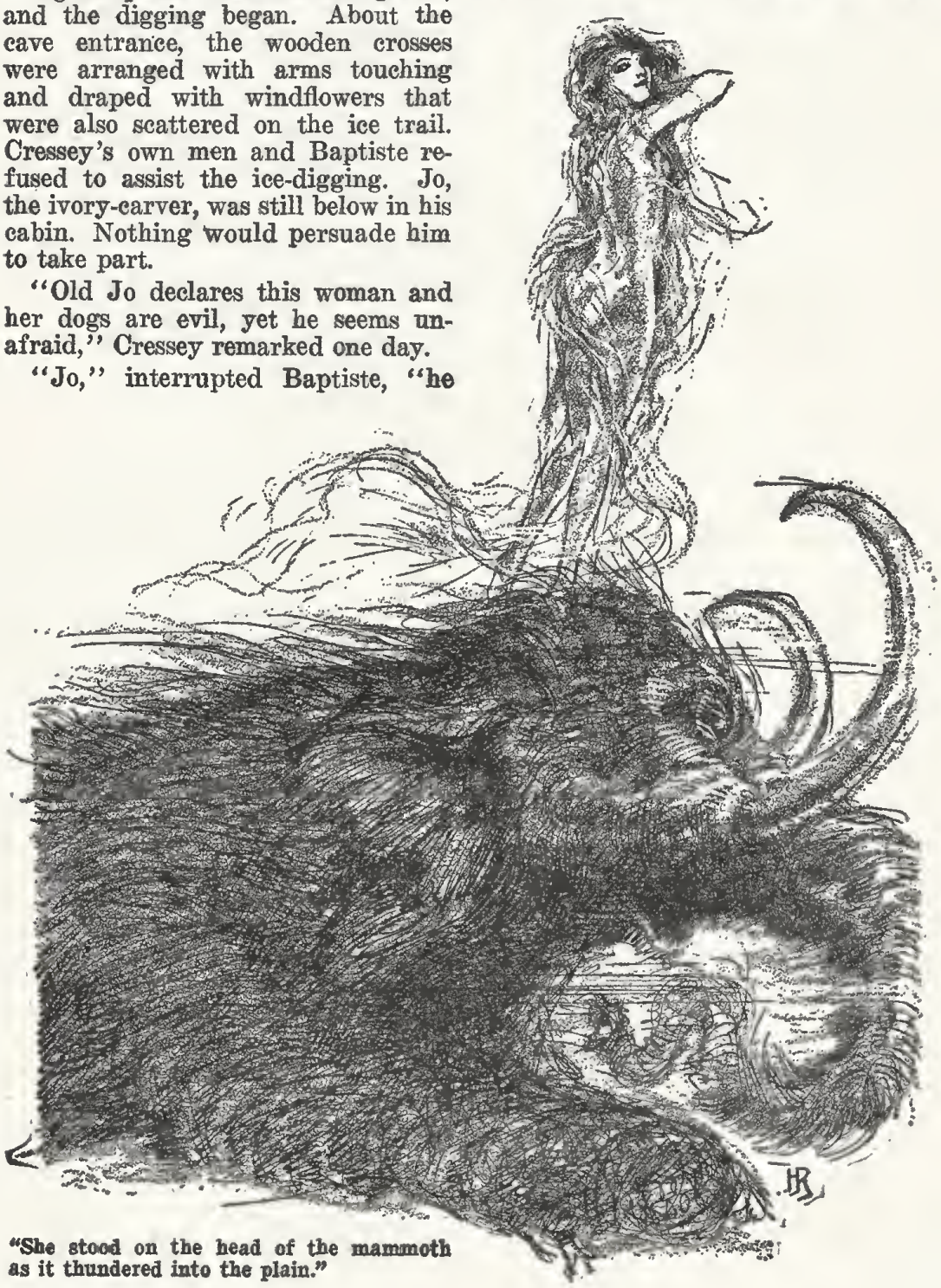
Cressey laughed. The evil spell of the place had caught Johnson, and if he could be persuaded to carry out this wild scheme of digging up this frozen mammoth, there would be time

. . . time to seek again his Huntress and find the Lethe of her embrace.

Through ensuing talk, Cressey was enthusiastic. The men were sent to bring the packs from the first grotto, and the digging began. About the cave entrance, the wooden crosses were arranged with arms touching and draped with windflowers that were also scattered on the ice trail. Cressey's own men and Baptiste refused to assist the ice-digging. Jo, the ivory-carver, was still below in his cabin. Nothing would persuade him to take part.

"Old Jo declares this woman and her dogs are evil, yet he seems unafraid," Cressey remarked one day.

"Jo," interrupted Baptiste, "he say he too old, an' have not much blood. He say he make charm een hees ivory womans. When dis hunter-womans come, he pick up ax and smash ivory womans, an' the



"She stood on the head of the mammoth as it thundered into the plain."

ghost-womans go 'way an' nev' come back."

"Oddly enough, the natives of the south seas and Africa have the same belief," said Johnson. "They make an image of some enemy and either burn it or put it in water to rot, and the object of their venom sickens and dies. The world, Cressey, is small."

That night, as the sun sank lower, came the howling of wolves, and Cressey felt the prickling of his scalp and leap of blood. Although toil-weary, the men were awake, and guns in hand they watched the great white hounds streaking down the glacier, led by the flying huntress. Cressey started for the ice-passage, but Baptiste leaped and bore him down, his great weight pressing the breath from the smaller man as he struggled and fought in sudden rage. Subsiding, he laughed, but the sound of his laughter was unpleasant even to his own hearing.

It seemed as if the party had small chance of defense against those ghastly, ravening death-wolves, but to the amazement of every man, the pack halted abruptly beyond the wooden crosses, and the huntress stood there twisting her white hands as if baffled. The crosses and blessed windflowers had turned the hunt, but there began hours of fearful waiting until the pack circled the pinnacles, even leaping over the grotto arch and howling from behind the fence of crosses over the cave entrance. The sun was well above the horizon when they drifted away.

Night after night the diabolic chase returned only to retreat, baffled by barriers they could not break down. By day the men slaved to unearth the frozen beasts belonging to an era when the north was tropic swale. Baptiste, who hunted in the valley for fresh meat, reported that Jo was carving a second figure of the huntress, standing upright, extremely life-like, and that he scarcely left his work to eat or sleep.

AT LAST the great hairy mammoth lay clear of ice, and because they had no means of lifting its immense weight from the hole, Cressey and Johnson built fires about it, shielded from the carcass by screens of flattened oil-cans until it was thawed and restoratives from Stamwell's stores applied. Blankets and fur robes were shoved under it by leverage of cut pine sticks, and all hands rubbed the gigantic limbs and trunk with rough pads of twigs bound together by coarse grass. It was a Herculean task and the men were exhausted before the monster shuddered, stirred his mighty body, strained ponderously, while everyone scrambled out of the ice-hole; then heaving himself to his knees, the mammoth staggered slowly to his feet. As the puny humans fled from his path, he crushed the ice under his forefeet, burst the ropes with which he had been bound, and lumbered out of his tomb, his tusks crashing down the ice-pinnacles of the passage and scattering the protecting crosses, then he lunged to the glacial river and went tottering to the valley.

Cressey, white-faced and shaking as he realized the titanic grimness of the thing he and Johnson had loosed, ordered the trek to begin immediately down the ice-floe to the valley. At the same time he realized that, working with pick and shovel, concentrating on the healthful task of manual labor, he had liberated his mind and body from the huntress' evil sway. He no longer paid attention to the midnight *Chasse du Diable*, and he slept soundly through the baying of ghost-wolves. He breathed deep drafts of the balsam-laden valley warmth as they approached Jo's cabin, reverently thankful for his release.

"Baptiste," he said gently, "you have looked after me and I am grateful. I have been caught in the power of hell, but it is gone."

Baptiste caught him by the arms and looked deep into his eyes.

"*Oui, M'sieu.* No more I can see dat woman-shape in your eyeball. All dees time, eet was dere an' I know you are een her power. Now, eet ees gone!"

Cressey felt a tremor of apprehension. He had not known that the image of the huntress was photographed on the retinas of his eyes until Baptiste spoke of it. He held out his hand and the breed gripped it in solemnity of silence that was like prayer, then he pointed to the almost finished figure at which Jo worked assiduously, never lifting his hands from the task. The delicacy of his skill was never so apparent as now. From the ivory base still shrouding her feet, the huntress seemed to dance, wind-blown hair, curving limbs, round young breasts so perfect that it seemed a pity he could not, like Pygmalion of old, breathe life into this Galatea. Cressey put out a hand to touch it but Jo waved him aside and yelped a warning.

"He say you mus' not touch her, or you have devil in your liver some more," translated Baptiste.

"Tell him I shall buy her and pay well," said Cressey, but Baptiste returned a disconcerting negative.

"Jo say, he keep her for to lay curse you have loos' een dees world. Now, *M'sieu*, we go outside."

But this time it was Jo who demurred at departure. His harangue, interpreted by Baptiste, told Cressey that he was responsible for releasing the powers of darkness in the valley and it was no longer safe to be caught on the trail at night until the evil was overcome. This simple acceptance by the old ivory-carver of the presence of terrifying supernatural powers did more to persuade Johnson than all Cressey's talk.

"They're merely flesh and blood animals," he argued. "We may have to take precautions as we would with any wild beasts, but I mean to follow that mammoth and herd him into some museum."

In the sun-warmed valley, where fires and cooking spread the comfort of commonplace occurrences, it was easier to lay aside superstitious fears, but when Baptiste's convictions were strengthened by Jo's calm acceptance of peril, Cressey realized he would better bow to their opinion that they take the river instead of land trails on their way out, and for this purpose Baptiste was already cutting timber to make rafts, which were the quickest and most serviceable solution of their need.

THE long day passed and night closed in again. The crosses, carried down by the careful Baptiste, stood like a fence about the cabin, draped with fresh windflowers, with one gap left by which the men went to and fro on the way to logs they rolled to the river for the raft.

Johnson fell into heavy sleep and Cressey lay near him, smoking a last pipe. The old ivory-carver worked by the light of his oil lamp in the corner, although sunlight still shone in at the open window. The sled dogs had been brought and leashed inside the encircling crosses, but Cressey had scarcely dozed off when he heard their whimperings. Rising, he went outside.

From far off came the baying of the chase, and he saw the huntress flying down the ice, followed by her hounds. Johnson came from the cabin and both men stood in that twilight which had grown longer in the waning of summer which would soon give way to winter. A pale crescent moon danced on one silver toe, a fit

companion for that lovely Diana dancing on the ice.

"Even now," said Johnson. "I can't believe but that she is a flesh and blood woman. Cressey, I'd like to clasp her hand and know for myself."

Cressey did not reply. The huntress was coming nearer, the baying of the hounds grew louder. He looked to see that the crosses were in place and did not observe that Johnson had stepped past them until he heard the cry of Baptiste. Then he saw the dark figure of the man, the radiant white fire of the huntress' beauty, and they melted into each other's arms. With a yell, Cressey leaped the barrier of crosses and raced to where the two stood swaying in close embrace.

As if the hounds sensed the symbol on Cressey's breast, they fell back as he approached. He had a swift wonder at their timidity until his hands seized Johnson, who screamed and writhed at his touch and fought being rescued as the huntress' head lifted from his shoulder and she slowly retreated, step by step, her moistened red lips parted, showing her strong white teeth in almost a snarl of hatred.

Cressey fought to draw Johnson to safety, and as he came nearer the cabin, the huntress advanced, hands reaching, weaving, tearing at the space separating her from her victim, unable to brush aside or combat the force for good protecting him. Slowly the hounds advanced with her, and the cries of the sled dogs made the night hideous, when suddenly the huntress threw back her head and shrilled her wild call.

Once inside the barrier of crosses, Cressey dropped the half-crazed Johnson into Baptiste's arms, then he stared into the brightening light of dawn on the mountains. There were sounds from far off, of crashing brush and thunderingly ominous tread, and into their view loomed the giant of the ancient world, lumbering forward with incredible speed until it reached the woman's side, a dreadful menace which only for the frail barrier could have crushed the cabin and scattered the last vestige of men and dogs.

The howling of sled dogs and cries of men were terror-muted for a few moments. Then they were alert. Guns cracked in sharp fusillade, but the ghost-beasts neither quivered nor showed signs of a wound. The huntress was screaming at her beasts and waving white arms to urge them on, but they slunk aside until she howled at the mammoth, who caught her in his trunk and swung her to his broad head. There she stood, ethereally lovely and evil, her lips stained by the interrupted draft of human life, while the night waned and the blessed sun shot from the curving breasts of snow on Mount Logan. A cry as of frenzied despair came from her. The mammoth turned, the hounds leaped ahead, and the whole cavalcade vanished in the direction of the ice-fields.

Cressey turned to find Johnson as mad as he himself had been.

"You cur," he howled, "to come between me and my woman! You've had your day and now you begrudge me my hour of happiness."

"Johnson, she killed Stamwell, drained his body of life. She almost killed me. Left me like a maniac, as she will leave you. Here, this trinket of Baptiste's protected me; you shall wear it."

He dropped the thong of the crucifix over Johnson's head and heard his cry of pain. Cressey knew the white-hot searing of that symbol on flesh accursed and felt only pity for the man. All that day Johnson moaned, watched over by Cressey, while Baptiste directed the men in their task of making the raft.

"No ghost can pass running

(Continued on page 428)

The Moon Menace

by Edmond Hamilton

"He lifted his hands toward the brilliant orb above. The sun! The blessed sun!"

NEARLY all of the story is known to us, now. From our vantage-point in time, we can look back and see how the peril rushed upon us, how that dark, gigantic plot against the peoples of earth rose to its tremendous climax. And, looking back, it seems strange that we could ever have been so unsuspecting, so blind to the gathering storm. But we did not know. It is our excuse. It came near to being our epitaph. We did not know.

One man dominates the story. It begins and ends with him. A stubby, spectacled scientist, a strange figure thus to be the hero of a cosmic epic. And yet his hands swept earth up to the very brink of cataclysmic horror, then plucked it back again. We know his true greatness, now.

Even before the terror, though, the name of Dr. Howard Gilbert was a famous one, for he was one of the world's greatest authorities in certain branches of electrical science. When but two years out of the university, his invention of the revolutionary "stagnation" transformer had brought him national notice. It had brought him large royalties, too, and most of this money he had used to finance his further researches. On the summit of Ralls Mountain, in a remote section of the upper Adirondacks, stood his laboratory and his home. For a dozen years he had lived and worked there, alone except

for his young assistant, Francis Townsend, and two Filipino servants. Most men would have been driven mad by the loneliness of the place, but to the shy and retiring Gilbert, that was its chief attraction.

A romantic figure, this hermit of science. So the newspapers held, at least, and they gave considerable prominence to his statements. Such statements were infrequent enough, though, for Gilbert preferred to carry on his work in silence, and give his results to the world if he succeeded. He had given the world much, in those twelve years on the mountain. He had advanced more than one revolutionary theory that was bitterly opposed at first, but later verified and accepted. And at last, overshadowing all of his previous achievements and in the end casting a cloud on them, came his sensational announcement regarding the reception of light-ray radio impulses, from an extra-terrestrial source.

For some time, he stated, he had been working on the problem of television, the transmission of vision by radio. Many others were also struggling toward that goal, but he had attacked the problem in a novel manner. Instead of first finding a way to send light-rays by radio, and then seeking a method of receiving them, he had first constructed a rudimentary receiving apparatus for such impulses, intending to reverse its design in constructing his transmitter. He had succeeded in constructing a crude form of receiver, and was amazed to find that when the instrument was put into operation it did actually receive and register light-ray impulses that were evidently being sent out from some unknown source. Gilbert's receiver was too crude to show anything more than moving blotches of shadow on a ground-glass screen, but even that was tremendous in its implications. It meant that someone else had already constructed a transmitting apparatus, at least, and was sending out these light-rays translated into radio impulses, which Gilbert's receiver caught and transmuted back into light-rays.

Going eagerly ahead with the problem, Gilbert had found that the impulses he received were evidently being constantly sent out, never stopping. He had made use of directional-wave receiving apparatus over a period of weeks, then, and in that way located the source of the impulses. And that source, he claimed, was earth's satellite, the moon. Therefore, he concluded, it was but logical to assume that these television light-ray signals were being sent out by some intelligent being or beings on the moon itself, and that as soon as they could be more clearly received, and a transmitting apparatus constructed with which to answer them, intelligent communication might be established.

Thus far Gilbert's statement. It is useless to review now the storm of controversy and criticism that followed it. In the days that followed, he was bombarded with questions and objections. His main line of communication with the outside world was his own powerful radio plant, and for a time the ether was jammed with messages addressed to him, demanding further information. But to all such messages he gave no answer, saying only that at the proper time he would prove his theory beyond shadow of doubt. The reporters and curious people who made their way to the remote mountain laboratory were politely but firmly repulsed.

But though the central figure in the controversy thus held aloof, it raged on without him. Public interest rose steadily, and the matter occupied more and more space in the newspapers, coming finally to be headlined by the most conservative organs. In the end, the entire mat-

ter was brought to a head by the New York chapter of the World Federation of Science, which invited Gilbert to explain his experiment at its next meeting. And this invitation he accepted.

IN THE three weeks that passed before the meeting took place, the affair assumed sensational interest to the public at large, and was discussed pro and con by ten thousand scientists. Most of these disparaged Gilbert's statements. He held no academic position, and his former commercial success had prejudiced not a few against him. Most bitter in condemnation were the astronomers, who asserted that it was impossible for any kind of life to exist on the moon, which was virtually airless and waterless, with a sun-scorched day of two weeks and a night of the same length at temperatures near to absolute zero. A few astronomers, it is true, held out doubts in Gilbert's favor, pointing out the great power of adaptation to conditions possessed by intelligent life, as instanced by man in our own world. Also one or two recalled the old theory that the moon is hollow, a theory based on the fact that its specific gravity is so much lower than earth's, while so far as is known their constituent materials are the same.

But the weight of scientific opinion was against Gilbert, and became more so as the day of the meeting approached. A week before that day, the chairman of the federation received a long, exultant radio message from Gilbert, announcing the complete success of his efforts. "For the last two weeks," he stated, "I have been in constant and intelligent communication with the lunar people, and with their aid I have brought about a thing beside which communication is nothing. I will not only explain my experiment to the federation's members, on the day set, I will also present to them a proof of my statements, a concrete proof, a *living* proof. At that meeting will occur the most important event in our earth's history since it was thrown off by the sun. Let the world mark the day. On it I will bring forward my proof."

To many people, that message appeared the raving of a madman, but it can not be denied that when it was made public it enhanced interest in the matter a hundredfold. When the momentous day of the meeting finally arrived, the hour set found the lecture-room in the federation building crowded with people from wall to wall. Several dozen reporters occupied seats in the first rows, and a telegraph had been installed in the building.

The appointed hour came and passed, but no one appeared on the platform. The crowd stirred restlessly, the reporters scribbled, the world waited. At last, some forty minutes after the scheduled hour, the chairman of the federation walked onto the stage. He was greeted with crashing applause, but raised his hand for silence. When the tumult stilled, he said gravely:

"I regret to announce that Dr. Gilbert has not arrived at the building, nor has he sent any message. Therefore, in view of the circumstances, this meeting is adjourned."

There was a moment of stunned silence, and then a hum of surprize swept over the room, rising to an angry roar. The audience had been ready for almost any sensation, but were entirely unprepared for such a disappointment. Their wrath rose swiftly, and as they passed out of the lecture-room they gave voice to bitter condemnation of Gilbert, who had thus tricked them, as they considered.

Even while the last of them were leaving the room, the linotypes were clicking, and soon the papers poured into the streets, carrying the news that the expected sensational meet-

ing had proved a fiasco. It was stated that in so far as could be ascertained, Gilbert had not come to New York at all, and was evidently still at his mountain home. A number of radiograms addressed to him by officials of the federation and by the press had received no reply whatever.

Gilbert's silence could be construed in only one way, and thus the whole matter seemed fairly clear. In a sudden craze for publicity, he had fabricated his first statement, later enhancing its effect by his sensational message. Then, unable to work himself out of the morass of deception caused by his statements, he had remained in hiding. In his quest for notoriety, he had destroyed his former great reputation. Thus the newspapers, that night. The many who had condemned Gilbert's statements were complacently triumphant. The few scientists who had half-supported him expressed chagrin.

To the general public, the news came as a distinct disappointment. It had expected something sensational, something new and astounding. Gilbert had promised that. And now he had proved to be a charlatan. There were scathing condemnations of his duplicity, that night.

To one man alone does it seem to have occurred that Gilbert's silence and non-appearance might be interpreted otherwise than as an admission of trickery. This single exception was Ray Manning, a young official of the electrical company with which Gilbert had formerly been connected, and one of the scientist's few close friends. Manning did not believe for a moment that a sudden thirst for publicity on his friend's part had led him to make questionable statements. He knew Gilbert's inordinate shyness too well for that.

Yet at the same time he was anxious, since for two days his own messages to his friend had evoked no answer. Considering the matter that night, he determined to see his friend and learn the reason for his silence. He was an aviation enthusiast, and so decided to make the trip in the big sport plane that was his hobby.

It was late in the next morning that he made his start, slanting up from a Westchester flying-field and heading north. A single man, a single plane, thundering north above the sprawling suburban cities. Racing north toward the first scenes of that dread, colossal drama that was to have all earth as its stage. Flashing north through the morning sunshine toward the dark, squat mountain on whose summit was centered the destiny of a world.

2

ONE sees now the impossibility of presenting any complete record of the terror that struck earth on that fateful day in August, less than twenty-four hours after the sensational federation meeting. The thing itself was experienced by every living being on earth, but its very nature prevented any one person from obtaining a broad view of it. To get such a view, one must go to the myriad personal accounts, and strive to connect these together as well as possible.

Thus it is to one of these records of individual experience that we turn, that of one Woodley, middle-aged clerk in a New York office. His account embraces the main features of the business clearly enough, and gives a graphic picture of how the thing struck New York City.

This Woodley seems to have been a commonplace clerk in a commonplace Broadway office. On that particular day, the noon whistles found him leaving his office, as he had left it a thousand times before, bound for a small restaurant several blocks

away. Struggling against the surging tides of humanity in the streets, he pressed along toward Times Square. It took him several minutes to make his way to the southeast corner of the Forty-second Street and Broadway intersection.

Forty-second Street and Broadway! The focal point of a nation, the nerve-center of a hemisphere. One sees it as Woodley saw it that day, a few minutes after noon. Swift, roaring traffic, trucks, limousines, motorcycles. Changing lights, shrilling whistles, humming motors. And choking the sidewalks, the usual noon-hour crowd. All of the great human hives of stone and glass had discharged their occupants for that one hour, to swirl through the streets in a roaring maelstrom of life. Portly executives, jaunty clerks, stenographers, peering wistfully into shop-windows. Crackle of voices, hoarse shouts, metallic laughter. Overhead, the hot August sun glaring down on all, baking the streets, heating tempers.

Forty-second and Broadway. . . .

There have been numberless descriptions of that first coming of the terror, and many of them differ widely. But as Woodley experienced it, and as most people now admit, the thing struck quite silently, with swift, instantaneous action. One moment the flashing traffic, the pushing crowds, the hot sunlight. The next moment——

Blackness.

Deep, rayless night. It was as if the entire world had been plunged from brilliant noon into deepest midnight, a midnight with no spark of light. It was as if a giant sponge had blotted all light from the world, in a single instant.

To Woodley, halting in sheer astonishment, it seemed that his eyes had ceased to function. He blinked, rubbed them, opened them again. Still there reigned the utter, unrelieved darkness.

For a single moment there was silence all around him, a silence stunning after the previous roar of voices. Then, from the street, came a series of loud, rending crashes, as the automobiles there drove blindly into one another, in the darkness.

A single, high-pitched female scream cut through the din, and as if at a signal, a thousand hoarse shrieks went up to heaven. In that first minute of the darkness it must have seemed to many, like Woodley, that sudden blindness had stricken them. Nothing else would have explained to them, for the moment, that sudden vanishing of all light from the world.

Woodley staggered, clung to the wall at his right. "Good Lord!" he muttered, in mild expression of his astonishment. "Good Lord!"

From the pitchy darkness around him was rising a terrific uproar, sobs and shrieks, oaths and cries for help, sound of running feet, and one or two agonized screams of pain. From all the length of the streets around him, it seemed, came that babel of fear-crazed cries.

It came home to Woodley, at last, that the darkness which had fallen so suddenly was not one of blindness, and peculiar to himself, but was spread over a wide territory. An expedient occurred to him, and he drew a box of matches from his pocket, scratching one of them on the box's side. There was no resulting light, though he scratched several times. But in a few seconds a burning pain shot through his finger-tips and he dropped the match with a little exclamation. It had burned, but the flame had showed no light! He considered that fact, dazedly.

"Good Lord!" he muttered, again.

Out of the darkness running feet came toward him, and someone collided violently with Woodley, then

slumped down to the sidewalk with him. They grasped hands, touched each other with questing fingers, in the darkness. The other seemed to be a stout man clad in a knickered golf-suit, and his voice was tremulous.

"What *is* it?" he asked, with weak petulance. "What *is* it?"

"What?" asked Woodley.

"The dark," complained the other. "The light's all gone."

"It's gone, all right," Woodley agreed. "It's an eclipse—or something."

The other digested that statement in silence, and then seemed to fumble in his pockets. Woodley heard the scratch of a match. "Don't do that!" he said, quickly, but the other made no answer. In a moment, though, there came a little cry of pain and surprize. "I told you," said the clerk, with a certain satisfaction.

The uproar in the streets had dwindled in intensity. The first roaring panic seemed to have subsided a little, though there still came shrieks and moans from the enveloping blackness. Woodley rose to his feet. The other clutched at his legs. "Where are you going?" he asked, anxiously.

"I'm going to try to get back to my room," the clerk told him. "While we're out in the street here, anything can happen to us. Autos smashing—and all. You don't know how long this dark will last."

"Don't go," begged the other, fearfully. "There'll be no one with me. I'll pay you well——"

But Woodley had jerked away from him and was feeling his way along the building at his right, slowly and cautiously. In his mind's eye was a plan of the blocks he must traverse to get to the furnished room that was his home, and he proceeded with great care through the smothering darkness.

WOODLEY never forgot that journey across the heart of New York, under the dark pall of the blackness. The streets were still crowded with those who had been caught in them at the noon-hour, and who had so lost all sense of direction that they could make no effort to reach familiar surroundings, but lay prone in the streets, sobbing in sheer, abject terror. He heard women calling for children lost in the darkness, their voices frantic with fear. In a night deeper than that of Erebus, a darkness pierced with cries and moans, he felt his way onward. Ever and again he collided with other slow-wandering figures, and always he jerked away from them in sudden panic fear, raising his hands to strike. It was the dark, the ultimate night, in which no man knew whether the man before him was friend or enemy.

He stumbled over prostrate figures, often, and passed wrecks of vehicles in the streets. Once he joined a group who worked in the darkness to raise one of these wrecks and release a trapped autoist, whose moans came in ghastly fashion to their ears, through the unchanging night.

But there were other purposes than benevolent ones at work in the darkness. Woodley had ample evidence of that as he went on. He heard the clinking crash of plate-glass windows as looters began their work, under the shield of the blackness. There was a sudden rattle of shots, once, in the distance, and many cries of fear. Once, too, his ears caught the thunder of a great explosion, from far away. Still he stumbled on.

With the passing of all light, all notion of time had passed also, and he could not guess how much later it was when he finally ascended the stone steps of his lodging-house. The door he found locked, but managed to make the fearful landlady inside recognize and admit him, and so

climbed wearily up to his room. There he sank into a chair and strove to understand this catastrophe that had suddenly stricken his world.

He made trials of the electrics in the room, but as he had expected, they gave forth no light. It occurred to him to test the radio set in a corner of the room, and he felt his way through the darkness toward it. He snapped a switch, twirled a dial, and was suddenly immeasurably gladdened to hear the voice of an announcer issue from the loud speaker, clear and strong. That voice coming out of the darkness reassured him not a little, even though the news it brought him was appalling in import.

For the first time he learned that the darkness that had stricken New York was no local phenomenon, for the same total blackness had descended on all the earth at the same moment. In some parts of the earth it had struck at dawn, in others at midnight or at sunset, or as in New York, at noon, but everywhere its effects were the same, blotting out every ray of light and leaving all earth submerged in an absolute, unprecedented darkness.

With its coming, most of the world's usual organizations and activities had disappeared almost at once. Anarchy ruled the world, under cover of the dreadful night. The only means of spreading news was the radio, and in the great broadcasting stations men fumbled in darkness with their instruments, striving to keep open this last channel of communication. To their listeners, they addressed words of encouragement. Their advice was to stay quiet and unmoving, for it might be that the darkness would soon pass.

The nature and cause of the blackness remained a mystery. At first it had been deemed by many an eclipse, but that theory would not account for the total blotting out of all light on earth, including that from artificial sources. Flame burned as fiercely as ever, but without light, and it was remarked that while the sun's light no longer reached earth, its heat was unchanged. Whatever thing was smothering the world's light, it did not affect the heat, at least.

Scientists groped through the darkness to meet and endeavor to solve the mystery of it. It was impossible to experiment on the matter. The darkness itself rendered that vain, for they could not even glimpse the instruments in their hands. They gave it as their opinions that some freak of natural force was blotting out all light by neutralizing the light-vibrations, without affecting those of radio or radiant heat. It might be, they said, that earth was passing through a zone of electrical force causing the phenomenon. More they could not say.

As the hours passed on, uncounted and unmeasured, more and more terrible news came out of the darkness to the awe-stricken Woodley. Riots of great dimensions had abruptly broken out in most cities, centering about the food-markets. Men fought each other in the darkness for a ham or a few cans of food, struck and stabbed blindly at each other in savage battle. Many carried pistols or rifles and instantly fired blindly at anyone opposing them. Houses were looted for food and valuables, and the darkness was made a cover for every crime that had ever disfigured earth under the light of day.

There came word that in Philadelphia a great fire was raging, started none knew how. It was a vast holocaust, consuming block after block of buildings, and made more terrible by the fact that no ray of light came from its leaping, devouring flames. Men felt its approaching heat and fled in terror, staggering through the streets in blind efforts to escape from the burning city. Many blundered directly into the

lightless flames, to meet a dreadful death.

From ships at sea came frantic appeals for help. "We are drifting blindly through the darkness," they flashed word. "No light to chart our course by, or see our compass. Crews have mutinied, officers are being killed and thrown overboard. For God's sake, help us." And there was none who could help.

The hours dragged on, and night came, night in name only, for the deep blackness changed not. Through that night the radio stations began to fall silent, one by one. Not one was left functioning by the time dawn came.

That dawn was the most terrible ever known on earth, a dawn without a ray of light. Men felt the growing heat of the rising sun, but saw it not, saw no single gleam of light. They stretched their hands in supplication toward the eastern sky, they cried out in their despair, and some went mad and died.

Smothering beneath the darkness that lay over it, and not knowing that a greater horror even than that darkness was crouching and tensing to spring upon it, the world waited in hopeless terror for the end.

3

At the moment when the darkness struck earth, Manning's plane had not been on the ground more than five minutes, at most. Shortly before noon he had sighted the humped, forest-covered mountain that was his goal. He had circled his plane high above it, glimpsing the clearing on the summit in which there stood the huge, steel aerial masts and long, low buildings of Gilbert's laboratory. Knowing that the clearing itself was too small for a landing, he had swung the plane in a great spiral down toward a narrow, open field at the mountain's base, and it was just after he had brought it to rest there that the blackness enveloped him.

To Manning, though, the thing was more terrible than to most in the world at large, for he was quite alone and it seemed certain to him that he had been overtaken by sudden blindness. It was an impression suffered by many people, that day, but was more terrifying to Manning because, being alone, he had no evidence to disprove that first thought. For a moment he lost his head entirely, staggering about madly and clutching at his eyes. But that first moment of panic was of short duration. When he had gripped himself enough to consider the matter with some calmness, he began to understand something of the phenomenon's real nature.

All around him an utter silence had set in, for the songs and calls of the birds had ceased abruptly with the coming of the darkness. That fact reassured him, more or less, as to the nature of the thing, but its cause remained a mystery. An electric flashlight which he took from the plane failed to show any gleam of light, nor did matches. Again he hovered on the brink of panic, but luckily it occurred to him that the startling disappearance of all light around him might be the result of one of Gilbert's experiments. That idea cheered him a little, and he began to consider the situation. Finally he procured from the plane a heavy automatic, which he thrust into a coat-pocket, then struck out through the impenetrable darkness in the direction of the mountain.

For a period of perhaps two hours he blundered blindly through underbrush and aeross swamps, but finally reached the rough but firm surface of the narrow road that led up the side of the mountain. Resting for a time, he started again along this road,

slowly feeling his way forward. Soon the road began to slant upward, along the mountain's slope.

For hours he pushed forward in slow, nerve-racking progress, tripping now and then on unseen obstacles, and stopping often to rest. At one of these stops it occurred to him that he must have covered over half the distance up to the summit, and smashing the crystal of his watch, he ascertained by feeling the hands that it was well after 7 in the evening. The silence and the total blackness around him had remained quite unchanged.

As he rose and started forward again, through that silence, there came to his ears from far above a faint, unfamiliar sound. It was like the deep beat of some great machine, drifting down to him from the summit above. Throb—throb—throb—— It murmured down to him through the pitchy blackness in a whispered pulse of sound. A clanging of metal broke across it for a moment, then ceased, but the first sound went on. Throb—throb——

He stopped for a moment, better to hear it, and as he did so there came to him out of the darkness ahead the sound of footsteps coming down toward him. He started, at that, and a twig snapped sharply under his foot.

At once the footsteps ceased. It was evident that the other had heard him. For a time there was a deep silence, neither moving. A silence broken only by the enigmatic sound from above. Throb—throb—throb——

The silence and the strange sound began to wear on Manning's nerves, already tense, and when he could stand it no longer he called out in a hoarse voice, "Who's there?"

No reply came from the surrounding blackness but a thin, whispering echo of his words. That died, leaving only the faint throbbing from above. He listened intently, his lips suddenly dry.

"Who's there?" he called again, a little thickly. "Is that you, Gilbert? This is Manning, Ray Manning."

There was an exclamation, somewhere ahead, and then a rush of swift-running feet toward him. Before he could shrink back, a man had blundered squarely into him, out of the darkness. A man who clutched his arms and spoke with an eager rush of words. "Manning! What are you doing here? How did you get here?"

"Gilbert!" he cried, in sudden relief.

The other laid a swift hand over his lips. "Not so loud, Ray," he commanded, in a low voice. "They will hear us."

"They?" repeated Manning, in a bewildered whisper. "Whom do you mean, Gilbert? And where is Townsend?"

"Townsend is dead," said the other, tonelessly, and Manning recoiled. Gilbert was speaking on. "And the fault is mine—all mine. Townsend's death, this darkness they have flung over earth, the hell that is about to burst on earth—all my fault." His voice was deep, despairing.

Manning struggled with his amazement. He caught at a single word in the other's speech. "The darkness! What's causing it, Gilbert? Do you know?"

"Listen!" commanded Gilbert, and they stood in silence. Down from the summit came the same deep, beating sound, never ceasing. Throb—throb—throb—— Across it again there cut a hammering of metal on metal, loud and brutal, this time. And again that died, while the throbbing went on.

"The machine you hear," said Gilbert, "is what causes the darkness,

blots out all light, all over earth, I think."

Before Manning could comment on that, the other had led him to the side of the road, where they crouched together on the ground, speaking in low tones and unable to glimpse each other's face, under the dark pall that covered the world about them.

"It was the moon experiment," said Gilbert, "our communication with the lunar people. You heard about that, I suppose?

"Well, it was almost three weeks ago that Townsend and I perfected our receiver and constructed our transmitting instrument. You must understand that our apparatus was one of television. It actually threw our sight by radio impulses across the void to the moon, to the receiving apparatus of the lunar people, while our own receiver did the same for them. Looking into the glass screen of our receiver, it was just as though we were looking through a glass window into the room that was the location of their installation, on the moon.

"The first thing that attracted our attention was these lunar people, these moon men. They were not men like ourselves. They were extremely different, of about the same height as human beings, and their bodies shaped roughly the same, yet still utterly different and monstrous in appearance. Their bodies were plump and dark, oily-skinned. The thick, round projections that were their arms and legs ended in a sort of flipper, instead of in a hand or foot. The heads were very small and round, covered with the same dark skin as the bodies, and quite without nose or ears that we could see. The mouth was a narrow, horizontal slit, and the eyes were tiny, close-set white ones, without pupils. Yet for all their unhuman appearance, these creatures were more than human in their knowledge, their intelligence. Their science, we found, was immeasurably above ours, just as their race is immeasurably more ancient than our own.

"As I said, all of our communication was by sight only, and looking into the glass screen of our receiver, we saw their receiving station as through a window. It seemed to be in a big, shadowy room. The room was illuminated only by a globe of feeble purple light, suspended from above. And sitting at their apparatus were some three or four of the moon men, staring steadily at us across the gulf of space.

"Their first request, which they made clear to us by repeated motions, was that we darken our laboratory, since the daylight, streaming through the windows was almost blinding to their more sensitive eyes. We did so, and then began our efforts at communication.

"They made signs or motions, and we answered as well as we could. As we were constantly at the apparatus, Townsend and I learned their written language before many days. They taught us by holding up models or pictures for us to see, and then the corresponding written word. In the interest of it, we lost our first aversion to their unhuman appearance. And in the days that followed, we learned much concerning them.

"As we had expected, they were inhabitants of the moon's hollow core. The gradual disappearance of air and water on our satellite's surface had forced them down into its interior, ages before intelligent life appeared on earth. In the cavernous interior they had managed to exist, eking out their dwindling supply of air and water by artificial means. And as the ages passed, the moon men themselves had become more and more adapted to the darkness of the moon's interior. It would have been complete darkness to our human eyes,

but it was not to theirs. The human eye can perceive only a few of the light-vibrations that are known to exist. The vibrations between red and violet it can see, but the infra-red, or those below red, and the ultra-violet, or those above violet, it can not perceive. Some physical and chemical devices, such as those centered around the phenomena of fluorescence, can register these higher and lower vibrations, and it has been suggested that the eye of a cat, for instance, can do so partially, also. It was the same with the moon men. Their ages in the dark core of the moon had gradually changed their eyes until they could receive and register these other light-vibrations, which would be invisible to us. Thus, to put the thing crudely, they could see with ease in darkness that would be utterly impenetrable to our eyes.

"So much had they changed, there in the moon's interior, that they assured us that it would be impossible for them to live in sunlight again, that the sunlight would kill them as it kills any plant or animal brought out into it from a dark, lightless cavern. The globe of purple light in their receiving room, they said, was for our benefit, enabling us to see them, and it was the strongest kind of light they could stand.

"They had dwelt thus, in the moon's interior, for ages, and for ages they had endeavored to get into communication with the inhabitants of other worlds. Their science enabled them to send forth vision, light-rays, as radio impulses, which will pass unchecked through nearly any solid matter with ease. For ages they had sent out their visual signals, thus, never stopping, and had received no answer at all until at last Townsend and I received their signals and replied to them.

"And then, after we had been in communication with them for several days, they proposed to us a stunning experiment, which they could carry out with our aid.

"Not only, they told us, could sound and light vibrations be changed into radio impulses and sent out, but the same thing could also be done to matter. Sound waves, light rays, radio waves, and matter itself are but four different vibrations in the ether, differing from each other only in frequency of vibration. Radio waves can be sent any distance, through almost any obstacle. By changing the frequency of the sound waves until they have become radio waves, we can broadcast them, too, and every radio receiver catches them and translates them back into sound waves. Townsend and I had done the same thing with light rays, in our television apparatus. And now the moon men told us that it could be done with matter also. All that was needed, they said, was to step up the frequency of the matter vibrations until they had become radio vibrations, then hurl these radio waves across space to a receiving apparatus that could catch them and step their frequency down again, changing them back into matter. It was no more complicated, really, than the sending of sound or light.

"They had long known how to do this, they said, and had such a matter-sending apparatus ready for action. If we were to build a similar matter-receiving apparatus, under their direction, it would be possible for one or two of them to hurtle across the gulf from moon to earth as radio impulses, bringing with them written records, books, models of machinery, and so forth, and thus they would be able to instruct us personally in their greater science.

"WE ASSENTED to the proposition at once. Not only was the scientific side of it too appealing to resist, but I had already publicly announced our first attempts at com-

munication, and had promised to explain my experiment. If I could produce one of the moon men themselves, when I made that explanation, none could doubt my statements. One thing suggested itself to me as an objection, and I questioned the moon men as to the difference in gravitational power on moon and earth, thinking that perhaps with the increased power on our planet they would be too heavy to move about. But they made nothing of that obstacle, saying that there was a method known to them of reducing their own weight to any degree desired, by subjecting themselves to a force that worked changes in their very atomic structure. They could thus reduce their weight before coming to earth, and move about here with freedom. So Townsend and I set to work under the directions of the moon men and built our matter-receiving apparatus.

"The main part of it was a flat disk of smooth metal, some eight feet in diameter, which was actuated by a complicated electrical apparatus. This apparatus seemed to make use of electrical currents to step down the frequency of the radio impulses received, and change them back into matter, but the fact is that although Townsend and I built the thing with our own hands, we hardly understood it at all. Every detail of our work was superintended by the moon men, through the television apparatus.

"At last it was completed, and ready for our trial of it. The moon men instructed us to darken the laboratory completely, letting no ray of light enter. We protested that then we should be unable to see, and after considering this, they suggested a remedy for that. They instructed us to make glasses, or goggles, of a curious sort, according to the formula they furnished us, and wearing which we would be able to see in darkness almost as well as themselves. The glasses duplicated roughly the structure of their own eyes, and with them on we found that we could see fairly well in complete darkness, all things around us seeming to be bathed in a weird violet light. The glasses, of course, were similar to the fluoroscope, through which one can see clearly X-ray and other vibrations invisible to the naked eye.

"I made glasses for Townsend and myself according to their directions, taking the precaution to make a spare pair, too. We let them know that all was ready, and early yesterday morning we threw the matter-receiving apparatus into action. The laboratory had been completely darkened, but everything inside it showed itself to us as though under the illumination of a feeble violet light. A humming sound arose from the disk, and we waited. There was an interval of a few minutes, a sudden rustle of wind, and then there flashed into being on the smooth disk—five of the moon men!

"They stepped off the receiving disk and confronted us. Their motions were heavy and lumbering, but were not dragging, or affected by the greater gravity. I noticed, though, that they seemed to be panting on account of the thicker air.

"We stared at them without speaking, and they at us. I had seen them many times, through the television apparatus, and had become more or less accustomed to their strange appearance, but then, as they stood in the flesh, a few feet away from us, they were monstrous. I noticed, too, that each of them carried in a flipper-hand a short rod of green metal.

"For a moment there was silence in the laboratory, as we stared at each other, and then sudden fear gripped me. The unearthliness of the whole business struck me like a blow, and with sudden panic I made for the door. I saw Townsend take a

step toward the five creatures, and heard one of them utter a thick, throaty cry. As I ripped the door open, one of the metal rods came up and a streak of white fire flashed from it and struck Townsend. He vanished, utterly. Where he had stood was only a little cloud of thick, white vapor, which dissolved and disappeared instantly.

"All of this had occurred in perhaps three seconds. As I laid my hand on the door-knob, the moon man nearest me aimed his rod at me. But as he did so, I ripped the door open, and the hot morning sunlight streamed in, striking him squarely, though not the others. And then I saw why they had been so careful to have us darken the laboratory. For when the sunlight struck him he cried out in a hoarse bellow, and then crumpled up, seeming to shrivel and wither like a living plant thrown into a furnace.

"Before the others could act, I had hurled myself out the door and was racing across the clearing toward the shelter of the surrounding forest. I flung myself behind a big tree, panting. The two Filipino servants had heard the commotion by that time, and came out of the cottage into the clearing, looking about in a wondering sort of way. I shouted to them to go back, but before they understood me or could move, other fire-streaks hissed out from the laboratory, through the open door, and struck them. Like Townsend, they vanished, and thick white smoke hung for a moment to mark their location, then that too melted away.

"The laboratory door was cautiously shut, then, from the inside. I knew that the creatures inside dared not venture out into the sunlight after me, so all that day I hung about the laboratory, half-mad with fear and rage, lurking behind the trees. But there was nothing to see. The door and window-shutters remained closed. I heard grinding noises from the inside, though, and low, grunting voices.

"As darkness approached, I grew more fearful. Before the sunlight passed, I managed to get into the cottage from its other side, and stuffed my pockets with food. But I got a long butcher-knife from the kitchen and stuck it into my belt. Thus armed, I crept back to my hiding place behind the trees.

"I assumed that with the darkness they would be able to come out from the laboratory, and I did not want to leave the place. It was my thought that the only thing to do was to hang about until I saw a chance to smash the matter-receiving apparatus which we had so blindly built for them. I solved the matter by climbing up into a big fork in one of the larger trees. Crouched there, I watched and waited.

"As soon as complete darkness had fallen, they came out and moved about the clearing. It was evident that more of them had come across from the moon on the matter-receiving apparatus, since there were some twenty-five or thirty moving about in the clearing below me. And their numbers seemed to be constantly reinforced by little groups of two or three.

"At once they began to bring from the laboratory strange-looking tools and instruments. They set to work at a spot on the clearing's edge opposite the laboratory, and began to build up an intricate machine. The nature and details of it were about as clear to me as the details of a radio-set would be to an Eskimo, but all that night I watched them working on it, and the big, complicated-looking mechanism loomed up larger and larger. When dawn came, they scurried back into the laboratory with the first hint of the coming light. But an hour after sunrise, some five or six

of them ventured out again, wearing a strange sort of dress, or armor, metallic in appearance, which covered all their bodies. These armored ones walked directly into the sunlight and were not affected by it, and it was clear that the armor had been designed to that end.

"Thus protected, they took up again their work on the machine, and all of the morning, this morning, they kept at it. Finally, just before noon, the thing seemed to be finished, for they covered it with a great square shield of black metal, brought in sections from the laboratory. Thus in appearance the thing looked to be a square, black cube, each side fifteen feet in length, I judged, and set on its front face a complicated switch-board, replete with studs and levers. In the center of this mass of controls was one large, shining stud.

"Thus far, the purpose of the thing had been a complete mystery to me. But after stepping back and surveying it a moment, one of the six armored figures stepped up to it and began to manipulate the intricate switch-board. He pushed and turned and twisted on its controls for a few moments, then grasped the shining stud at the center. This he pulled out toward him, a little at a time.

"A deep throbbing sound arose from the machine at once, its rhythm accelerating as the stud was pulled farther out. Then, abruptly, all lights around me seemed to vanish at once, and I was left in complete darkness, with the machine throbbing away across the clearing from me.

"For a few moments I was dumfounded, and then I remembered the glasses which we had used in the dark laboratory. I had jerked mine off when I first had escaped from the building, but they were in my pocket, along with the spare pair. I drew one of the pairs from my pocket and put them on. The transformation was instantaneous. Instantly everything in the clearing and around me seemed illumined with thin violet light, and I could make out what was going on beneath me.

"The six moon men at the machine were discarding their armor, and the others were streaming out from the laboratory. The purpose of the machine was clear enough, then. It was a device that blotted out all light like sunlight or starlight or artificial light, the light by which we see, but which left unchanged the higher-frequency ultra-violet vibrations by which the moon men saw, and by which I could see also with the prepared glasses I wore. Possibly by opposing to the light vibrations an equal and opposite vibration, the machine neutralized them and thus made it safe for the moon men to venture out without fear. I wondered how far the power of the machine extended, how far its pall of darkness was flung. Over all earth, I think.

"Now the moon men set to work again in the clearing, except for three of their number armed with the fire-rods, who guarded the neutralizing machine. The others brought from the laboratory great sections of smooth metal, which they laid on the ground and began to link together. Those sections, I knew, had been brought across from the moon on the matter-receiving disk, and I wondered what their purpose was. As the hours of the afternoon went by, I clung to my post in the tree, watching, wondering. But as their work went on, its purpose finally became clear to me. They were building, in the clearing, a great flat disk of metal, all of a hundred feet in diameter, a disk that was an enlarged replica of the matter-receiving one in the laboratory. And they were setting up beside it a similar, but much larger, actuating apparatus.

"Then, at last, I understood what their intentions were, and understood

at last the evil that Townsend and I had wrought. No doubt the moon men had coveted earth for ages, cramped as they were in their cavern world. They had had the power to send themselves through space as radio impulses, but without a receiving station on earth, that power was useless. So for ages they had vainly signaled earth, hoping to get into communication with someone there, and persuade him to build for them such a matter-receiving station. And Townsend and I had done so!

"We had done for them the thing that had been their goal for ages, and had given them a foothold on the earth. Now they were building a larger, greater matter-receiving apparatus which would be large enough to enable them to bring all their hordes from moon to earth in a short time. And I did not doubt that on the moon they had a sending apparatus fully as large.

"The machine which blotted out all light from the earth was a part of their plan, it was clear. Under cover of the deep darkness it produced, they could spread at will over all the earth, and conquer it, for what resistance could be offered by the forces of man, disorganized as they would be by the total absence of light?

"And when they had conquered earth, it was their intention, no doubt, to keep the light blotted from it always, as they can live only in darkness. The whole thing was clear to me, at last, and I realized the destroying terror which we had set free upon the unsuspecting earth.

"I watched no longer, then, but slipped down my tree and down the mountainside. Without weapons or firearms of any sort, I could do nothing, but if I could get help!—if I could get help——!

"And I heard you, and found you, Manning. Listen, now, and you can hear the throb of their neutralizing machine, and can hear them linking together the last sections of their great disk. And once that disk is finished, they will sweep from moon to earth, will sally out on earth in all their force, annihilate mankind, already terrorized by the darkness, no doubt, and so bring all earth under their dominion. And that will be the end, for us. Man gone forever, a lightless earth spinning blindly through the heavens, and the moon men its masters from pole to pole!"

4

A SILENCE followed as Gilbert ceased speaking, a silence broken only by the uninterrupted throbbing sound that drifted down to them from the summit, whispering mockingly in their ears. Manning was the first of the two to speak.

"What can we do?" he asked, his voice dry and despairing. "We can't let the thing go on, but what can we do to stop it?"

"Have you a gun?" asked Gilbert.

"An automatic," replied the younger man, drawing it from his pocket, his searching fingers assuring him that it was loaded.

Gilbert spoke, slowly and thoughtfully. "We might try to get help," he said, "but it would be impossible to go far in this total darkness, or find our way back here. And there is no time to lose. We must rely on ourselves, I think. What we must strive to do is to smash or turn off that neutralizing machine, and thus lift the darkness. If we could do that it would at least delay them, give us a chance to get help and come back,"

"But I can see nothing," Manning told him. "This blackness——"

"I forgot," said Gilbert. "Here." He thrust into Manning's hands a pair of large, round glasses, attached to a leather strap and buckle-like goggles. "Put them on," said the

scientist; "they're the spare pair I had in my pocket, luckily."

Manning placed them before his eyes, and uttered an exclamation. The total blackness which he had stumbled through for hours gave way to a glowing, violet light, which feebly illuminated the scene around him. He saw the rough road, the looming, dark trees around him, and Gilbert's chubby figure beside him.

"This is my plan," Gilbert told him: "We'll creep up to the summit, to the edge of the clearing, and then separate. I'll get around to the other side of the clearing, taking your pistol with me, if you'll lend it, and make a commotion there, cry out and fire the gun. That ought to draw all in the clearing after me in pursuit. If it does, you will have a chance to get to the neutralizing machine and smash it, or turn it off at least. If you can break it in some way, it will give you a chance to get back out of the clearing and then you can go for help in your plane, come back and bomb the entire summit, if necessary. The whole thing depends on whether the guards at the neutralizing machine will leave it when I start my disturbance."

"But you're liable to be caught," Manning protested. "You're taking the most dangerous part on yourself."

"No," denied Gilbert, "the risks are the same for both of us. And I can easily get away from them, I think."

He rose to his feet and Manning followed his example. Looking at his watch, Manning perceived that it was almost midnight. He handed his pistol to Gilbert, who examined it closely, and then started forward up the slanting road, the younger man following close behind him.

As they neared the summit there came to their ears, louder and louder, the sounds of the activity there, the throbbing machine, the clangor of metal on metal, and a deep chorus of grunting, hoarse voices. His breath coming fast, Manning moved onward after his friend.

Gilbert soon left the road and moved up through thick underbrush and between great trees, slowly and quietly, the noises ahead of them growing ever stronger. Finally he dropped to his hands and knees and began to crawl forward, Manning following his example. Abruptly they came to the forest's edge, and there burst upon their view the whole clearing, a scene of extraordinary activity.

The violet illumination there, feeble enough, yet seemed stronger to Manning's eyes than in the forest, and he glimpsed clearly some two or three score of dark, bulky figures who were moving with surprizing speed across the clearing, and in and out of the laboratory building. They were the moon men, as Gilbert had described them, dark, plump, like overripe fungi near to bursting, monstrous flipper-people whose appearance was rendered even more ghastly by the thin violet light by which he saw them.

The thing on which most were working was a large, intricate machine of cylindrical shape, which stood beside an immense, flat disk of smooth metal that lay on the clearing's surface.

"They're finishing the actuating apparatus of the big disk," whispered Gilbert. "We must act quickly, Manning. You see the neutralizing machine?"

Manning turned his gaze, saw at the farther edge of the clearing a great black cube before which there lounged three of the moon men, armed with the deadly rods Gilbert had described. It was the neutralizing machine, he knew at once, the thing that was flinging down on earth the pall of darkness he had struggled through on the mountain.

"You stay here," whispered Gilbert, "and I'll crawl around to the southern side of the clearing. Be ready, and when you hear me making a disturbance there, if all of the moon men in the clearing go to investigate it, you will have your chance. Good luck, Manning."

With those last whispered words, Gilbert turned and began to crawl away through the trees to the right, in a wide circle around the clearing. Left alone, Manning waited, with fast-beating heart.

It occurred to him to remove the glasses from his eyes for a moment, and when he did so the entire violet-lit scene before him vanished immediately, and there was only deep darkness. With a little touch of panic, he replaced the glasses, and the scene at once sprang again into sight.

The minutes passed, slow-dragging, with the suspense rapidly becoming intolerable to the waiting Manning. Then, with startling abruptness, there came from the forest south of the clearing a loud, savage yell of defiance, Gilbert's voice. The moon men in the clearing halted in astonishment, gazing in that direction.

At once the yell was repeated and a pistol-shot cracked out, one of the moon men collapsing to the ground at the shot. It was provocation enough, for all of the dark figures in the clearing began to run with lumbering haste toward its southern side, their fire-rods raised and ready for action.

Tensely Manning watched, and could have shouted with joy when he saw that the three guards at the neutralizing machine had joined the others in their pursuit of Gilbert. He saw them racing into the forest, and saw that the clearing was free of them, for the moment.

He sprang to his feet and ran out into the clearing, toward the neutralizing machine, stopping once to pick from the ground a heavy metal bar, and then racing on. As he came toward the great matter-receiving disk he heard a slight sound that was rising from it, a thin humming the significance of which he did not grasp, at the moment. He raced on along the side of the big disk toward the black, cubelike machine that was his goal.

He had reached a point possibly twenty yards from it when a sudden fierce gust of wind smote him, almost twisting him from his feet. He staggered, swayed, strove to retain his balance. Then, as he glimpsed the thing that had abruptly occurred, he uttered a despairing cry.

For on the great disk had suddenly appeared a thick-packed mass of dark figures, hundreds of the moon men, flashed through space from moon to earth! They glimpsed him, and a horde poured from the disk toward him. Manning strove to reach the neutralizing machine, but before he had covered half the distance a torrent of dark, bulky figures poured down on him, knocked him from his feet. He glimpsed a flipper that swung a metal tool for a blow, and raised his arm in a vain effort to ward it off, but it fell on his head with stunning force, and darkness descended on him.

5

MANNING came back to realization with his head still throbbing with blinding pain. He strove to raise his hands to his head, and found that he could not. He opened his eyes, found the glasses still upon them, and looking down, saw the predicament in which he was situated.

His hands and feet were tightly bound with strong ropes, and other bonds held him fastened erect to the wall of the laboratory, inside of which he saw himself to be. The door of the room was open, and looking through it he regarded unsteadily the extraordinary scene in the clearing outside.

Under the same violet illumination, the clearing lay, but now it was swarming with moon men, their numbers extending indefinitely into the surrounding forest. There were thousands in the clearing, he saw, and their numbers were constantly being reinforced by the arrival of new hordes on the great disk, who flashed into being there and then streamed off the disk to make way for the arrival of the next mass, a few moments later. They brought with them tools and machines and great sections of metal, which they carried into the clearing and down the mountainside.

Stabbing, blinding pains again closed Manning's eyes, and he lapsed into semi-consciousness, only half-hearing the din in the clearing. He tried to clear his mind from the mists that hung about it. He remembered after an effort, his dash at the neutralizing machine, and the blow from the moon man that had stunned him. Why had they kept him alive? he wondered. Did they expect to glean from him information concerning the world they were invading? Or was it for some other, darker purpose?

He looked about the laboratory with tired eyes. There was no one else in it, though he noted beside him the smaller matter-receiving disk that had been built by Gilbert. Gilbert! Where was he? Manning wondered. Had the moon men caught him, killed him?

A sudden sharp clangor outside roused his attention, and he turned his eyes to the clearing again. A group of the moon men, he saw, were dismantling the big disk and its apparatus. The significance of that action struck him like a blow. It meant that they had no more use for the receiving disk, that all of their hordes had been flashed from moon to earth and were now assembled on and around the mountain. It meant that to the last one they were on earth, to stay, whether to conquer or to die!

From the dark hordes in the clearing, and from around and beyond it, was rising a terrific clamor, a clanging and hammering and grinding that merged into one deep, beating roar of sound. That babel of sounds seemed to stretch away down the mountain's sides, around its base, and it came to him that the hordes of the moon men must number in the millions, to be thus massed.

Glancing around the laboratory's shadowy interior, his eyes found an inset clock, in the wall to the right, and he gasped with sudden surprize. The hands registered the hour of 7, in the morning, and he knew that it had not been much after midnight when he had been knocked into unconsciousness. He had been senseless, then, for all those hours, and all during them the moon men must have been streaming from the big disk, flashing from moon to earth. What countless hordes of them had been loosed on earth in that time? he wondered.

Across the clearing he glimpsed vaguely in the dim light the dark bulk of the neutralizing machine, and caught the gleam of the big, shining stud at its center. In front of it, he saw, there lounged again the three guards, but Manning looked at it almost without interest, sinking into a deep apathy of despair. There came again, sharp and stabbing, the pain in his head, and again he closed his eyes.

Never afterward was Manning able to recall clearly the details of what he saw in that time he hung helpless against the laboratory wall. The pain that blinded him wiped from his mind consciousness, much of the time, of all other things, and he got but occasional vague glimpses of what went on in the clearing.

The sounds were most clear to him, the thundering clangor, the sharp tapping of tools, the hoarse grunting cries of the thousands in the clearing, the hissing and puffing of strange machines. And under all these, weaving across his hearing and his consciousness in a strange, dominating rhythm, the throb—throb—throb of the neutralizing machine.

He glimpsed in the clearing great constructions of metal that grew up with incredible speed under the labor of the swarming moon men. He saw vast, flat things, their surfaces crowded with massed moon men, that rose into the air, hissing, and circled above the summit. Saw others, too, great platforms upheld on gigantic limbs of metal, hundreds of feet in height, that strode about the clearing and over the forest like lordly giants, bearing other masses of dark figures on their upper platforms. And others, like writhing devil-fish of metal, whose twisting tentacles ripped trees from the forests and cleared a path for the vast spider-machines to follow.

Abruptly there cut across all the clamorous din a sharp, screaming signal, seeming to come from the base of the mountain, yet clear and loud in spite of the distance. It was answered from the striding giants in the clearing, who now crashed down the slope toward it, and was answered too by the hissing, circling things above, that slanted off into the darkness in answer to that call. From all around the sides of the mountain the sharp signal was repeated, and the ground quivered beneath the engines of the moon men as they moved gigantically down its sides.

The swarms of moon men left in the clearing were leaving, too, following in the wake of the great machines. In an incredibly short space of time, it seemed, the violet-lit clearing was almost deserted. In the forests to the west of it, Manning heard the voices of a score of the moon men, and the grinding sound of some machine which they worked on there, and across the open space from him still remained the three guards of the neutralizing machine, but except for them the clearing was deserted.

He was listening to the distant, retreating clamor of the marching forces of the moon men when there came from just beside him, it seemed, a sound that suddenly roused him to alertness. It was a low scratching, a fumbling at the window beside him, which began to open with slow caution. His head twisted to one side, Manning watched, suddenly breathless.

In a moment the window was quietly opened, and a dark figure crept through, closing it behind him. With an effort, Manning restrained the exclamation that rushed to his lips. It was Gilbert!

GILBERT came stealthily toward him. "Manning!" he whispered. "Thank God you're safe! I saw them carry you into the laboratory and thought you were dead."

"I thought you were dead, too," Manning whispered. "I heard them after you, in the forest there."

"I climbed a tree," the scientist told him. "Waited in it for hours until just now, when they left the clearing. Manning, this is a chance in a million to lift the darkness, to destroy the neutralizing machine."

He pulled a knife from his pocket and began to sever Manning's bonds. "Together we can——" His voice suddenly ceased as Manning ejected a warning whisper. The suspicions of the guards at the neutralizing machine had been aroused, and two of the three were coming across the clearing toward the laboratory, their

fire-rods gripped in their flipper-hands and pointing toward the building's door.

Gilbert slipped to a window, watched their approach. They came closer, walking more slowly, were within forty feet of the door, thirty-five, thirty, closer, closer——

A series of swift, stunning reports almost deafened Manning as Gilbert fired through the window at the oncoming two. Both slumped down to the ground, and Gilbert ran to the door.

From the forests to the west of the clearing came hoarse cries of alarm, and then a crashing of underbrush as the moon men there lumbered in haste toward the clearing.

"Gilbert!" Manning screamed. "The machine——"

But Gilbert was already out of the laboratory and racing across the violet-lit clearing toward the dark, square, neutralizing machine. The guard there saw him coming, raised his fire-rod, pointed it——

A streak of white fire ripped across the clearing, but Gilbert had thrown himself to the ground and to one side, so that it grazed by him. His pistol cracked, and the moon man at the machine fell. Manning cried out in exultation. His own hands were free, and he was struggling to loosen the bonds that held him to the wall. The crashing in the forest to the west was louder and louder, nearer and nearer.

Abruptly, though, Manning shouted sudden warning. The fallen moon man at the machine had raised himself, and again a fire-streak flashed from it. At Manning's shout, Gilbert had again swerved, but not quickly enough to avoid the deadly weapon for the second time, and the white streak seemed to strike his legs and feet and flow over them as he threw himself to one side. Manning shut his eyes, in sickening horror. For that white streak had changed to a little puff of white smoke, and that instantly drifted away, revealing Gilbert lying prone on the ground, his legs from the knees down suddenly vanished—disintegrated. The guard at the machine had fallen too, and lay quite still.

Suddenly Manning shouted his friend's name, in a great voice. Gilbert had raised his shattered body a little, had turned in his crouching position so that he faced the neutralizing machine, half the clearing's width away from him. With an infinite effort, his right arm came up, the pistol gripped in his hand. He took slow aim at the great machine, at the big shining stud on its surface.

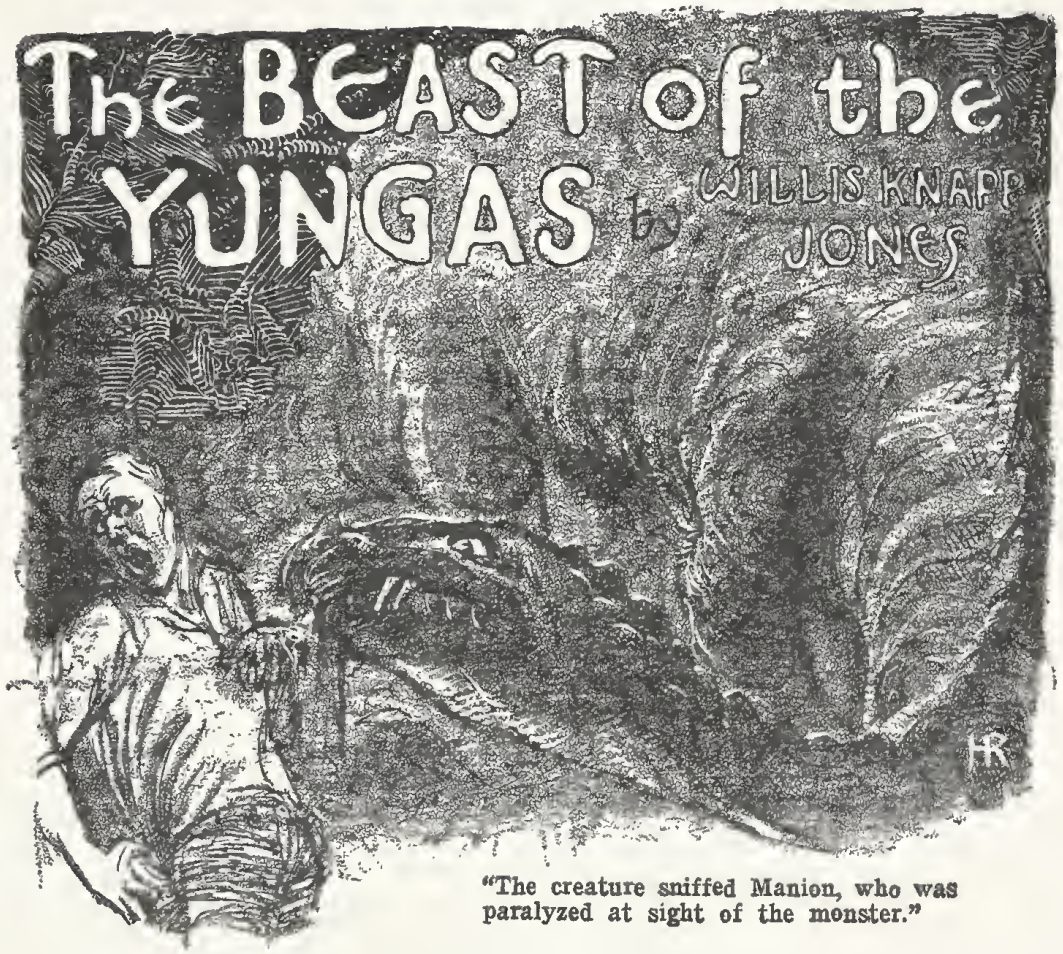
A dozen moon men burst into the clearing at its western edge, and halted as they saw. Their fire-rods swung up and a half-score of destroying white streaks flashed toward the crouching Gilbert.

But as they did so, his pistol cracked, and Manning saw the shining stud drive suddenly inward under the smashing impetus of the heavy bullet. Only a dissolving cloud of thick white vapor marked the spot where Gilbert had been. The throbbing of the great machine suddenly stopped.

The moon men in the clearing staggered about, uttered hoarse cries. Manning ripped the glasses from his eyes, then covered them again, half-blinded. For a flood of brilliant, golden sunlight was pouring down from above, bathing all on the summit in its hot glare. And under that dazzling illumination, the moon men twisted about in blind confusion, fell to the ground and lay still.

From far away, from all around the mountain and from the distance, came faint cries of terror and dismay, from the masses of the moon men. Came too, in a moment, the crashing

(Continued on page 431)



"The creature sniffed Manion, who was paralyzed at sight of the monster."

"FEAR?" the explorer repeated, pushing back his sherbet glass with a quick, nervous hand. "Oh, I suppose I've hung back as often as the next man, but in time one gets calloused to fear, I imagine."

Several of the dinner guests expressed polite interest, but Grace Demming, debutante daughter of the hostess, looked at the guest of honor with an expression in her wide-set gray eyes like one regarding a supercreature. "Haven't you ever been afraid, Mr. Winslow?" Her rich contralto voice was very lovely.

"If you mean fear as those fiction writers describe it, when a man's soul is turned to water, I can't say I've ever experienced it, nor come in contact with it except—perhaps——" He paused awkwardly, glanced at the ladies around the table, then finished hurriedly: "No, never."

Mrs. Mason, the dowager next to him, caught him up quickly as though scenting a choice bit of gossip. "Was it something terrible?" she inquired. "You needn't be afraid to tell us. It couldn't be nearly so unprintable as many things we read every day in the papers."

"Well," the explorer began, "it isn't scandalous. I didn't mean to give that impression. In fact—to tell the truth, it's something I've been trying to drive out of my mind, but it persists in coming back without bringing an explanation with it."

Miss Demming's gray eyes seemed

to plead with him, too. He had been especially conscious all evening of the way they held him, seeming to draw him out.

And now there was a strange aloofness in that girl as though she were curtained off from the world. His explorer instinct made him want to know more about her. He had gone into Afghanistan once just because he had read that a certain temple in Mangfu had a curtain screening off a mystery which not more than two people then alive had seen. He wanted to pierce the veil.

"I'm afraid you won't be satisfied," Winslow began. "I don't know what caused the fear. I can't tell you any of the details, but the thing that seared my soul was a look of fright in the eyes of another man." He made a gesture as though to repel the host of memories crowding in upon him. "It's not a pretty story. After all, I believe I'd better not tell it."

If that were meant for a refusal, its only effect was to make the guests more interested. All of them urged him to continue—all but Miss Demming; yet her half-parted lips and that inscrutable something in her eyes made him go on.

"IT WAS in Bolivia that it happened—Bolivia, that unexplored country where anything might be true. I was in La Paz concluding some Inca investigation. Strange rumors had been filtering in about some queer beast that the Indians of the Beni region had seen. The scientists of the capital were trying to convince us that the description fitted a diplodocus, or some other prehistoric creature like it."

From the looks of interrogation, he knew that he was talking beyond most of them. "The diplodocus," he hastened to explain, "was a huge creature from ten to fifteen feet high and perhaps forty feet long that lived ages ago during the Pleistocene period before the tyrannosaurus came along and killed them off. You've probably seen reconstructions of them in museums, looking like a kangaroo with a long, tapering tail. At any rate, the jungle Indians were claiming to have seen a creature that has been extinct for at least 25,000 years.

"Frankly, I didn't believe a word of the story. I thought that some of those coca-crazed savages had gone on a spree; it was good newspaper stuff, however, like the creature that was reported in Argentina later. The upshot was that my committee at home read about it and cabled me to investigate. I didn't object. I love Bolivia. There's not a country I know of that is richer in interest for foreigners, and here was a chance to visit a part I'd never seen.

"I needed a few more pongos—those Indians that can carry anything up to a trunk on their shoulders—and while I was looking for them, I ran across Manion, or rather he ran across me. Nobody knew Manion. He was a silent chap who did nothing in the daytime but sun himself in front of the Congressional Building on the plaza, and when the cold evenings of the *alto plano* descended, he would disappear into the *pensión* where he boarded. People said he was cracked. He had drifted into La Paz a few months before, no one knew from where. Where so many foreigners are fugitives, it doesn't do to make too many inquiries, but I half suspected he didn't know any too much about himself. He had a lot of uncomfortable habits. One was to tap incessantly at a silver plate embedded in his skull, when he was pondering. It reminded me of the old-fashioned wireless decoherer where a hammer jars apart the filings. Perhaps he was trying to clarify his thoughts in the same way.

"But he would never tell us how he acquired the plate or the limp. Once, later when I had taken him

with me, I saw scars on his body and he explained that he thought he had had an argument and after it they had given him some false ribs, which wasn't any explanation at all.

"Since he was a likable chap and could take the place of my secretary, who was down with dysentery, I gave him a job. He wrote a copper-plate hand, could handle the porters, and was a big help.

"The day we left La Paz he appeared in a faded and worn flying suit with double wings on the breast. He apologized for it by saying he had no other roughing costume and had not wanted to bother me about an advance on his wages. Later he let drop that he had been in the Lafayette Escadrille, but that was a lie. I've looked over their records and no Manion or name like it appears in their roster.

"If I had been superstitious or gifted with prophecy we never should have left La Paz; but unfortunately, man can't see what lies ahead. I won't describe that trip, day after weary day. All the colors of an artist's palette could never reproduce its splendor, but all the tortures of the Inquisition are puny beside the sufferings it laid upon us. Sometimes we would toil for hours through knee-deep grasses with rain so heavy that it was like a curtain to push against. Then the torrid sun would transform the jungle in a twinkling into a vapor bath where we could scarcely breathe. But through all the hardships, Manion was always ready with a song. He seemed to know only one, but when we were dog-tired and needed to push on farther, his singing helped.

"He had evidently never been in the jungle before, and everything was wonderful. When all I could see was the next three feet of the trail, he would want to stop to be told about a new bird he had seen in one of the snakewood trees.

"But where he excelled was as a revolver shot. I never saw anyone so quick on the draw and so sure in aim. Once"—Winslow shuddered—"a boa constrictor, twined about a branch above the trail, swung down its head like a battering ram and with a single blow dislocated the neck of one of our Indian bearers. I was next in line, but before I could get out my revolver or that battering head could swing back, Manion put three shots into it. Then with hands absolutely steady, he stopped to reload his revolver. Out of curiosity, I felt his pulse—as slow as a child's. When not a single tremor betrayed his excitement, I thought he must be a man without nerves. That's what makes the rest of it so horrible."

Again the explorer stopped and took a sip of water. His own hand shook slightly as he set down the glass. After a moment he went on. "Manion had shot a twenty-eight foot boa without disturbing his calm. You can see the skin in the museum, for I brought it back. He wanted to take the head, too, with the three bullet holes below the frontal bone so close together that a quarter would have covered them. We were rather short of carriers, however, so he had to give up the idea.

"It was a long journey to the place where the guides told us the animal had been seen, and far from any beaten path. No white people had penetrated that far before, so Manion, Jenkins (the botanist and geologist) and I—the only white people of the party—were a constant source of interest and fear to the few Indians we met. When we reached the tribe whose members had seen the animal, I found that neither my Aimara or Quechua, nor any of the Beni dialects Jenkins thought he knew were any use. Even the guide had difficulty making himself understood, but he did make out that they had

recently seen that prehistoric animal. We were soon led to the place.

"If—mark I say 'if'—there's a place in this world where creatures of the Miocene and Pleistocene Ages might be expected to survive down to our own day, the valley we reached is the one. It was a sunken plain, about twenty or thirty miles square and full of that riot of vegetation which must have covered the earth when the diplodocus roamed it, for they ate only grass. You know how La Paz is situated—a sheer drop of one thousand feet below the surrounding plain. Well, this region was something like it, except that it had no exit, no river winding out of it, no path up the slope—only straight, sheer cliffs. Without elaborate tackle nothing down there could get out, and nothing outside, falling by accident over the edge, would live to want to get out. We went three-quarters of the way around before we found the place where the walls were lowest and least steep. There we made camp.

"We intended to make a permanent camp in the valley itself, but when we ordered the carriers to go down the three hundred foot vine ladder that they had constructed, there was a mutiny. Don't tell me sign language doesn't exist. Not one of our carriers had been told by us the reason for our coming, and yet all of them, without understanding a word of the jargon of that region, knew all about the beasts supposed to be hidden by the tangle of foliage below.

"They were afraid even of staying near the place, and I am sure that if we had carried out our plan and had us three white men make our camp below, they would have deserted, leaving us helpless in the jungle. It was Manion's idea to have two of us explore the lower valley by daylight, the other one staying with the carriers.

"Jenkins, who had been ill for a large part of the trip, suddenly took a turn for the worse. He was useless. He could do nothing but lie in the smaller of the lean-tos, leaving Manion and me to set in place the ladder which the Indians had woven.

"It was almost dark before we completed the work, and we were so excited that we could not wait till morning. We descended to the lower level, not knowing what we should find, perhaps some footprints in the soft ground. But in our brief survey we found nothing, so, as it was growing dark, I suggested we had better return to camp.

"Manion wouldn't leave. He wanted to spend the night there in the valley, hoping to hear something. With Jenkins sick, I could not very well accompany him, especially as the Indians had been nervous and jumpy all day. Yet I hesitated to leave Manion. He laughed at my fears. He had two revolvers and was not at all afraid. Finally I gave in after he promised to sleep close to the ladder, to which he could retreat in case of danger.

"As I climbed the vine ladder, I looked back. I shall never forget the sight. Already the valley foliage was deepening in color where it lay closest to the western ledge. It would not have been difficult to imagine anything in that tangle of green. I called down a warning as I saw Manion brushing the ground where he was going to sleep. And as I went up the ladder, I heard him singing to himself that song which was so continually on his lips. It certainly had a haunting strain; I've never heard anybody else sing it. *Bonny Eloise* I think it is called. It goes——"

A cry like that of a stricken bird broke into his story. Grace Demming, her face suddenly dead white, leaned forward, clutching the table for support. Her glass of water overturned and the water spread slowly across the tablecloth, but no

one moved. "Jimmy!" she moaned. "Then he didn't die in France."

Instant confusion reigned. Several of the company protested that she must be mistaken, that he could not possibly have reached South America. In the babble of sound, Miss Beardsley told Winslow that Miss Demming had been engaged to an aviator who had been reported killed in battle. Could that wound in the head have played pranks with his memory? The whole thing sounded preposterous, but Miss Demming was convinced.

"It was Jimmy," she insisted. "Something you said made me begin to suspect. Then you mentioned his writing, and now the only song he ever sang. Wait!" She burst out of the room, her mother following. In an instant she had returned with a photograph of a man in a flying suit. There was no doubt about it, then. Manion and the Jimmy Kent to whom Miss Demming had been engaged were the same. The explorer recognized him at once.

"Where is he?" she cried. "Tell me, where is he?"

Winslow looked at her sadly. "I am sorry, Miss Demming," he said gently. "He's dead."

It seemed as though a whisper echoed his words. The girl clutched at her throat, pale as the lace that edged her collar. Her gray eyes appealed for more details.

"Yes, there's no doubt of it. Manion—I mean Kent—came back the next day, convinced that we had been hoaxed and that no animal existed except in some Indian's delirious imagination. We started back toward La Paz, but somewhere in the lowlands, perhaps the night he roamed the sunken valley, he had contracted jungle fever. We did all we could to make him comfortable, but in spite of all, he died, conscious to the end and entirely without pain. I wish you could see the paradise where we buried him, under a beautiful chonta palm, and we scattered orchids over the place before we left."

There was a scattered volley of questions. "Didn't you see the animal?"

The explorer shook his head. "How could one see a beast that has been extinct for centuries?"

Then the bald old man beside Miss Demming spoke up. "But I don't see what your story proves, Mr. Winslow. Where was the fear you spoke of?"

"Didn't I say? It was—it was in the faces of the Indians when they talked about the valley. The superstitious terror in their countenances when we told them we were going to camp in the valley was enough to make strong men shiver. But I don't blame them, exactly. It was the fear of the unknown that gripped them, so that I was glad enough to leave them and return to civilization. But I wonder whether there aren't almost as many superstitious terrors among the civilized."

The conversation switched, and soon the guests left the table and went to the porch where coffee was served.

THE explorer, wishing to escape from the others, had slipped into the house and was standing alone, watching the light of an automobile on the mountain road above him, when he sensed a presence. He had withdrawn from the group but Mr. Demming had found him. "Perhaps the others believed your story, perhaps not. But Kent was engaged to my daughter. He fell behind the German lines and we never had definite proof of his death. Grace has never been herself since, always hoping that he would some day return. Now I want the truth."

The explorer nodded wearily. "It's your right," he acknowledged dully. "I should never have begun the story in the first place. Again and again

I have tried to efface its horror from my mind, but it leaps out, as it did tonight."

"Then part of it is true? I beg of you, be careful."

"I know, Mr. Demming. Unfortunately, it is true—true to the point where the boy and I parted. The rest of it I have never told a soul. Sometimes at night it fairly screams for utterance.

"I said he came up in the morning. He didn't. Shortly after I reached the camp, I threw down a blanket for him and some food. Then he made a fire and I went into the lean-to. Suddenly I heard a scream—his voice. It was too dark to see or do anything. Again and again I called his name. Only the echoes and the scream of the vampire bats answered me. All night I shuddered, waiting, waiting. When the first streak of light came, I took a gun and went down after him. At first I found nothing. Then I picked up his footprints, far apart, slipping and dodging as though he had been running. The reason for his haste was not apparent until I saw in the muck the mark of a gigantic foot. About ten feet farther on was another, and in between the trail of a heavy tail.

"Farther on was a trodden space about a thick, bushy growth. The tracks were mute evidence of the story. A mad chase and flight, dodging about the bush, with the huge creature finally breaking down the vegetation. Then I noticed other footprints, smaller, coming from another direction, from where the ladder hung.

"And finally, under the trampled bushes, I found Manion, dead. His face! Deadly terror had graven unforgettable lines on it, such horror and loathing as I never saw before. Please God I'll never have to see it again! And his body—not a sign of bruise or hurt upon it, the only mark, a messy green slime on one hand, as though an animal had slobbered over it.

"As I caught the significance, the world began making dizzying circles about me, and when next I knew anything, it was almost evening. Manion was lying in the same place, his sightless eyes staring as though seeing into hell. Hastily I buried him, as I said, at the foot of a palm and dropped orchids over his grave.

"Jenkins, when I found him, was in a fever of excitement. The carriers had deserted with most of our provisions. It was imperative to start back at once to save the lives of both of us. My nerves were in terrible shape, and Jenkins was about helpless, but we eventually reached La Paz."

"And you left Manion's body for that horrible animal to dig up and eat?"

The explorer shook his head. "No, that's the thing that makes me believe an unbelievable fact. Manion, who, as I knew, was a cool, accurate shot, had died of fright, paralyzed by the sight of some monster, and the beast had the chance to eat him any time during the night. His hand bore evidence that the creature had sniffed him, but there was no sign of a bite. Do you know any modern South American animal of any size that would not have eaten him? I don't. I know, however, that the diplodocus is herbivorous. Grass forms its diet. So I think he may have seen such a prehistoric animal as the Indians mentioned. I don't know. People would call me crazy if I told them I believed it. But some day I'm going back to Bolivia. The nights when I think about Manion, I can not sleep. I must go back to see what it was that shocked him lifeless with that horror that I saw painted indelibly on his features. Perhaps—who knows?"

The Dead Wagon

by Greye La Spina

"Bring out your dead! The ominous cry sounded through the night."

"SOMEONE'S been chalking up the front door." The speaker stepped off the terrace into the library through the open French window.

From his padded armchair Lord Melverson rose with an involuntary exclamation of startled dismay.

"Chalking the great door?" he echoed, an unmistakable tremor in his restrained voice. His aristocratic, clean-shaven old face showed pallid in the soft light of the shaded candles.

"Oh, nothing that can do any harm to the carving. Perhaps I am mistaken—it's coming on dusk—but it seemed to be a great cross in red, chalked high up on the top panel of the door. You know—the Great Plague panel."

"Good God!" ejaculated the older man weakly.

Young Dinsmore met his prospective father-in-law's anxious eyes with a face that betrayed his astonishment. He could not avoid marveling at the reception of what certainly seemed, on the surface, a trifling matter.

To be sure, the wonderfully carved door that, with reinforcements of hand-wrought iron, guarded the entrance to Melverson Abbey was well worth any amount of care. Lord Melverson's ill-concealed agitation would have been excusable had a tourist cut vandal initials on that admirable example of early carving. But to make such a fuss over a bit of red chalk that a servant could wipe off in a moment without injury to the panel—Kenneth felt slightly superior

to such anxiety on the part of Arline's father.

Lord Melverson steadied himself with one hand against the library table.

"Was there—did you notice—anything else—beside the cross?"

"Why, I don't think there was anything else. Of course, I didn't look particularly. I had no idea you'd be so—interested," returned the young American.

"I think I'll go out and take a look at it myself. You may have imagined you saw something, in the dusk," murmured Lord Melverson half to himself.

"May I come?" inquired Dinsmore, vaguely disturbed at the very apparent discomposure of his usually imperturbable host.

Lord Melverson nodded. "I suppose you'll have to hear the whole story sooner or later, anyway," he acquiesced as he led the way.

His words set Kenneth's heart to beating madly. They meant but one thing; Arline's father was not averse to his suit. As for Arline, no one could be sure of such a little coquette. And yet—the young American could have sworn there was more than ordinary kindness in her eyes the day she smiled a confirmation of her father's invitation to Melverson Abbey. It was that vague promise that had brought Kenneth Dinsmore from New York to England.

A moment later, the American was staring, with straining eyes that registered utter astonishment, at the famous carved door that formed the principal entrance to the abbey. He would have been willing to swear that no one could have approached that door without having been seen from the library windows; yet in the few seconds of time that had elapsed between his first and second observation of the panel, an addition had been made to the chalk marks.

The Melverson panels are well known in the annals of historic carvings. There is a large lower panel showing the Great Fire of London. Above this are six half-panels portraying important scenes in London's history. And running across the very top is a large panel which shows a London street during the Great Plague of 1664.

This panel shows houses on either side of a narrow street yawning vacantly, great crosses upon their doors. Before one in the foreground is a rude wooden cart drawn by a lean nag and driven by a saturnine individual with leering face. This cart carries a gruesome load; it is piled high with bodies. Accounts vary oddly as to the number of bodies in the cart; earlier descriptions of the panel give a smaller number than the later ones, an item much speculated upon by connoisseurs of old carvings. The tout ensemble of the bas-relief greatly resembles the famous Hogarth picture of a similar scene.

Before this great door Kenneth stood, staring at a white-chalked legend traced across the rough surface of the carved figures on the upper panel. "God have mercy upon us!" it read. What did it mean? Who had managed to trace, unseen, those words of despairing supplication upon the old door?

And suddenly the young man's wonderment was rudely disturbed. Lord Melverson lurched away from the great door like a drunken man, a groan forcing its way from between parched lips. The old man's hands had flown to his face, covering his eyes as though to shut out some horrid and unwelcome sight.

"Kenneth, you have heard the story! This is some thoughtless jest of yours! Tell me it is, boy! Tell me that your hand traced these fatal words!"

Dinsmore's sympathy was keenly aroused by the old nobleman's in-

tense gravity and anxiety but he was forced to deny the pitifully pleading accusation.

"Sorry, sir, but I found the red cross just as I told you. As for the writing below, I must admit——"

"Ah! Then you *did* put *that* there? It was you who did it, then? Thank God! Thank God!"

"No, no, I hadn't finished. I was only wondering how anyone could have slipped past us and have written this, unseen. I'm sure," puzzled, "there was nothing here but the red cross when I told you about it first, sir."

"Then you haven't heard—no one has told you that old legend? The story of the Melverson curse?"

"This is the first I've heard of it, I assure you."

"And you positively deny writing that, as a bit of a joke?"

"Come, sir, it's not like you to accuse me of such a silly piece of cheap trickery," Kenneth retorted, somewhat indignantly.

"Forgive me, boy. I—I should not have said that but—I am—agitated. Will you tell me"—his voice grew tenser—"look closely, for God's sake, Kenneth!—*how many bodies there are in the wagon?*"

Dinsmore could not help throwing a keen glance at his future father-in-law, who now stood with averted face, one hand shielding his eyes as though he dared not ascertain for himself that which he asked another in voice so full of shrinking dread. Then the American stepped closer to the door and examined the upper panel closely, while the soft dusk closed down upon it.

"There are eleven bodies," he said finally.

"Kenneth! Look carefully! More depends upon your reply than you can be aware. Are you sure there are only eleven?"

"There are only eleven, sir. I'm positive of it."

"Don't make a mistake, for pity's sake!"

"Surely my eyesight hasn't been seriously impaired since this morning, when I bagged my share of birds," laughed the young man, in a vain effort to throw off the gloomy depression that seemed to have settled down upon him, from the mere propinquity of the other.

"Thank God! Then there is still time," murmured the owner of the abbey brokenly, drawing a deep, shivering sigh of relief. "Let us return to the house, my boy." His voice had lost its usually light ironical inflection and had acquired a heaviness foreign to it.

Kenneth contracted his brows at Lord Melverson's dragging steps. One would almost have thought the old man physically affected by what appeared to be a powerful shock.

Once back in the library, Lord Melverson collapsed into the nearest chair, his breath coming in short, forced jerks. Wordlessly he indicated the bell-pull dangling against the wall out of his reach.

Kenneth jerked the cord. After a moment, during which the young man hastily poured a glassful of water and carried it to his host, the butler came into the room.

At sight of his beloved master in such a condition of pitiful collapse, the gray-haired old servitor was galvanized into action. He flew across the room to the desk, opened a drawer, picked up a bottle, shook a tablet out into his hand, flew back.

He administered the medicine to his master, who sipped the water brought by Kenneth with a grateful smile that included his guest and his servant.

Jenning shook his head sadly, compressing his lips, as Lord Melverson leaned back exhausted in his chair, face grayish, lids drooping over weary eyes.

Kenneth touched the old servant's arm to attract his attention. Then he tapped his left breast and lifted his eyebrows questioningly. An affirmative nod was his reply. Heart trouble! Brought on by the old gentleman's agitation over a chalk mark on his front door! There was a mystery somewhere, and the very idea stimulated curiosity. And had not Lord Melverson said, "You will have to know, sooner or later?" Know what? What strange thing lay back of a red cross and a prayer to heaven, chalked upon the great Melverson portal?

2

LORD MELVERSON stirred ever so little and spoke with effort. "Send one of the men out to clean the upper panel of the front door, Jenning," he ordered tonelessly.

Jenning threw up one hand to cover a horrified mouth and stifle an exclamation. His faded blue eyes peered at his master from under pale eyebrows as he stared with dreadful incredulity.

"It isn't the red cross, m'lord? Oh, no, it can not be the red cross?" he stammered.

The thrill of affection in that cracked old voice told a little something of how much his master meant to the old family retainer.

"It seems to be a cross, chalked in red," admitted Melverson with patent reluctance, raising dull eyes to the staring ones fixed upon him with consternation.

"Oh, m'lord, not the red cross! And—was the warning there? Yes? did you count them? *How many were there?*"

Terrible foreboding, shrinking reluctance, rang in that inquiry, so utterly strange and incomprehensible. Kenneth felt his blood congeal in his veins with the horrid mystery of it.

Lord Melverson and his retainer exchanged a significant glance that did not escape the young American's attention. The answer to Jenning's question was cryptic but not more so than the inquiry.

"The same as before, Jenning. That is all—*as yet.*"

Kenneth's curiosity flamed up anew. What could that mean? Could Jenning have been inquiring how many bodies were in the cart? There would be eleven, of course. How could there be more, or less, when the wood-carver had made them eleven, for all time?

The old servant retired from the room, dragging one slow foot after the other as though he had suddenly aged more than his fast-whitening hairs warranted.

In his capacious armchair, fingers opening and closing nervously upon the polished leather that upholstered it, Lord Melverson leaned back wearily, his eyes wide open but fixed unseeingly upon the library walls with their great paintings in oil of bygone Melversons.

"Kenneth!" Lord Melverson sought his guest's eyes with an expression of apology on his face that was painfully forced to the surface of the clouded atmosphere of dread and heaviness in which the old nobleman seemed steeped. "I presume you are wondering over the to-do about a chalk mark on my door? It —it made me think of—of an old family tradition—and disturbed me a little.

"There's just one thing I want to ask you, my boy. Arline must not know that I had this little attack of heart-failure. I've kept it from her for years and I don't want her disturbed about me. And Kenneth, Arline has never been told the family legend. Don't tell her about the cross—the chalk marks on my door." His voice was intensely grave. "I have your word, my boy? Thank

you. Some day I'll tell you the whole story."

"Has it anything to do with the quaint verse in raised gilded letters over the fireplace in the dining hall?" questioned Kenneth.

He quoted it:

"Melverson's first-born will die early away;
Melverson's daughters will wed in gray;
Melverson's curse must Melverson pay,
Or Melverson Abbey will ownerless stay."

"Sounds like doggerel, doesn't it, lad? Well, that's the ancient curse. Foolish? Perhaps it is—perhaps it is. Yet—I am a second son myself; my brother Guy died before his majority."

"Coincidence, don't you think, sir?"

Lord Melverson smiled wryly, unutterable weariness in his old eyes. "Possibly. But a chain of coincidences, then. You—you don't believe there could be anything in it, do you, Kenneth? Would you marry the daughter of a house with such a curse upon it, knowing that it was part of your wife's dowry? Knowing that your first-born son must die before his majority?"

The American laughed light-heartedly.

"I don't think I'd care to answer such a supposititious question, sir. I can't admit such a possibility. I'm far too matter-of-fact, you see."

"But would you?" persistently, doggedly.

"I don't believe a word of it," sturdily. "It's just one of those foolish superstitions that people have permitted to influence them from time immemorial. I refuse to credit it."

Did Kenneth imagine it, or did Lord Melverson heave a deep, carefully repressed sigh of relief?

"Hardly worth while to go over the old tradition, is it?" he asked eagerly. "You wouldn't believe it, anyway. And probably it is just superstition, as you say. Ring for Jenning again, will you? Or—do you want to lend me your arm, my boy? I—I feel a bit shaky yet. I rather think bed will be the best place for me."

3

AFTER Kenneth had bidden Lord Melverson good-night, he got out his pipe and sat by his window smoking. Tomorrow, he decided, he would try his fate; if he could only get Arline away where they could be alone. Little witch, how she managed always to have someone else around! Tomorrow he would know from her own lips whether or not he must return to America alone.

The clock struck midnight. Following close upon its cadences, a voice sounded on the still night, a voice raucous, grating, disagreeable. The words were indistinguishable and followed by a hard chuckle that was distinctly not expressive of mirth; far from it, the sound made Kenneth shake back his shoulders quickly in an instinctive effort to throw off the dismal effect of that laugh.

"Charming music," observed he to himself, as he leaned from his window.

Wheels began to grate and crunch through the graveled road that led around the abbey. The full moon threw her clear light upon the space directly under Kenneth's window. He could distinguish every object as distinctly, it seemed to him, as in broad daylight. He listened and watched, a strange tenseness upon him. It was as though he waited for something terrible which yet must be; some unknown peril that threatened vaguely but none the less dreadfully.

The noise of the wheels grew louder. Then came a cautious, scraping sound from the window of a room close at hand. Kenneth decided that it was Lord Melverson's room. His host, hearing the horrid laughter that had been flung dismally upon

the soft night air, had removed the screen from his window, the better to view the night visitor with the ugly chuckle.

The grinding of wheels grew louder. And then there slid into the full light of the moon a rude cart drawn by a lean dappled nag and driven by a hunched-up individual who drew rein as the wagon came directly under Lord Melverson's window.

From the shadow of his room, Kenneth stared, open-eyed. There was something intolerably appalling about that strange equipage and its hunched-up driver, something that set his teeth sharply on edge and lifted his hair stiffly on his head. He did not want to look, but something pushed him forward and he was obliged to.

With a quick motion of his head, the driver turned a saturnine face to the moon's rays, revealing glittering eyes that shone with terrible, concentrated malignancy. The thinly curling lips parted. The cry Kenneth had heard a few minutes earlier rang—or rather, grated—on the American's ear. This time the words were plainer. Plainer to the ear, although not to the sense—for what sense could they have? he reasoned as he heard them.

"Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!"

A stifled groan. That was Lord Melverson, thought Kenneth, straining his eyes to watch the strange scene below.

For suddenly there rose from out the shadow of the abbey's great gray walls two figures bearing between them a burden. They carried it to the cart and with an effort lifted it, to toss it carelessly upon the grisly contents of that horrid wagon—contents that Kenneth now noted for the first time with starting eyes and pricking skin. And as the white face of the body lay upturned to the moon, a terrible cry wailed out from Lord Melverson's apartment, a cry of anguish and despair. For the moon's light picked out the features of that dead so callously tossed upon the gruesome pile.

"Oh, Albert, Albert, my son, my son!"

Kenneth leaned from his window and peered toward that of his host. From above the sill protruded two clasped hands; between them lay the white head of the old man. Had he fainted? Or had he had another attack of heart-failure?

The driver in the roadway below chuckled malignantly, and pulled at his horse's reins. The lean, dappled nag started up patiently in answer, and the cart passed slowly out of sight, wheels biting deep into the road-bed. And as it went out of sight among the deep shadows cast by the thickly wooded park, that harsh chuckle floated back again to the American's ears, thrilling him with horror of that detestable individual.

THE hypnotic influence of that malignant glance had so chained Kenneth to the spot that for the moment he could not go to the assistance of Lord Melverson. But he found that he had been anticipated; as he reached his door, Jenning was already disappearing into his host's room. He retreated, unseen; perhaps he would do better to wait until he was called. It might well be that the drama he had seen enacted was not meant for his eyes and ears.

After all, had he seen or heard anything? Or was he the victim of a nightmare that had awakened him at its end? Kenneth shrugged his shoulders. He would know in the morning. Unless it rained hard in the meantime, the wheels of the cart would have left their mark on the gravel. If he had not dreamed, he would find the ruts made by those broad, ancient-looking wheels.

He could not sleep, however, until he heard Jenning leave his master's room. Opening the door softly, he inquired how Lord Melverson was. The old servitor flung a suspicious glance at him.

"I heard him cry out," explained Kenneth, seeing that the old man was averse to any explanation on his own side. "I hope it is nothing serious?"

"Nothing," replied Jenning restrainedly. But Dinsmore could have sworn that bright tears glittered in the old retainer's faded blue eyes and that the old mouth was compressed as though to hold back an outburst of powerful emotion.

Arline Melverson, her face slightly clouded, reported that her father had slept poorly the night before and would breakfast in his own room. She herself came down in riding habit and vouchsafed the welcome information that she had ordered a horse saddled for Kenneth, if he cared to ride with her. Despite his desire to be alone with her, the American felt that he ought to remain at the abbey, where he might be of service to Lord Melverson. But inclination overpowered intuition, and after breakfast he got into riding togs.

"I believe I'm still dreaming," he thought to himself as he rode back to the abbey at lunch-time, his horse crowding against Arline's as he reached happily over to touch her hand every little while. "Only this dream isn't a nightmare."

Instinctively his glance sought the graveled road where the dead cart of the night before had, under his very eyes, ground its heavy wheels into the ground. The road was smooth and ruttless. After all, then, he had dreamed and had undoubtedly been awakened by Lord Melverson's cry as the old man fainted. The dream had been so vivid that Kenneth could hardly believe his eyes when he looked at the smooth roadway, but his new happiness soon chased his bewilderment away.

As the young people dismounted before the door, Jenning appeared upon the threshold. The old man's lined face was turned almost with terror upon his young mistress. His lips worked as though he would speak but could not. His eyes sought the other man's as if in supplication.

"What's the matter, Jenning?"

"Master Albert, Mr. Dinsmore! M'lord's first-born son!"

"What is it?" Arline echoed. "Is my brother here?"

"I can't tell her, sir," the majordomo implored of Kenneth. "Take her to Lord Melverson, sir, I beg of you. He can tell her better than I."

Kenneth did not take Arline to her father. The girl fled across the great hall as if whipped by a thousand fears. Kenneth turned to Jenning with a question in his eyes.

Down the old man's face tears ran freely. His wrinkled hands worked nervously together. "He fell, sir. Something broke on his plane. He died last night, sir, a bit after midnight. The telegram came this morning, just after you and Miss Arline went."

Kenneth, one hand pressed bewildered to his forehead, walked aimlessly through that house of sorrow. Albert Melverson had fallen from his plane and died, the previous night. Had that dream, that nightmare, been a warning? Had it perhaps been so vivid in Lord Melverson's imagination that the scene had been telepathically reproduced before the American's own eyes? Although puzzled and disturbed beyond words, Kenneth realized that the matter must rest in abeyance until Lord Melverson should of his own free will explain it.

In the meantime there would be Arline to comfort, his sweetheart, who had just lost her dearly loved and only brother.

4

Two months had hardly passed after Albert's death before Lord Melverson broached the subject of his daughter's marriage.

"It's this way, my boy. I'm an old man and far from well of late. I'd like to know that Arline was in safe keeping, Kenneth," and he laid an affectionate hand on the young man's shoulder.

Kenneth was deeply affected. "Thank you, sir. I promise you I shall do my utmost to make her happy."

"I know you will. I want you to speak to Arline about an early wedding. Tell her I want to see her married before—before I have to leave her. I have a very powerful reason that I can not tell you, my boy, for Arline to marry soon. I want to live to see my grandson at her knee, lad. And unless you two marry soon, I shall be powerless to prevent—that is, I will be unable to do something for you both that has been much in my mind of late. It is vital that you marry soon, Kenneth. More I can not say."

"You don't need to say more. I'll speak to Arline today. You understand, sir, that my only motive in not urging marriage upon her now has been your recent bereavement?"

"Of course. But Arline is too young, too volatile, to allow even such a loss to weigh permanently upon her spirits. I think she will yield to you, especially if you make it plain that I want it to be so."

Kenneth sought Arline thoughtfully. Lord Melverson's words impressed him almost painfully. There was much behind them, much that he realized he could not as yet demand an explanation of. But the strength of Lord Melverson's request made him surer when he asked Arline to set an early date for their marriage.

"I am ready if Father does not consider it disrespectful to Albert's memory, Kenneth. You know, dear, we intended to marry soon, anyway. And I think Albert will be happier to know that I did not let his going matter. You understand, don't you? Besides, I feel that he is here with us in the abbey, with Father and me.

"But there is one thing, dear, that I shall insist upon. I think too much of my brother to lay aside the light mourning that Father permitted me to wear instead of heavy black. So if you want me to marry you soon, dear, you must wed a bride in gray."

Into Kenneth's mind flashed one line of the Melverson curse:

"Melverson's daughters will wed in gray."

Could there be something in it, after all? Common sense answered scornfully: No!

Four months after Albert Melverson had fallen to his death, his sister Arline—gray-clad like a gentle dove—put her hand into that of Kenneth Dinsmore, while Lord Melverson, his lips twitching as he strove to maintain his composure, gave the bride away.

A honeymoon trip that consumed many months took the young people to America as well as to the Continent, as the groom could hardly wait to present his lovely young wife to his family. Then, pursuant to Lord Melverson's wishes, the bridal pair returned to Melverson Abbey, that the future heir might be born under the ancestral roof.

5

Little Albert became the apple of his grandfather's eye. The old gentleman spent hours watching the cradle the first few months of his grandson's life, and then again other hours in fondly guiding the little fellow's first steps.

But always in the background of this apparently ideally happy family lurked a black shadow. Jenning, his

pale eyes full of foreboding, was always stealing terrified looks in secret at the panel of the great door. Kenneth grew almost to hate the poor old man, merely because he knew that Jenning believed implicitly in the family curse.

"Confound the man! He'll bring it upon us by thinking about it," growled the young father one morning as he looked out of the window of the breakfast room, where he had been eating a belated meal.

Little Albert, toddling with exaggerated precaution from his mother's outstretched hands to those of his grandfather, happened to look up. He saw his father; laughed and crowed lustily. Dinsmore waved his hand.

"Go to it, young chap. You'll be a great walker some day," he called facetiously.

Lord Melverson looked around, a pleased smile on his face. Plainly, he agreed to the full with his son-in-law's sentiments.

As usual, entered that black-garbed figure, the very presentment of wo; Jenning. Into the center of the happy little circle he came, his eyes seeking the old nobleman's.

"M'lord! Would your lordship please take a look——," stammered Jenning, his roving eyes going from the young father to the young mother, then back to the grandfather again, as if in an agony of uncertainty.

Lord Melverson straightened up slowly and carefully from his bent position over the side of a great wicker chair. He motioned Jenning silently ahead of him. The old butler retraced his footsteps, his master following close upon his heels. They disappeared around the corner of the building.

"Now, what on earth are they up to?" wondered Kenneth. His brow contracted. There had been something vaguely suspicious about Lord Melverson's air. "I've half a mind to follow them."

"Kenneth!" Arline's cry was wrung agonizedly from her.

Kenneth whirled about quickly, but too late to do anything. The baby, toddling to his mother's arms, missed a step, slipped, fell. The tender little head crashed against the granite coping at the edge of the terrace.

And even then Kenneth did not realize what it all meant. It was not until late that night that he suddenly understood that the Melverson curse was not a silly tradition, but a terrible blight upon the happiness of the Melverson family, root and branch.

He had left Arline under the influence of a sleeping potion. Her nerves had gone back on her after the day's strain, and the knowledge that her baby might not live out the night. A competent nurse and a skilled physician had taken over the case. Specialists were coming down from London as fast as a special train would bring them. Kenneth felt that his presence in the sickroom would be more hindrance than help.

He went down to the library where his father-in-law sat grimly, silently, expectantly, a strangely fixed expression of determination on his fine old face. Lord Melverson had drawn a handkerchief from his pocket. And then Kenneth suddenly knew, where before he had only imagined. For the old man's fine cambric kerchief was streaked with red, red that the unhappy young father knew must have been wiped from the upper panel of the great door that very morning. *The baby, Kenneth's first-born son, was doomed.*

"Why didn't you tell me? You hid it from me," he accused his wife's father, bitterly.

"I thought I was doing it for the best, Kenneth," the older man defended himself sadly.

"But if you had told me, I would never have left him alone for a single moment. I would have been beside him to have saved him when he fell."

"You *know* that if he had not fallen, something else would have happened to him, something unforeseen."

"Oh, yes, I know, now, when it is too late. My little boy! My Arline's first-born! The first-born of Melverson!" fiercely. "Why didn't you tell me that the Melverson curse would follow my wife? That it would strike down her first-born boy?"

"And would that have deterred you from marrying Arline?" inquired Arline's father, very gently. "You know it wouldn't, Kenneth. I tried to put a hypothetical case to you once, but you replied that you refused to consider the mere possibility. What was I to do? I will confess that I have suffered, thinking that I should have insisted upon your reading the family records before you married Arline—then you could have decided for yourself."

"Does Arline know?"

"No. I've shielded her from the knowledge, Kenneth."

"I can't forgive you for not letting me know. It might have saved Albert's life. If Arline, too, had known——"

"Why should I have told her something that would have cast a shadow over her young life, Kenneth? Are you reproaching me because I have tried to keep her happy?"

"Oh, Father, I didn't mean to reproach you. I'm sorry. You must understand that I'm half mad with the pain of what's happened, not only on account of the little fellow, but for Arline. Oh, if there were only some way of saving him! How I would bless the being who would tell me how to save him!"

Lord Melverson, still with that strange glow in his eyes, rose slowly to his feet.

"There is a way, I believe," said he. "But don't put too much stress on what may be but a groundless hope on my part. I have had an idea for some time that I shall put into expression tonight, Kenneth. I've been thinking it over since I felt that I had wronged you in not pressing home the reality of the Melverson curse. If my idea is a good one, our little Albert is saved. And not only he, but I shall have broken the curse, rendered it impotent forever." His eyes shone with fervor.

"Is it anything I can do?" the young father begged.

"Nothing. Unless, perhaps, you want to read the old manuscript in my desk drawer. It tells why we Melversons have been cursed since the days of the Great Plague of 1664.

"Just before midnight, be in little Albert's room. If he is no better when the clock strikes twelve, Kenneth—why, then, my plan will have been a poor one. But I shall have done all I can do; have given all that lies in my power to give, in my attempt to wipe out the wrong I have inadvertently done you."

Kenneth pressed the hand outstretched to him.

"You've been a good husband to my girl, Kenneth, lad. You've made her happy. And—in case anything were to happen to me, will you tell Arline that I am perfectly contented if only our little one recovers? I want no vain regrets," stressed Lord Melverson emphatically, as he released Kenneth's hand and turned to leave the room.

"What could happen?"

"Oh—nothing. That is—you know I've had several severe heart attacks of late," returned Arline's father vaguely.

6

KENNETH, alone, went to his father-in-law's desk and drew out the stained and yellow manuscript. Sitting in a chair before the desk, he laid the ancient sheets before him and pored over the story of the Melverson curse. He thought it might take his mind off the tragedy slowly playing to a close in the hushed room upstairs.

Back in 1664, the then Lord Melverson fell madly in love with the charming daughter of a goldsmith. She was an only child, very lovely to look upon and as good as she was fair, and she dearly loved the rollicking young nobleman. But a Melverson of Melverson Abbey, though he could love, could not wed a child of the people. Charles Melverson pleaded with the lovely girl to elope with him, without the sanction of her church.

But the damsel, being of lofty soul, called her father and related all to him. Then she turned her fair shoulder indifferently upon her astonished and chagrined suitor and left him, while the goldsmith laughed saturninely in the would-be seducer's face.

A Melverson was not one to let such a matter rest quietly, however, especially as he was deeply enamoured of the lady. He sent pleading letters, threatening to take his own life. He attempted to force himself into the lady's presence. At last, he met her one day as she returned from church, caught her up, and fled with her on his swift charger.

Still she remained obdurate, although love for him was eating her wounded heart. Receive him she must, but she continued to refuse him so little a favor as a single word.

Despairing of winning her by gentle means, Charles Melverson determined upon foul.

It was the terrible winter of 1664-5. The Black Death, sweeping through London and out into the countryside, was taking dreadful toll of lives. Hundreds of bodies were daily tumbled carelessly into the common trenches by hardened men who dared the horrors of the plague for the big pay offered those who played the part of grave-digger. And at the very moment when Melverson had arrived at his evil decision, the goldsmith staggered into the abbey grounds after a long search for his ravished daughter, to fall under the very window where she had retreated in the last stand for her maiden virtue.

Retainers without shouted at each other to beware the plague-stricken man. Their shouts distracted the maiden. She looked down and beheld her father dying, suffering the last throes of the dreaded pestilence.

Coldly and proudly she demanded freedom to go down to her dying parent. Melverson refused the request; in a flash of insight he knew what she would do with her liberty. She would fling herself desperately beside the dying man; she would hold his blackening body against her own warm young breast; she would deliberately drink in his plague-laden breath with her sweet, fresh lips.

Lifting fast-glazing eyes, the goldsmith saw his daughter, apparently clasped fast in her lover's arms. How was he to have known that her frantic struggles had been in vain? With his last breath he cursed the Melversons, root and branch, lifting discolored hands to the brazen, glowing sky lowering upon him. Then, "And may the demon of the plague grant that I may come back as long as a Melverson draws breath, to steal away his first-born son!" he cried. With a groan, he died.

And then, thanks to the strange heart of woman, Charles Melverson unexpectedly won what he had believed lost to him forever, for he could not have forced his will upon

that orphaned and sorrowful maiden. The goldsmith's daughter turned upon him limpid eyes that wept for him and for her father, too.

"It is too much to ask that you should suffer alone what my poor father has called down upon your house," she said to him, with unexpected gentleness. "He would forgive you, could he know that I have been safe in your keeping. I must ask you, then, to take all I have to give, if by so doing you believe the shadow of the curse will be lightened —for you, at least."

Touched to his very heart by her magnanimity, Charles Melverson released her from his arms, knelt at her feet, kissed her hand, and swore that until he could fetch her from the church, his lawful wedded wife, he would neither eat nor sleep.

But—the curse remained. Down through the centuries it had worked its evil way, and no one seemed to have found a way of eluding it. Upon the last pages of the old manuscript were noted, in differing chirography, the death dates of one Melverson after another, after each the terribly illuminating note: "First-born son. Died before his majority."

And last of all, in the handwriting of Lord Melverson, was written the name of that Albert for whom Kenneth Dinsmore's son had been named. Must another Albert follow that other so soon?

7

KENNETH tossed the stained papers back into the drawer and shut them from sight. There was something sinister about them. He felt as if his very hands had been polluted by their touch. Then he glanced at the clock. It was on the point of striking midnight. He remembered Lord Melverson's request, and ran quickly upstairs to his little dying son's room.

Arline was already at the child's side; she had wakened and would not be denied. Nurse and physician stood in the background, their faces showing plainly the hopelessness of the case.

On his little pillow, the poor baby drew short, painful gasps, little fists clenched against his breast. A few short moments, thought Kenneth, would determine his first-born's life or death. And it would be death, unless Lord Melverson had discovered how to break the potency of the Melverson curse.

Torn between wife and child, the young father dared not hope, for fear his hope might be shattered. As for Arline, he saw that her eyes already registered despair; already she had, in anticipation, given up her child, her baby, her first-born.

What was that? The sound of heavy, broad-rimmed wheels crunching through the gravel of the roadway; the call of a mocking voice that set Kenneth's teeth on edge with impotent fury.

He went unobtrusively to the window and looked out. After all, he could not be expected to stand by the bed, watching his little son die. And he had to see, at all costs, that nightmare dead cart with its ghastly freight; he had to know whether or not he had dreamed it, or had seen it truly, on the night before Albert Melverson's death.

Coming out of the shadows of the enveloping trees, rumbled the dead wagon with its hunched-up driver. Kenneth's hair rose with a prickling sensation on his scalp. He turned to glance back into the room. No, he was not dreaming; he had not dreamed before; it was real—as real as such a ghastly thing could well be.

On, on it came. And then the hateful driver lifted his malignant face to the full light of the moon. His challenging glance met the young father's intent gaze with a scoffing,

triumphant smile, a smile of satisfied hatred. The thin lips parted, and their grating cry fell another time upon the heavy silence of the night.

"*Bring out your dead!*"

As that ominous cry pounded against his ears, Kenneth Dinsmore heard yet another sound; it was the sharp explosion of a revolver.

He stared from the window with straining eyes. Useless to return to the baby's bedside; would not those ghostly pall-bearers emerge from the shadows now, bearing with them the tiny body of his first-born?

They came. But they were carrying what seemed to be a heavy burden. *That was no child's tiny form they tossed with hideous upward grins upon the dead cart.*

"Kenneth! Come here!"

It was Arline's voice, with a thrilling undertone of thankfulness in it that whirled Kenneth from the window to her side, all else forgotten. "Look! He is breathing easier. Doctor, look! Tell me, doesn't he seem better?"

Doctor and nurse exchanged mystified, incredulous glances. It was plain that neither had heard or seen anything out of the ordinary that night, but that the baby's sudden turn for the better had astonished them both.

"I consider it little short of a miracle," pronounced the medical man, after a short examination of the sleeping child. "Madam, your child will live. I congratulate you both."

"Oh, I must tell Father, Kenneth. He will be *so* happy. Dear Father!"

The cold hand of certain knowledge squeezed Kenneth's heart. "If anything should happen to me," Lord Melverson had said. What did that revolver shot mean? What had meant that body the ghostly pall-bearers had carried to the dead wagon?

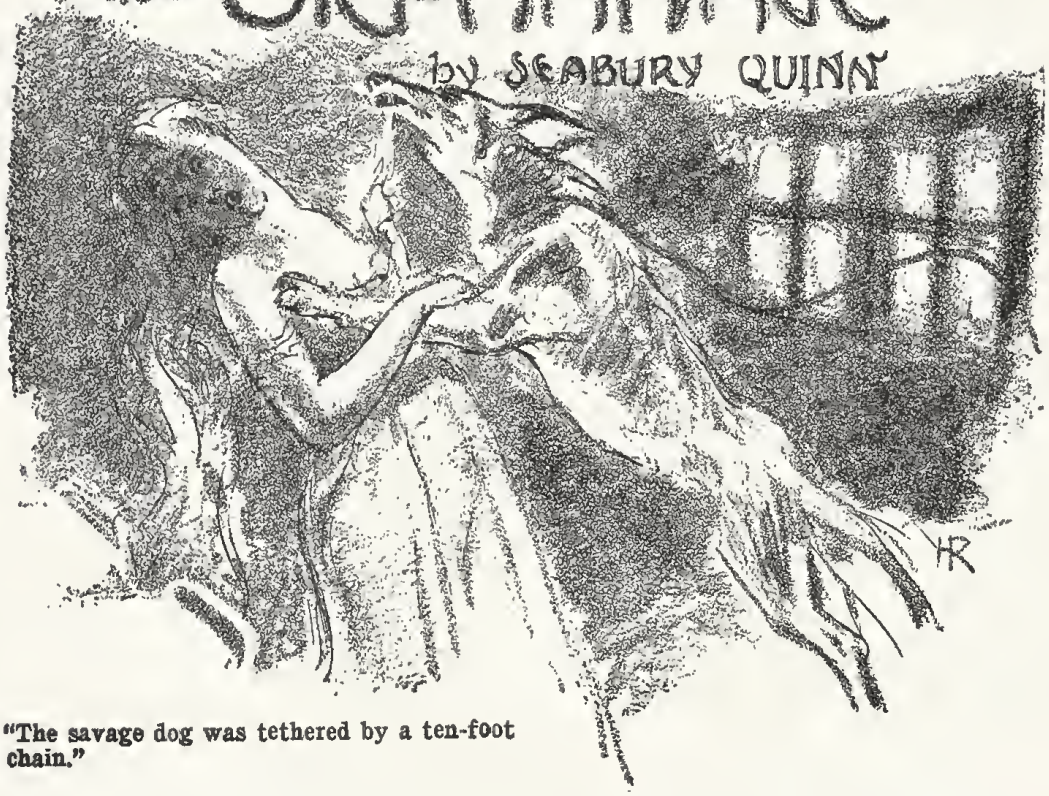
A light tap came at the door. The nurse opened it, then turned and beckoned to Kenneth.

It was Jenning, frankly unashamed of the tears that were rolling down his wrinkled cheeks. He choked back a sob.

"He's gone, Mr. Dinsmore. Break it to her easy, sir—but it's proud of him she ought to be." His voice trembled; broke. "'Twas not the little master *they* carried away in the accursed dead cart, thanks to him. I tried to stop him, sir; forgive me, I loved him! But he *would* make the sacrifice; he said it was worth trying. And so—he—did—it. But—*he's broken the curse, sir, he's broken the curse!*"

The WHITE LADY of the ORPHANAGE

by SEABURY QUINN



"The savage dog was tethered by a ten-foot chain."

"DR. TROWBRIDGE? Dr. de Grandin?" Our visitor looked questioningly from one of us to the other.

"I'm Trowbridge," I answered, "and this is Dr. de Grandin. What can we do for you?"

The gentle-faced, white-haired little man bowed rather nervously to each of us in turn, acknowledging the introduction. "My name is Gervaise, Howard Gervaise," he replied. "I'm superintendent of the Springville Orphans' Home."

I indicated a chair at the end of the study table and awaited further information.

"I was advised to consult you gentlemen by Mr. Willis Richards, of your city," he continued. "Mr. Richards told me you accomplished some really remarkable results for him at the time his jewelry was stolen, and suggested that you could do more to clear up our present trouble than anyone else. He is president of our board of trustees, you know," he added in explanation.

"U'm?" Jules de Grandin murmured noncommittally as he set fire to a fresh cigarette with the glowing butt of another. "I recall that Monsieur Richards. He figured in the affair of the disembodied hand, Friend Trowbridge, you remember. *Parbleu,* I also recall that he paid the reward for his jewels' return with very bad grace. You come poorly introduced, my friend"—he fixed his uncompromising cat-stare

on our caller—"however, say on. We listen."

Mr. Gervaise seemed to shrink in upon himself more than ever. It took small imaginative powers to vision him utterly cowed before the domineering manner of Willis Richards, our local nabob. "The fact is, gentlemen," he began with a soft, deprecating cough, "we are greatly troubled at the orphanage. Something mysterious—most mysterious—is taking place there. Unless we can arrive at some solution we shall be obliged to call in the police, and that would be most unfortunate. Publicity is to be dreaded in this case, yet we are at a total loss to explain the mystery."

"U'm," de Grandin inspected the tip of his cigarette carefully, as though it were something entirely novel, "most mysteries cease to be mysterious, once they are explained, *Monsieur*. You will be good enough to proceed?"

"Ah——" Mr. Gervaise glanced about the study as though to take inspiration from the surroundings, then coughed apologetically again. "Ah—the fact is, gentlemen, that several of our little charges have—ah—mysteriously disappeared. During the past six months we have missed no less than five of the home's inmates, two boys and three girls, and only day before yesterday a sixth one disappeared—vanished into air, if you can credit my statement."

"Ah?" Jules de Grandin sat forward a little in his chair, regarding the caller narrowly. "They have disappeared, vanished, you do say? Perhaps they have decamped?"

"No-o," Gervaise denied, "I don't think that's possible, sir. Our home is only a semi-public institution, you know, being supported entirely by voluntary gifts and benefits of wealthy patrons, and we do not open our doors to orphan children as a class. There are certain restrictions imposed. For this reason, we never entertain a greater number than we are able to care for in a fitting manner, and conditions at Springville are rather different from those obtaining in most institutions of a similar character. The children are well fed, well clothed and excellently housed, and—as far as anyone in their unfortunate situation can be—are perfectly contented and happy. During my tenure of office, more than ten years, we have never had a runaway; and that makes these disappearances all the harder to explain. In each case the surrounding facts have been essentially the same, too. The child was accounted for at night before the signal was given to extinguish the lights, and—and next morning he just wasn't there. That's all there is to say. There is nothing further I can tell you."

"You have searched?" de Grandin asked.

"Naturally. The most careful and painstaking investigations have been made in every case. It was not possible to pursue the little ones with hue and cry, of course, but the home has been to considerable expense in hiring private investigators to obtain some information of the missing children, all without result. There is no question of kidnaping, either, for, in every case, the child was known to be safely inside not only the grounds, but in the dormitories, on the night preceding the disappearance. Several reputable witnesses vouch for that in each instance."

"U'm?" de Grandin commented once more. "You say you have been at considerable expense in the matter, *Monsieur?*"

"Yes."

"Good. Very good. You will please be at some more considerable expense. Dr. Trowbridge and I are *gens d'affaires*—businessmen—as well as scientists, *Monsieur,* and while

we shall esteem it an honor to serve the fatherless and motherless orphans of your home, we must receive an adequate consideration from Monsieur Richards. We shall undertake the matter of ascertaining the whereabouts of your missing charges at five hundred dollars apiece. Do you agree?"

"But that would be three thousand dollars——" the visitor began.

"Perfectly," de Grandin interupted. "The police will undertake the case for nothing."

"But we can not have the police, as I have just explained——"

"You can not have us for less," the Frenchman cut in. "This Monsieur Richards, I know him of old. He desires not the publicity of a search by the gendarmes, and, though he loves me not, he has confidence in my ability, otherwise he would not have sent you. Go to him and say Jules de Grandin will act for him for no less fee than that I have mentioned. Meantime, will you smoke?"

He passed a box of my cigars to the caller, held a lighted match for him, and refused to listen to another word concerning the business which had brought Gervaise on the twenty-mile jaunt from Springville.

"TROWBRIDGE, *mon vieux,*" he informed me the following morning at breakfast, "I assure you it pays handsomely to be firm with these captains of industry, such as Monsieur Richards. Before you had arisen, my friend, that man of wealth was haggling with me over the telephone as though we were a pair of dealers in second-hand furniture. *Morbleu,* it was like an auction. Bid by bid he raised his offer for our services until he met my figure. Today his attorneys prepare a formal document, agreeing to pay us five hundred dollars for the explanation of the disappearance of each of those six little orphans. A good morning's business, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

"De Grandin," I told him, "you're wasting your talents in this work. You should have gone into Wall Street."

"*Eh bien,*" he twisted the tips of his little blond mustache complacently, "I think I do very well as it is. When I return to *la belle France* next month I shall take with me upward of fifty thousand dollars—more than a million francs—as a result of my work here. That sum is not to be sneezed upon, my friend. And what is of even more value to me, I take with me the gratitude of many of your countrymen whose burdens I have been able to lighten. *Mordieu,* yes, this trip has been of great use to me, my old one."

"And——" I began.

"And tomorrow we shall visit this home of the orphans where Monsieur Gervaise nurses his totally inexplicable mystery. *Parbleu,* that mystery shall be explained, or Jules de Grandin is seven thousand francs poorer!

"ALL arrangements have been made," he confided as we drove over to Springville the following morning. "It would never do for us to announce ourselves as investigators, my friend, so what surer disguise can we assume than that of being ourselves? You and I, are we not physicians? But certainly. Very well. As physicians we shall appear at the home, and as physicians we shall proceed to inspect all the little ones—separately and alone—for are we not to give them the Schick test for diphtheria immunity? Most assuredly."

"And then——?" I began, but he cut my question in two with a quick gesture and a smile.

"And then, my friend, we shall be guided by circumstances, and if there are no circumstances, *cordieu,* but we shall make them! *Allons,* there is much to do before we handle Monsieur Richards' check."

HOWEVER dark the mystery overhanging the Springville Orphans' Home might have been, nothing indicating it was apparent as de Grandin and I drove through the imposing stone gateway to the spacious grounds. Wide, smoothly kept lawns, dotted here and there with beds of brightly blooming flowers, clean, tastefully arranged buildings of red brick in the Georgian style, and a general air of prosperity, happiness and peace greeted us as we brought our car to a halt before the main building of the home. Within, the youngsters were at chapel, and their clear young voices rose pure and sweet as bird-songs in springtime to the accompaniment of a mellow-toned organ:

"There's a home for little children
Above the bright blue sky,
Where Jesus reigns in glory,
A home of peace and joy;
No earthly home is like it,
Nor can with it compare . . ."

We tiptoed into the spacious assembly room, dimly lit through tall, painted windows, and waited at the rear of the hall till the morning exercises were concluded. Right and left de Grandin shot his keen, stock-taking glance, inspecting the rows of neatly clothed little ones in the pews, attractive young female attendants, and the mild-faced, gray-haired lady of matronly appearance who presided at the organ. "*Mordieu,* Friend Trowbridge," he muttered in my ear, "truly, this is mysterious. Why should any of the *pauvres orphelins* voluntarily quit such a place as this?"

"S-s-sh!" I cut him off. His habit of talking in and out of season, whether at a funeral, a wedding or other religious service, had annoyed me more than once. As usual, he took the rebuke in good part and favored me with an elfish grin, then fell to studying an elongated figure representing a female saint in one of the stained-glass windows, winking at the beatified lady in a highly irreverent manner.

"Good morning, gentlemen," Mr. Gervaise greeted us as the home's inmates filed past us, two by two. "Everything is arranged for your inspection. The children will be brought to you in my office as soon as you are ready for them. Mrs. Martin"—he turned with a smile to the white-haired organist who had joined us—"these are Dr. de Grandin and Dr. Trowbridge. They are going to inspect the children for diphtheria immunity this morning."

To us he added: "Mrs. Martin is our matron. Next to myself she has entire charge of the home. We call her 'Mother Martin,' and all our little ones love her as though she were really their own mother."

"How do you do?" the matron acknowledged the introduction, favoring us with a smile of singular sweetness and extending her hand to each of us in turn.

"*Madame,*" de Grandin took her smooth, white hand in his, American fashion, then bowed above it, raising it to his lips, "your little charges are indeed more than fortunate to bask in the sunshine of your ministrations!" It seemed to me he held the lady's hand longer than necessity required, but like all his countrymen my little friend was more than ordinarily susceptible to the influence of a pretty woman, young or elderly.

"And now. *Monsieur,* if you please——" He resigned Mother Martin's plump hand regretfully and turned to the superintendent, his slim, black brows arched expectantly.

"Of course," Gervaise replied. "This way, if you please."

"It would be better if we examined the little ones separately and without any of the attendants being present," de Grandin remarked in a business-like tone, placing his medicine case

on the desk and unfolding a white jacket.

"But surely you can not hope to glean any information from the children!" the superintendent protested. "I thought you were simply going to make a pretense of examining them as a blind. Mrs. Martin and I have questioned every one of them most carefully, and I assure you there is absolutely nothing to be gained by going over that ground again. Besides, some of them have become rather nervous, and we don't want to have their little heads filled with disagreeable notions, you know. I think it would be much better if Mother Martin or I were present while the children are examined. It would give them greater confidence, you know—"

"*Monsieur*"—de Grandin spoke in the level, toneless voice he assumed before one of his wild outbursts of anger—"you will please do exactly as I command. Otherwise——" He paused significantly and began removing the clinical smock.

"Oh, by no means, my dear sir," the superintendent hastened to assure him. "No, no; I wouldn't for the world have you think I was trying to put difficulties in your way. Oh, no; I only thought——"

"*Monsieur,*" the little Frenchman repeated, "from this time onward, until we dismiss the case, I shall do the thinking. You will kindly have the children brought to me, one at a time."

To see the spruce little scientist among the children was a revelation to me. Always tart of speech to the verge of bitterness, with a keen, mordant wit which cut like a razor or scratched like a briar, de Grandin seemed the last one to glean information from children naturally timid in the presence of a doctor. But his smile grew brighter and brighter and his humor better and better as child after child entered the office, answered a few seemingly idle questions and passed from the room. At length a little girl, some four or five years old, came in, the hem of her blue pinafore twisted between her plump baby fingers in embarrassment.

"Ah," de Grandin breathed, "here is one from whom we shall obtain something of value, my friend, or I much miss my guess.

"*Holà, ma petite tête de chou!*" he exclaimed, snapping his fingers at the tot. "Come hither and tell Dr. de Grandin all about it!"

His "little cabbage-head" gave him an answering smile, but one of somewhat doubtful quality. "Dr. Grandin not hurt Betsy?" she asked, half confidently, half fearsomely.

"*Parbleu,* not I, my pigeon," he replied as he lifted her to the desk. "*Regardez-vous!*" from the pocket of his jacket he produced a little box of bonbons and thrust them into her chubby hand. "Eat them, my little onion," he commanded. *Tête du diable,* but they are an excellent medicine for loosening the tongue!"

Nothing loth, the little girl began munching the sweetmeats, regarding her new friend with wide, wondering eyes. "They said you would hurt me—cut my tongue out with a knife if I talked to you," she informed him, then paused to pop another chocolate button into her mouth.

"*Mort d'un chat,* did they, indeed?" he demanded. "And who was the vile, detestable one who so slandered Jules de Grandin? I shall —s-s-sh!" he interrupted himself, turning and crossing the office in three long, catlike leaps. At the entrance he paused a moment, then grasped the handle and jerked the door suddenly open.

On the sill, looking decidedly surprized, stood Mr. Gervaise.

"Ah, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin's voice held an ugly, rasping note as he glared directly into the superintendent's eyes, "you are perhaps seeking for something? Yes?"

"Er—yes," Gervaise coughed softly, dropping his gaze before the Frenchman's blazing stare. "Er—that is—you see, I left my pencil here this morning, and I didn't think you'd mind if I came to get it. I was just going to rap when——"

"When I saved you the labor, *n'est-ce-pas?*" the other interrupted. "Very good, my friend. Here"—hastening to the desk he grabbed a handful of miscellaneous pencils, pens and other writing implements, including a stick of marking chalk—"take these, and get gone, in the name of the good God." He thrust the utensils into the astonished superintendent's hands, then turned to me, the gleam in his little blue eyes and the heightened color in his usually pale cheeks showing his barely suppressed rage. "Trowbridge, *mon vieux,*" he almost hissed, "I fear I shall have to impress you into service as a guard. Stand at the outer door, my friend, and should anyone come seeking pens, pencils, paint-brushes or printing presses, have the goodness to boot him away. Me, I do not relish having people looking for pencils through the keyhole of the door while I interrogate the children!"

Thereafter I remained on guard outside the office while child after child filed into the room, talked briefly with de Grandin, and left by the farther door.

"Well, did you find out anything worth while?" I asked when the examination was finally ended.

"U'm," he responded, stroking his mustache thoughtfully, "yes and no. With children of a tender age, as you know, the line of demarcation between recollection and imagination is none too clearly drawn. The older ones could tell me nothing; the younger ones relate a tale of a 'white lady' who visited the dormitory on each night a little one disappeared, but what does that mean? Some attendant making a nightly round? Perhaps a window curtain blown by the evening breeze? Maybe it had no surer foundation than some childish whim, seized and enlarged upon by the other little ones. There is little we can go on at this time, I fear.

"Meanwhile," his manner brightened, "I think I hear the sound of the dinner gong. *Parbleu,* I am as hungry as a carp and empty as a kettledrum. Let us hasten to the refectory."

Dinner was a silent meal. Superintendent Gervaise seemed ill at ease under de Grandin's sarcastic stare, and the other attendants who shared the table with us took their cue from their chief and conversation languished before the second course was served. Nevertheless, de Grandin seemed to enjoy everything set before him to the uttermost, and made strenuous efforts to entertain Mrs. Martin, who sat immediately to his right.

"But *Madame,*" he insisted when the lady refused a serving of the excellent beef which constituted the roast course, "surely you will not reject this so excellent roast! Remember, it is the best food possible for humanity, for not only does it contain the nourishment we need, but great quantities of iron are to be found in it, as well. Come, permit that I help you to that which is at once food and tonic!"

"No, thank you," the matron replied, looking at the juicy roast with a glance almost of repugnance. "I am a vegetarian."

"How terrible!" de Grandin commiserated, as though she had confessed some overwhelming calamity.

"Yes, Mother Martin's been subsisting entirely on vegetables for the last six months," one of the nurses, a plump, red-cheeked girl, volunteered. "She used to eat as much meat as any of us, but all of a sud-

den she turned against it, and—oh, Mrs. Martin!"

The matron had risen from her chair, leaning half-way across the table, and the expression on her countenance was enough to justify the girl's exclamation. Her face had gone pale—absolutely livid—her lips were drawn back against her teeth like those of a snarling animal, and her eyes seemed to protrude from their sockets as they blazed into the startled girl's. It seemed to me that not only rage, but something like loathing and fear were expressed in her blazing orbs as she spoke in a low, passionate voice: "Miss Bosworth, what I used to do and what I do now are entirely my own business. Please do not meddle with my affairs!"

For a moment silence reigned at the table, but the Frenchman saved the situation by remarking, "*Tiens, Madame,* the fervor of the convert is ever greater than that of those to the manner born. The Buddhist, who eats no meat from his birth, is not half so strong in defense of his diet as the lately converted European vegetarian!"

To me, as we left the dining hall, he confided, "A charming meal, most interesting and instructive. Now, my friend, I would that you drive me home at once, immediately. I wish to borrow a dog from Sergeant Costello."

"What?" I responded incredulously. "You want to borrow a——"

"Perfectly. A dog. A police dog, if you please. I think we shall have use for the animal this night."

"Oh, all right," I agreed. The workings of his agile mind were beyond me, and I knew it would be useless to question him.

SHORTLY after sundown we returned to the Springville home, a large and by no means amiable police dog, lent us by the local constabulary, sharing the car with us.

"You will engage Monsieur Gervaise in conversation, if you please," my companion commanded as we stopped before the younger children's dormitory. "While you do so, I shall assist this so excellent brute into the hall where the little ones sleep and tether him in such manner that he can not reach any of his little room-mates, yet can easily dispute passage with anyone attempting to enter the apartment. Tomorrow morning we shall be here early enough to remove him before any of the attendants who may enter the dormitory on legitimate business can be bitten. As for others——" He shrugged his shoulders and prepared to lead the lumbering brute into the sleeping quarters.

His program worked perfectly. Mr. Gervaise was nothing loth to talk with me about the case, and I gathered that he had taken de Grandin's evident dislike much to heart. Again and again he assured me, almost with tears in his eyes, that he had not the least intention of eavesdropping when he was discovered at the office door, but that he had really come in search of a pencil. It seemed he used a special indelible lead in making out his reports, and had discovered that the only one he possessed was in the office after we had taken possession. His protestations were so earnest that I left him convinced de Grandin had done him an injustice.

Next morning I was at a loss what to think. Arriving at the orphanage well before daylight, de Grandin and I let ourselves into the little children's dormitory, mounted the stairs to the second floor where the youngsters slept, and released the vicious dog which the Frenchman had tethered by a stout nail driven into the floor and a ten-foot length of stout steel chain. Inquiry among the building's attendants elicited the in-

formation that no one had visited the sleeping apartment after we left, as there had been no occasion for anyone connected with the home to do so. Yet on the floor beside the dog there lay a ragged square of white linen, such as might have been ripped from a night-robe or a suit of pajamas, reduced almost to a pulp by the savage brute's worrying, and—when Superintendent Gervaise entered the office to greet us, he was wearing his right arm in a sling.

"You are injured, *Monsieur?*" de Grandin asked with mock solicitude, noting the superintendent's bandaged hand with dancing eyes.

"Yes," the other replied, coughing apologetically, "yes, sir. I—I cut myself rather badly last night on a pane of broken glass in my quarters. The window must have been broken by a shutter being blown against it, and——"

"Quite so," the Frenchman agreed amiably. "They bite terrifically, these broken window-panes, is it not so?"

"Bite?" Gervaise echoed, regarding the other with a surprized, somewhat frightened expression. "I hardly understand you—oh, yes, I see," he smiled rather feebly. "You mean cut."

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin assured him solemnly as he rose to leave, "I did mean exactly what I said; no more, and certainly no less."

"Now what?" I queried as we left the office and the gaping superintendent behind us.

"*Non, non,*" he responded irritably. "I know not what to think, my friend. One thing, he points this way, another, he points elsewhere. Me, I am like a mariner in the midst of a fog. Go you to the car, Friend Trowbridge, and chaperone our so estimable ally. I shall pay a visit to the laundry, meantime."

None too pleased with my assignment, I re-entered my car and made myself as agreeable as possible to the dog, devoutly hoping that the hearty breakfast de Grandin had provided him had taken the edge off his appetite. I had no wish to have him stay his hunger on one of my limbs. The animal proved docile enough, however, and besides opening his mouth once or twice in prodigious yawns which gave me an unpleasantly close view of his excellent dentition, did nothing to cause me alarm.

When de Grandin returned he was fuming with impatience and anger. "*Sacré nom d'un grillon!*" he swore. "It is beyond me. Undoubtlessly this Monsieur Gervaise is a liar, it was surely no glass which caused the wound in his arm last night; yet there is no suit of torn pajamas belonging to him in the laundry."

"Perhaps he didn't send them to be washed," I ventured with a grin. "If I'd been somewhere I was not supposed to be last night and found someone had posted a man-eating dog in my path, I'd not be in a hurry to send my torn clothing to the laundry where it might betray me."

"*Tiens,* you reason excellently, my friend," he complimented, "but can you explain how it is that there is no torn night-clothing of Monsieur Gervaise at the washrooms today, yet two ladies' night-robes—one of Mère Martin's, one of Mademoiselle Bosworth's—display exactly such rents as might have been made by having this bit of cloth torn from them?" He exhibited the relic we had found beside the dog that morning and stared gloomily at it.

"H'm, it looks as if you hadn't any facts which will stand the acid test just yet," I replied flippantly; but the seriousness with which he received my commonplace rejoinder startled me.

"*Morbleu,* the acid test, do you say?" he exclaimed. "*Dieu de Dieu de Dieu de Dieu,* it may easily be so! Why did I not think of it before?

Perhaps. Possibly. Who knows? It may be so!"

"What in the world——" I began, but he cut me short with a frantic gesture.

"*Non, non,* my friend, not now," he implored. "Me, I must think. I must make this empty head of mine do the work for which it is so poorly adapted. Let us see, let us consider, let us ratiocinate!

"*Parbleu,* I have it!" He drew his hands downward from his forehead with a quick, impatient motion and turned to me. "Drive me to the nearest pharmacy, my friend. If we do not find what we wish there, we must search elsewhere, and elsewhere, until we discover it. *Mordieu,* Trowbridge, my friend, I thank you for mentioning that acid test! Many a wholesome truth is contained in words of idle jest, I do assure you."

FIVE miles out of Springville a gang of workmen were resurfacing the highway, and we were forced to detour over a back road. Half an hour's slow driving along this brought us to a tiny Italian settlement where a number of laborers originally engaged on the Lackawanna's right of way had bought up the swampy, low-lying lands along the creek and converted them into model truck gardens. At the head of the single street composing the hamlet was a neatly whitewashed plank building bearing the sign *Farmacia Italiana,* together with a crudely painted representation of the Italian royal coat of arms.

"Here, my friend," de Grandin commanded, plucking me by the sleeve. "Let us stop here a moment and inquire of the estimable gentleman who conducts this establishment that which we would know."

"But what——?" I began, then stopped, noting the futility of my question. Jules de Grandin had already leaped from the car and entered the little drug store.

Without preamble he addressed a flood of fluent Italian to the druggist, receiving monosyllabic replies which gradually expanded both in verbosity and volume, accompanied by much waving of hands and lifting of shoulders and eyebrows. What they said I had no means of knowing, since I understood no word of Italian, but I heard the word *acido* repeated several times by each of them during the three minutes' heated conversation.

When de Grandin finally turned to leave the store, with a grateful bow to the proprietor, he wore an expression as near complete mystification and surprize as I had ever seen him display. His little eyes were rounded with mingled thought and amazement, and his narrow red lips were pursed beneath the line of his slim blond mustache as though he were about to emit a low, soundless whistle.

"Well?" I demanded as we regained the car. "Did you find out what you were after?"

"Eh?" he answered absently. "Did I find—Trowbridge, my friend, I know not what I found out, but this I know: those who lighted the witch-fires in olden days were not such fools as we believe them. *Parbleu,* at this moment they are grinning at us from their graves, or I am much mistaken. Tonight, my friend, be ready to accompany me back to that orphans' home where the devil nods approval to those who perform his business so skilfully."

THAT evening he was like one in a muse, eating sparingly and seemingly without realizing what food he took, answering my questions absent-mindedly or not at all, even forgetting to light his customary cigarette between dinner and dessert. "*Nom d'un champignon,*" he muttered, staring abstractedly into

his coffee cup, "it must be that it is so; but who would believe it?"

I sighed in vexation. His habit of musing aloud but refusing to tell the trend of his thoughts while he arranged the factors of a case upon his mental chess-board was one which always annoyed me, but nothing I had been able to do had swerved him from his custom of withholding all information until he reached the climax of the mystery. "*Non, non,*" he replied when I pressed him to take me into his confidence, "the less I speak, the less danger I run of showing myself to be one great fool, my friend. Let me reason this business in my own way, I beseech you." And there the matter rested.

Toward midnight he rose impatiently and motioned toward the door. "Let us go," he suggested. "It will be an hour or more before we reach our destination, and that should be the proper time for us to see what I fear we shall behold, Friend Trowbridge."

We drove across country to Springville through the early autumn night in silence, turned in at the orphanage gates and parked before the administration building, where Superintendent Gervaise maintained his living quarters.

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin called softly as he rapped gently on the superintendent's door, "it is I, Jules de Grandin. For all the wrong I have done you I humbly apologize, and now I would that you give me assistance."

Blinking with mingled sleep and surprize, the little, gray-haired official let us into his rooms and smiled rather fatuously at us. "What is it you'd like me to do for you, Dr. de Grandin?" he asked.

"I would that you guide us to the sleeping apartments of Mère Martin. Are they in this building?"

"No," Gervaise replied wonderingly. "Mother Martin has a cottage of her own over at the south end of the grounds. She likes the privacy of a separate house, and we——"

"*Précisément,*" the Frenchman agreed, nodding vigorously. "I well understand her love of privacy, I fear. Come, let us go. You will show us the way?"

Mother Martin's cottage stood by the southern wall of the orphanage compound. It was a neat little building of the semi-bungalow type, constructed of red brick, and furnished with a low, wide porch of white-painted wood. Only the chirping of a cricket in the long grass and the long-drawn, melancholy call of a crow in the near-by poplars broke the silence of the starlit night as we walked noiselessly up the brick path leading to the cottage door. Gervaise was about to raise the polished brass knocker which adorned the white panels when de Grandin grasped his arm, enjoining silence.

Quietly as a shadow the little Frenchman crept from one of the wide, shutterless front windows to the other, looking intently into the darkened interior of the house, then, with upraised finger warning us to caution, he tiptoed from the porch and began making a circuit of the house, pausing to peer through each window as he passed it.

At the rear of the cottage was a one-story addition which evidently housed the kitchen, and here the blinds were tightly drawn, though beneath their lower edges there crept a faint, narrow band of lamplight.

"*Ah — bien!*" the Frenchman breathed, flattening his aquiline nose against the window-pane as though he would look through the shrouding curtain by virtue of the very intensity of his gaze.

A moment we stood there in the darkness, de Grandin's little waxed mustache twitching at the ends like the whiskers of an alert tom-cat, Gervaise and I in total bewilderment,

when the Frenchman's next move filled us with mingled astonishment and alarm. Reaching into an inner pocket, he produced a small, diamond-set glass-cutter, moistened it with the tip of his tongue and applied it to the window, drawing it slowly downward, then horizontally, then upward again to meet the commencement of the first down-stroke, thus describing an equilateral triangle on the pane. Before the cutter's circuit was entirely completed, he drew what appeared to be a square of thick paper from another pocket, hastily tore it apart and placed it face downward against the glass. It was only when the operation was complete that I realized how it was accomplished. The "plaster" he applied to the window was nothing more nor less than a square of fly-paper, and its sticky surface prevented any telltale tinkle from sounding as he finished cutting the triangle from the window-pane and carefully lifted it out by means of the gummed paper.

Once he had completed his opening he drew forth a small, sharp-bladed penknife, and working very deliberately, lest the slightest sound betray him proceeded to slit a peep-hole through the opaque window-blind.

For a moment he stood there, gazing through his spy-hole, the expression on his narrow face changing from one of concentrated interest to almost incredulous horror, finally to fierce, implacable rage.

"*À moi,* Trowbridge, *à moi,* Gervaise!" he shouted in a voice which was almost a shriek as he thrust his shoulder unceremoniously against the pane, bursting it into a dozen pieces, and leaped into the lighted room beyond.

I scrambled after him as best I could, and the astounded superintendent followed me, mouthing mild protests against our burglarious entry of Mrs. Martin's house.

One glance at the scene before me took all thought of our trespass from my mind.

Wheeled about to face us, her back to a fiercely glowing coal-burning kitchen range, stood the once placid Mother Martin, enveloped from throat to knees in a commodious apron. But all semblance of her placidity was gone as she regarded the trembling little Frenchman who extended an accusing finger at her. Across her florid, smooth-skinned face had come such a look of fiendish rage as no flight of my imagination could have painted. Her lips, seemingly shrunk to half their natural thickness, were drawn back in animal fury against her teeth, and her blue eyes seemed forced forward from her face with the pressure of hatred within her. At the corners of her twisting mouth were little flecks of white foam, and her jaw thrust forward like that of an infuriated ape. Never in my life, on any face, either bestial or human, had I seen such an expression. It was a revolting parody of humanity on which I looked, a thing so horrible, so incomparably cruel and devilish, I would have looked away if I could, yet felt my eyes compelled to turn again to the evil visage as a fascinated bird's gaze may be held by the glitter in the serpent's film-covered eye.

But horrid as the sight of the woman's transfigured features was, a greater horror showed behind her, for, protruding half its length from the fire-grate of the blazing range was something no medical man could mistake after even a split-second's inspection. It was the unfleshed radius and ulna bones of a child's forearm, the wrist process still intact where the flesh and periosteum had not been entirely removed in dissection. On the tile-topped kitchen table beside the stove stood a wide-mouthed glass bowl filled with some liquid about the shade of new vinegar, and in this there lay a score of small, glittering

white objects—*a child's teeth*. Neatly dressed, wound with cord like a roast, and, like a roast, placed in a wide, shallow pan, ready for cooking, was a piece of pale, veal-like meat.

The horror of it fairly nauseated me. The thing in woman's form before us was a cannibal, and the meat she had been preparing to bake was —my mind refused to form the words, even in the silence of my inner consciousness.

"You—*you*," the woman cried in a queer, throaty voice, so low it was scarcely audible, yet so intense in its vibrations that I was reminded of the rumbling of an infuriated cat's cry. "How—did—you—find——?"

"*Eh bien, Madame*," de Grandin returned, struggling to speak with his customary cynical flippancy, but failing in the attempt, "how I did find out is of small moment. *What* I found, I think you will agree, is of the great import."

For an instant I thought the she-fiend would launch herself at him, but her intention lay elsewhere. Before any of us was aware of her move she had seized the glass vessel from the table, lifted it to her lips and all but emptied its contents down her throat in two frantic swallows. Next instant, frothing, writhing, contorting herself horribly, she lay on the tiled floor at our feet, her lips thickening and swelling with brownish blisters as the poison she had drunk regurgitated from her esophagus and welled up between her tightly set teeth.

"Good heavens!" I cried, bending forward instinctively to aid her, but the Frenchman drew me back. "Let be, Friend Trowbridge," he remarked. "It is useless. She has taken enough hydrochloric acid to kill three men, and those movements of hers are only mechanical. Already she is unconscious, and in another five minutes she will have opportunity to explain her so strange life to One far wiser than we.

"Meantime," he assumed the cold, matter-of-fact manner of a morgue attendant performing his duties, "let us gather up these relics of the poor one"—he indicated the partially cremated arm-bones and the meat in the shining aluminum pan—"and preserve them for decent interment. I——"

A choking, gasping sound behind us turned our attention to the orphanage superintendent. Following more slowly through the window in de Grandin's wake, he had not at first grasped the significance of the horrors we had seen. The spectacle of the woman's suicide had unnerved him, but when de Grandin pointed to the relics in the stove and on the table, the full meaning of our discovery had fallen on him. With an inarticulate cry he had dropped to the floor in a dead faint.

"*Pardieu*," the Frenchman exclaimed, crossing to the water-tap and filling a tumbler, "I think we had best bestow our services on the living before we undertake the care of the dead, Friend Trowbridge."

As he recrossed the kitchen to minister to the unconscious superintendent there came an odd, muffled noise from the room beyond. "*Qui vive?*" he challenged sharply, placing the glass of water on the dresser and darting through the door, his right hand dropping into his jacket pocket where the ready pistol lay. I followed at his heels, and, as he stood hesitating at the threshold, felt along the wall, found the electric switch and pressed it, flooding the room with light. On the couch beneath the window, bound hand and foot with strips torn from a silk scarf and gagged with another length of silk wound about her face, lay little Betsy, the child who had informed us she feared being hurt when we made our pre-

tended inspection of the home's inmates the previous day.

"*Morbleu,*" de Grandin muttered as he liberated the little one from her bonds, "another?"

"Mother Martin came for Betsy and tied her up," the child informed us as she raised herself to a sitting posture. "She told Betsy she would send her to heaven with her papa and mamma, but Betsy must be good and not make a fuss when her hands and feet were tied."

She smiled vaguely at de Grandin. "Why doesn't Mother Martin come for Betsy?" she demanded. "She said she would come and send me to heaven in a few minutes, but I waited and waited, and she didn't come, and the cloth over my face kept tickling my nose, and——"

"Mother Martin has gone away on business, *ma petite,*" the Frenchman interrupted. "She said she could not send you to your papa and *maman,* but if you are a very good little girl you may go to them some day. Meantime"—he fished in his jacket pocket, finally produced a packet of chocolates—"here is the best substitute I can find for heaven at this time, *chérie.*"

"WELL, old chap, I'll certainly have to admit you went right to the heart of the matter," I congratulated as we drove homeward through the paling dawn, "but I can't for the life of me figure out how you did it."

His answering smile was a trifle wan. The horrors we had witnessed at the matron's cottage had been almost too great a strain for even his iron nerve. "Partly it was luck," he confessed wearily, "and partly it was thought.

"When first we arrived at the home for orphans I had nothing to guide me, but I was convinced that the little ones had not wandered off voluntarily. The environment seemed too good to make any such hypothesis possible. Everywhere I looked I saw evidences of loving care, and faces which could be trusted. But somewhere, I felt, as an old wound feels the coming changes of the weather, there was something evil, some evil force working against the welfare of those poor ones. Where could it be, and by whom was it exerted? 'This is for us to find out,' I tell me as I look over the attendants who were visible in the chapel.

"Gervaise, he is an old woman in trousers. Never would he hurt a living thing, no, not even a fly, unless it bit him first.

"Mère Martin, she was of a saintly appearance, but when I was presented to her I learn something which sets my brain to thinking. On the softness of her white hands are stains and callouses. Why? I hold her hand longer than convention required, and all the time I ask me, 'What have she done to put these hardnesses on her hands?'

"To this I had no answer, so I bethought me perhaps my nose could tell what my sense of touch could not. When I raised her hand to my lips I made a most careful examination of it, and also I did smell. Trowbridge, my friend, I made sure those disfigurements were due to HCl—what you call hydrochloric acid in English.

" '*Morbleu,* but this is extraordinary,' I tell me. 'Why should one who has no need to handle acid have those burns on her skin?'

" 'That are for you to answer in good time,' I reply to me. And then I temporarily forget the lady and her hands, because I am sure that Monsieur Gervaise desires to know what we say to the young children. *Eh bien,* I did do him an injustice there, but the wisest of us makes mistakes, my friend, and he gave me much reason for suspicion.

"When the little Betsy was an-

swering my questions she tells me that she has seen a 'white lady,' tall and with flowing robes, like an angel, come into the dormitory where she and her companions slept on many occasions, and I have ascertained from previous questions that no one enters those sleeping quarters after the lights are out unless there is specific need for a visit. What was I to think? Had the little one dreamed it, or has she seen this so mysterious 'white lady' on her midnight visits? It is hard to say where recollection stops and romance begins in children's tales, my friend, as you well know, but the little Betsy was most sure the 'white lady' had come only on those nights when her little companions vanished.

"Here we had something from which to reason, though the morsel of fact was small. However, when I talk further with the child, she informed me it was Mère Martin who had warned her against us, saying we would surely cut her tongue with a knife if she talked to us. This, again, was worthy of thought. But Monsieur Gervaise had been smelling at the door while we were interrogating the children, and he had also disapproved of our seeing them alone. My suspicion of him would not die easily, my friend; I was stubborn, and refused to let my mind take me where it would.

"So, as you know, when we had posted the four-footed sentry inside the children's door, I made sure we would catch a fish in our trap, and next morning I was convinced we had, for did not Gervaise wear his arm in a sling? Truly, he did.

"But at the laundry they showed me no torn pajamas of his, while I found the gowns of both Mademoiselle Bosworth and Madame Martin torn as if the dog had bitten them. More mystery. Which way should I turn, if at all?

"I find that Gervaise's window really had been broken, but that meant nothing; he might have done it himself in order to construct an alibi. Of the reason for Mademoiselle Bosworth's torn robe I could glean no trace; but behind my brain, at the very back of my head, something was whispering at me; something I could not hear, but which I knew was of importance.

"Then, as we drove away from the home, you mentioned the acid test. My friend, those words of yours let loose the memory which cried aloud to me, but which I could not clearly understand. Of a suddenness I did recall the scene at luncheon, how Mademoiselle Bosworth declared Mère Martin ate no meat for six months, and how angry Madame Martin was at the mention of it. *Parbleu*, for six months the little ones had been disappearing—for six months Madame Martin had eaten no meat, yet she were plump and well-nourished. She had the look of a meat-eater!"

"Still," I protested, "I don't see how that put you on the track."

"No?" he replied. "Remember, my friend, how we stopped to interview the druggist. Why think you we did that?"

"Hanged if I know," I confessed.

"Of course not," he agreed with a nod. "But I know. 'Suppose,' I say to me, 'someone have eaten the flesh of these poor disappeared children? What would that one do with the bones?'

"'He would undoubtlessly bury or burn them,' I reply.

"'Very good, but more likely he would burn them, since buried bones may be dug up, and burned bones are only ashes; but what of the teeth? They would resist fire such as can be had in the ordinary stove, yet surely they might betray the murderer.'

"'But of course,' I admit, 'but why should not the murderer reduce

those teeth with acid, hydrochloric acid, for instance?'

"'Ah-ha,' I tell me, 'that are the answer. Already you have one whose hands are acid-stained without adequate explanation, also one who eats no meat at table. Find out, now, who have bought acid from some neighboring drug store, and perhaps you will have the answer to your question.'

"The Italian gentleman who keeps the pharmacy tells me that a lady of very kindly mien comes to him frequently and buys hydrochloric acid, which she calls muriatic acid, showing she are not a chemist, but knows only the commercial term for the stuff. She is a tall, large lady with white hair and kind blue eyes.

"'It are Mère Martin!' I tell me. 'She are the "white lady" of the orphanage!'

"Then I consult my memory some more, and decide we shall investigate this night.

"Listen, my friend: In the Paris *Sûreté* we have the history of many remarkable cases, not only from France, but other lands as well. In the year 1849 a miscreant named Swiatek was haled before the Austrian courts on a charge of cannibalism, and in the same year there was another somewhat similar case where a young English lady—a girl of much refinement and careful education and nurture—was the defendant. Neither of these was naturally fierce or bloodthirsty, yet their crimes were undoubted. In the case of the beggar we have a transcription of his confession. He did say in part: When first driven by dire hunger to eat of human flesh he became, as the first horrid morsel passed his lips, as it were a ravening wolf. He did rend and tear the flesh and growl in his throat like a brute beast the while. From that time forth he could stomach no other meat, nor could he abide the sight or smell of it. Beef, pork or mutton filled him with revulsion. And had not Madame Martin exhibited much the same symptoms at table? Truly.

"Things of a strange nature sometimes occur, my friend. The mind of man is something of which we know but little, no matter how learnedly we prate. Why does one man love to watch a snake creep, while another goes into ecstasies of terror at sight of a reptile? Why do some people hate the sight of a cat, while others fear a tiny, harmless mouse as though he were the devil's brother-in-law? None can say, yet these things are. So I think it is with crime.

"This Madame Martin was not naturally cruel. Though she killed and ate her charges, you will recall how she bound the little Betsy with silk, and did it in such a way as not to injure her, or even to make her uncomfortable. That meant mercy? By no means, my friend. Myself, I have seen peasant women in my own land weep upon and fondle the rabbit they were about to kill for *déjeuner*. They did love and pity the poor little beast which was to die, but *que voulez vous?* One must eat.

"Some thought like this, I doubt not, was in Madame Martin's mind as she committed murder. Somewhere in her nature was a thing we can not understand; a thing which made her crave the flesh of her kind for food, and she answered the call of that craving even as the taker of drugs is helpless against his vice.

"*Tiens,* I am convinced that if we searched her house we should have the explanation of the children's disappearance, and you yourself witnessed what we saw. It was well she took the poison when she did. Death, or incarceration in a madhouse, would have been her portion had she lived, and"—he shrugged his shoulders—"the world is better off without her."

"U'm, I see how you worked it, out," I replied, "but will Mr. Richards be satisfied? We've accounted for one of the children, because we found part of her skeleton in the fire, but can we swear the rest disappeared in the same manner? Richards will want a statistical table of facts before he parts with three thousand dollars, I imagine."

"*Parbleu,* will he, indeed?" de Grandin answered, something like his usual elfish grin spreading across his face. "What think you would be the result were we to notify the authorities of the true facts leading up to Madame Martin's suicide? Would not the newspapers make much of it. *Cordieu,* I shall say they would, and the home for orphans over which Monsieur Richards presides so pompously would receive what you call 'the black eye.' *Morbleu,* my friend, the very black eye, indeed! No, no; me, I think Monsieur Richards will gladly pay us the reward, nor haggle over terms.

"Meanwhile, we are at home once more. Come, let us drink the cognac."

"Drink cognac?" I answered. "Why, in heaven's name?"

"*Parbleu,* we shall imbibe a toast to the magnificent three thousand dollars Monsieur Richards pays us tomorrow morning!"

The Turret Room

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

LORD ALVING stopped in the act of lighting his cheroot. He turned slowly toward the Earl of Kent loudly addressing a small group about him. He smiled quizzically and spoke.

"I say, old fellow," said Lord Alving, "are you quite certain of the element of truth in everything you say?"

The conversation stopped, automatically it seemed. The Earl of Kent raised his eyebrows in a mock serious gesture. Lord Alving remained smiling, the unlighted cheroot in his hand.

"For instance, what, Alving?"

"The exact words were these, I believe: 'Ghosts . . . balderdash, poppycock.'" He paused. "You said that, didn't you?"

"Yes, I believe I did."

"And you meant it?"

"Of course, Alving."

The ladies had stopped bridge and stood about in a small circle. Lady Montross idly stirred a cup of tea. Lady Alving had come away from her table with a royal flush in her hand. The Duke of Gloucester stood looking at it in the small silence.

"You believe every word of it, too, eh, old man?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then let me tell you something, something that happened to me about seven years ago down at the Duke of Gloucester's castle. There was rather an excellent crowd; trust the Duke to make a pleasing selection. We were gathered about the dinner table one evening, and somehow we began to talk about the supernatural. We were rather amused at some of the theories of our Lodge, of Lombroso, and of Flammarion. The Duke didn't

say much; he just sat and listened. Nor did he say anything until conversation began to lag. Then suddenly he said: 'It may interest you to know that the turret room of the center tower of my castle is supposed to be haunted.' 'Not really!' chorused several of us. But he was perfectly serious; I've never seen him more so."

Several of the company turned to the Duke of Gloucester. His calm smile verified Lord Alving's statement.

"'Do you mean to say,' said I, 'that if I'd spend a night in the turret room, I'd see a ghost?' 'I see no reason why you shouldn't,' he replied immediately. Without hesitation, I said, 'I'll spend tonight there. It'll take an unusual manifestation to scare me out.' The Duke protested, but I persisted. At length he gave in. I wanted to be shown right up; I could hardly wait. On the stairs I turned and shouted down, 'If I see a ghost, you'll all hear about it.' 'And if you don't?' came from someone below. All of you remember Harry Longworth, the poet, don't you? I was sure that you did. Harry was there, and Harry shouted back, 'And if you don't, I'll send one up to you.' Everybody laughed, and I followed the servant up to the haunted room.

"There was nothing conspicuous about the room, except perhaps the dust. The room had never been used; the mere thought of a specter will scare people away very easily, it seems. The moonlight streamed in through the latticed windows. I brushed the dust from one of the antique chairs and sat down. All of you know that the Duke tolls the hours with his ancient alarum bell. I had come into the turret room as the bell tolled 10 o'clock. I sat patiently waiting for some supernatural manifestation until somewhat after 12. I was disappointed, very much so. I had almost expected to see some long-dead cavaliers fight a duel before my eyes, or some atrocious murder committed. I allowed myself to go to sleep.

"The alarum bell was tolling 2 when I woke up. I had a queer feeling; I knew that there was someone else in the room. The patch of moonlight had moved considerably; it now fell aslant the dust-covered bed. On the edge of the bed, in the moonlight, sat Harry, grinning foolishly. I had completely forgotten him.

"'Sap!' said I. 'Do you want to scare me to death?' He kept right on grinning. 'Lucky you came up, though,' I continued, 'it was becoming odiously monotonous up here.' He nodded a little, and grinned some more. 'Haven't got a deck of cards with you, have you?' I asked. He shook his head. I walked over to the window and looked out. There was a beautiful view. 'Fine view, Harry. Come here.' But he didn't come, and when I turned around he had gone. I supposed he had gone for a deck of cards, and I waited accordingly. He didn't come back.

"In the morning I told the Duke what I thought of his haunted room. I told him that all I had seen was Harry. He looked as if you could have knocked him over with a feather; he's not so small either."

Lord Alving slowly lit the cheroot he had been holding.

"And what does that make of my idea of ghosts, Alving?" asked the Earl of Kent, smiling.

"Where does the ghost part come in?" asked the Duchess of York.

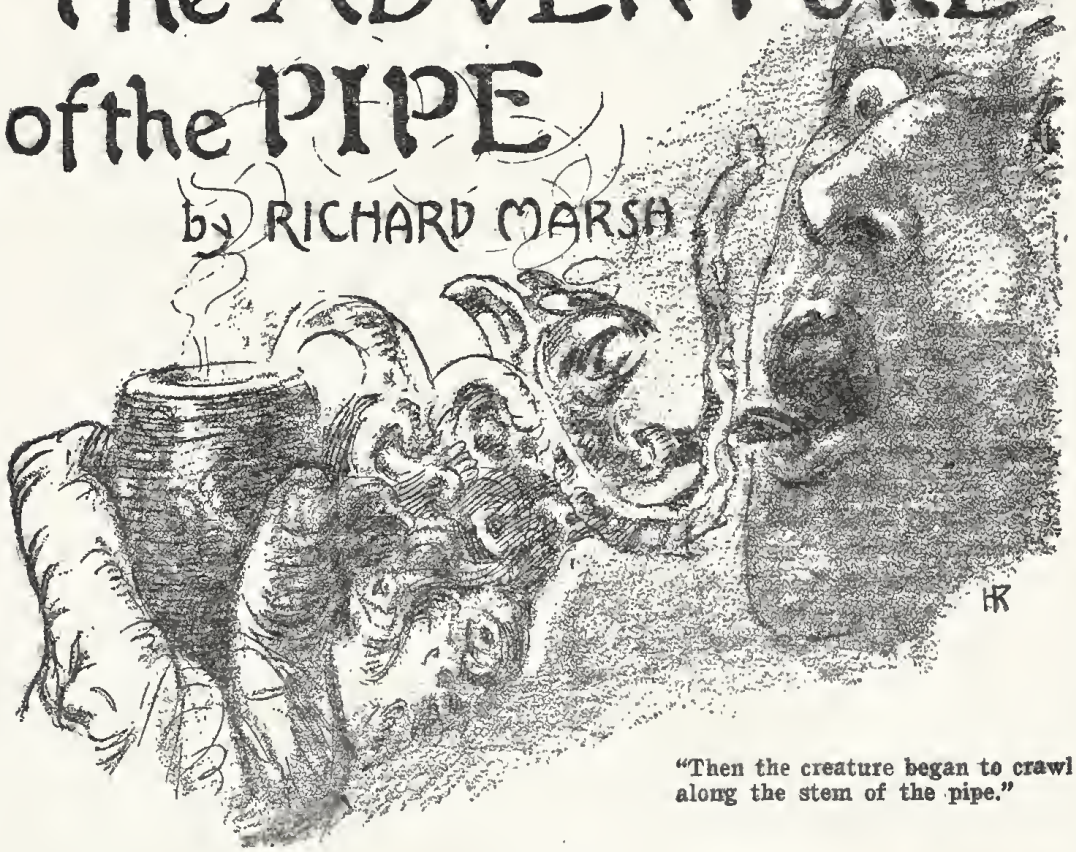
"Yes," said Lady Montross, "where is the ghost?"

"It doesn't prove anything to me, Alving," said the Earl of Kent.

"No? It didn't to me, either, until the Duke of Gloucester told me that Harry had died between 1 and 2 that morning of a sudden stroke of apoplexy."

The ADVENTURE of the PIPE

by RICHARD MARSH



"Then the creature began to crawl along the stem of the pipe."

1. *The Smoking of the Pipe*

THE letter accompanying the pipe was short, and contained no information as to why the pipe was sent to me:

Randolph Crescent, N. W.

My dear Pugh,—I hope you will like the pipe which I send with this. It is rather a curious example of a certain school of Indian carving, and is a present from

Yours truly,

JOSEPH TRESS.

It was really very handsome of Tress—very handsome! The more especially as I was aware that to give presents was not exactly in Tress' line. The truth is that when I saw what manner of pipe it was I was amazed. It was contained in a sandalwood box, which was itself illustrated with some remarkable specimens of carving. I use the word "remarkable" advisedly, because although the workmanship was undoubtedly, in its way, artistic, the result could not be described as beautiful. The carver had thought proper to ornament the box with some of the ugliest figures I remember to have seen. They appeared to me to be devils. Or perhaps they were intended to represent deities appertaining to some mythological system with which, thank goodness, I am unacquainted.

The pipe itself was of meerschaum, with an amber mouthpiece. It was rather too large for ordinary smoking. But then, of course, one doesn't smoke a pipe like that. There are pipes in my collection which I should as soon think of smoking as I should of eating. Ask

a china maniac to let you have afternoon tea out of his Old Chelsea, and you will learn some home truths as to the durability of human friendships. The glory of the pipe, as Tress had suggested, lay in its carving. Not that I claim that it was beautiful, any more than I make such a claim for the carving on the box, but it was curious.

The stem of the bowl was quite plain, but on the edge of the bowl was perched some kind of lizard. I told myself it was an octopus when I first saw it, but I have since had reason to believe that it was some almost unique member of the lizard tribe. The creature was represented as climbing over the edge of the bowl down toward the stem, and its legs, or feelers, or tentacula, or whatever the things are called, were, if I may use a vulgarism, sprawling about "all over the place." For instance, two or three of them were twined about the bowl, two or three of them were twisted round the stem, and one, a particularly horrible one, was uplifted in the air, so that if you put the pipe in your mouth the thing was pointing straight at your nose.

Not the least agreeable detail about the creature was that it was hideously lifelike. It appeared to have been carved in amber, but some coloring matter must have been introduced, for inside the amber the creature was of a peculiarly ghastly green.

The more I examined the pipe the more amazed I was at Tress' generosity. He and I are rival collectors. I am not going to say, in so many words, that his collection of pipes contains nothing but rubbish, because, as a matter of fact, he has two or three rather decent specimens. But to compare his collection to mine would be absurd. Tress is conscious of this, and he resents it. He resents it to such an extent that he has been known, at least on one occasion, to declare that one single pipe of his —I believe he alluded to the Brummagem relic preposterously attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh—was worth the whole of my collection put together. Although I have forgiven this, I have not forgotten it. He was, therefore, not at all the sort of person from whom I expected to receive a present. And such a present! I do not believe that he himself had a finer pipe in his collection. And to have given it to me! I had misjudged the man.

I wondered where he had got it. I had seen his pipes; I knew them off by heart—and some nice trumpery he has among them, too!—but I had never seen *that* pipe before. The more I looked at it, the more my amazement grew. The beast perched upon the edge of the bowl was so lifelike! Its two beadlike eyes seemed to gleam at me with positively human intelligence. The pipe fascinated me to such an extent that I actually resolved to—smoke it!

I filled it with Perique. Ordinarily I use bird's-eye, but on those very rare occasions on which I use a specimen I smoke Perique. I lit up with quite a small sensation of excitement. As I did so I kept my eyes perforce fixed upon the beast. The creature pointed its upraised tentacle directly at me. As I inhaled the pungent tobacco, that tentacle impressed me with a feeling of actual uncanniness. It was broad daylight, and I was smoking in front of the window, yet to such an extent was I affected that it seemed to me the tentacle was not only vibrating, which, owing to the peculiarity of its position, was quite within the range of probability, but actually moving, elongating—stretching forward, that is, farther toward me, and toward the tip of my nose. So impressed was I by this idea that I took the pipe out of my mouth, and minutely examined the beast. Really the delusion was excusable. So cunningly had the artist

wrought that he had succeeded in producing a creature which, such was its uncanniness, I could only hope had no original in nature.

Replacing the pipe between my lips, I took several whiffs. Never had smoking had such an effect on me before. Either the pipe, or the creature on it, exercised some singular fascination. I seemed, without an instant's warning, to be passing into some land of dreams. I saw the beast which was perched upon the bowl writhe and twist. I saw it lift itself bodily from the meerschaum. . . .

2. *The Mystery of the Pipe*

"FEELING better now?"

I looked up. Joseph Tress was speaking.

"What's the matter? Have I been ill?"

"You appear to have been in some kind of swoon."

Tress' tone was peculiar, even a little dry.

"Swoon! I never was guilty of such a thing in my life."

"Nor was I, until I smoked that pipe."

I sat up. The act of sitting up made me conscious of the fact that I had been lying down. Conscious, too, that I was feeling more than a little dazed. It seemed as though I was waking out of some strange, lethargic sleep — a kind of feeling which I have read of and heard about, but never beforo experienced.

"Where am I?"

"You're on the couch in your own room. You *were* on the floor; but I thought it would be better to pick you up and place you on the couch —though no one performed the same kind office to me when I was on the floor."

Again Tress' tone was distinctly dry.

"How came *you* here?"

"Ah, that's the question." He rubbed his chin—a habit of his which has annoyed me more than once before. "Do you think you are sufficiently recovered to enable you to understand a little simple explanation?" I stared at him, amazed. He went on stroking his chin. "The truth is that when I sent you the pipe I made a slight omission."

"An omission?"

"I omitted to advise you not to smoke it."

"And why?"

"Because—well, I've reason to believe the thing is drugged."

"Drugged!"

"Or poisoned."

"Poisoned!" I was wide awake enough then. I jumped off the couch with a celerity which proved it.

"It is this way. I became its owner in rather a singular manner." He paused, as if for me to make a remark; but I was silent. "It is not often that I smoke a specimen, but, for some reason, I did smoke this. I commenced to smoke it, that is. How long I continued to smoke it is more than I can say. It had on me the same peculiar effect which it appears to have had on you. When I recovered consciousness I was lying on the floor."

"On the floor?"

"On the floor. In about as uncomfortable a position as you can easily conceive. I was lying face downward, with my legs bent under me. I was never so surprized in my life as I was when I found myself *where* I was. At first I supposed that I had had a stroke. But by degrees it dawned upon me that I didn't *feel* as though I had had a stroke." (Tress, by the way, has been an army surgeon.) "I was conscious of distinct nausea. Looking about, I saw the pipe. With me it had fallen to the floor. I took it for granted, considering the delicacy of the carving, that the fall had broken it. But when I picked it up I found

it quite uninjured. While I was examining it a thought flashed to my brain. Might it not be answerable for what had happened to me? Suppose, for instance, it was drugged? I had heard of such things. Besides, in my case were present all the symptoms of drug-poisoning, though what drug had been used I couldn't in the least conceive. I resolved that I would give the pipe another trial."

"On yourself? Or on another party, meaning me?"

"On myself, my dear Pugh—on myself! I lit up and had another smoke."

"With what result?"

"Well, that depends on the standpoint from which you regard the thing. From one point of view the result was wholly satisfactory—I proved that the thing was drugged, and more."

"Did you have another fall?"

"I did. And something else besides."

"On that account, I presume, you resolved to pass the treasure on to me?"

"Partly on that account, and partly on another."

"On my word, I appreciate your generosity. You might have labeled the thing as poison."

"Exactly. But then you must remember how often you have told me that you *never* smoke your specimens."

"That was no reason why you shouldn't have given me a hint that the thing was more dangerous than dynamite."

"That did occur to me afterward. Therefore I called to supply the slight omission."

"*Slight* omission, you call it! I wonder what you would have called it if you had found me dead."

"If I had known that you intended smoking it I should not have been at all surprized if I had."

"Really, Tress, I appreciate your kindness more and more! And where is this example of your splendid benevolence? Have you pocketed it, regretting your lapse into the unaccustomed paths of generosity? Or is it smashed to atoms?"

"Neither the one nor the other. You will find the pipe upon the table. I neither desire its restoration nor is it in any way injured. It is merely an expression of personal opinion when I say that I don't believe that it *could* be injured. Of course, having discovered its deleterious properties, you will not want to smoke it again. You will therefore be able to enjoy the consciousness of being the possessor of what I honestly believe to be the most remarkable pipe in existence. Good-day, Pugh."

He was gone before I could say a word. I immediately concluded, from the precipitancy of his flight, that the pipe *was* injured. But when I subjected it to close examination I could discover no signs of damage. While I was still eyeing it with jealous scrutiny the door opened, and Tress came in again.

"By the way, Pugh, there is one thing I might mention, especially as I know it won't make any difference to you."

"That depends on what it is. If you have changed your mind, and want the pipe back again, I tell you frankly that it won't. In my opinion, a thing once given is given for good."

"Quite so; I don't want it back again. You may make your mind easy upon that point. I merely wanted to tell you *why* I gave it you."

"You have told me that already."

"Only partly, my dear Pugh—only partly. You don't suppose I should have given you such a pipe as that merely because it happened to be drugged? Scarcely! I gave it you because I discovered from indis-

putable evidence, and to my cost, that it was haunted."

"Haunted?"

"Yes, haunted. Good-day."

He was gone again. I ran out of the room and shouted after him down the stairs. He was already at the bottom of the flight.

"Tress! Come back! What do you mean by talking such nonsense?"

"Of course it's only nonsense," he called back. "We know that that sort of thing always is nonsense. But if you should have reason to suppose that there is something in it besides nonsense, you may think it worth your while to make inquiries of me. But I won't have that pipe back again in my possession on any terms—mind that!"

THE bang of the front door told me that he had gone out into the street. I let him go. I laughed to myself as I re-entered the room. Haunted! That was not a bad idea of his. I saw the whole position at a glance. The truth of the matter was that he did regret his generosity, and he was ready to go any lengths if he could only succeed in cajoling me into restoring his gift. He was aware that I have views upon certain matters which are not wholly in accordance with those which are popularly supposed to be the views of the day, and particularly that on the question of what are commonly called supernatural visitations I have a standpoint of my own. Therefore it was not a bad move on his part to make me believe that there was something about the pipe which could not be accounted for by ordinary laws. Yet, as his own sense should have told him it would do, if he had only allowed himself to reflect for a moment, the move failed. Because I am not yet so far gone as to suppose that a pipe, a thing of meerschaum and of amber, in the sense in which I understood the word, *could* be haunted. A pipe, a mere pipe!

"Halloa! I thought the creature's legs were twined round the bowl!"

I was holding the pipe in my hand, regarding it with the affectionate eyes with which a connoisseur does regard a curio, when I was induced to make this exclamation. I was certainly under the impression that, when I first took the pipe out of the box, two, if not three, of the feelers had been twined about the bowl—twined *tightly*, so that you could not see daylight between them and it. Now they were almost entirely detached, only the tips touched the meerschaum, and those particular feelers were gathered up as though the creature were in the act of taking a spring. Of course I was under a misapprehension: the feelers *couldn't* have been twined, though a moment before, I should have been ready to bet a thousand to one that they were. Still, one does make mistakes, and very egregious mistakes, now and then. At the same time, I confess that when I saw that dreadful-looking animal poised on the extreme edge of the bowl, for all the world as though it were just going to spring at me, I was a little startled.

I remembered that when I was smoking the pipe I did think I saw the uplifted tentacle moving, as though it were reaching out at me. And I had a clear recollection that just as I had been sinking into that strange state of unconsciousness, I had been under the impression that the creature was writhing and twisting as though it had suddenly become instinct with life.

Under the circumstances, these reflections were not pleasant. I wished Tress had not talked that nonsense about the thing being haunted. It was surely sufficient to know that it was drugged and poisonous, without anything else.

I replaced it in the sandalwood box. I locked the box in a cabinet. Quite apart from the question as to

whether that pipe was or was not haunted, I know it haunted me. It was with me, in a figurative—which was worse than actual—sense, all the day. Still worse, it was with me all the night. It was with me in my dreams. Such dreams! Possibly I had not yet fully recovered from the effects of that insidious drug, but, whether or no, it was very wrong of Tress to set my thoughts into such a channel. He knows that I am highly imaginative, and that it is easier to get morbid thoughts into my mind than to get them out again.

Before that night was through I wished very heartily that I had never seen the pipe! I woke from one nightmare to fall into another. One dreadful dream was with me all the time—of a hideous, green reptile which advanced toward me out of some awful darkness, slowly, inch by inch, until it clutched me round the neck, and, gluing its lips to my throat, sucked the life's blood out of my veins, as it embraced me, with a slimy hiss.

Such dreams are not restful. I woke anything but refreshed when the morning came. And when I got up and dressed I felt that, on the whole, it would perhaps have been better if I never had gone to bed. My nerves were unstrung, and I had that generally tremulous feeling which is, I believe, an inseparable companion of the more advanced stages of dipsomania. I ate no breakfast. I am not much of a breakfast-eater as a rule, but that morning I ate absolutely nothing.

"If this sort of thing is to continue, I will let Tress have his pipe again. He may have the laugh of me, but anything is better than this."

IT WAS with almost funereal forebodings that I went to the cabinet in which I had placed the sandalwood box. But when I opened it my feelings of gloom partly vanished. Of what fantasies had I been guilty! It must have been an entire delusion on my part to have supposed that those tentacula had ever been twined about the bowl. The creature was in exactly the same position in which I had left it the day before—as, of course, I knew it would be!—poised, as if about to spring. I was telling myself how foolish I had been to allow myself to dwell for even a moment on Tress' words, when Martin Brasher was shown in.

Brasher is an old friend of mine. We have a common ground—ghosts. Only we approach them from different points of view. He takes the scientific-psychological-inquiry side. He is always anxious to hear of a ghost, so that he may have an opportunity of "showing it up."

"I've something in your line here," I observed, as he came in.

"In my line? How so? *I'm* not pipe-mad."

"No, but you're ghost-mad. And this is a haunted pipe."

"A haunted pipe! I think you're rather more mad about ghosts, my dear Pugh, than I am."

Then I told him all about it. He was deeply interested, especially when I told him that the pipe was drugged. But when I repeated Tress' words about its being haunted, and mentioned my own delusion about the creature moving, he took a more serious view of the case than I had expected he would do.

"I propose that we act on Tress' suggestions, and go and make inquiries of him."

"But you don't really think that there is anything in it?"

"On these subjects I never allow myself to think at all. There are Tress' words, and there is your story. It is agreed on all hands that the pipe has peculiar properties. It seems to me that there is a sufficient case here to merit inquiry."

He persuaded me. I went with him. The pipe in the sandalwood box went too. Tress received us with a grin—a grin which was accentuated when I placed the sandalwood box upon the table.

"You understand," he said, "that a gift is a gift. On no terms will I consent to receive that pipe back in my possession."

I was rather nettled by his tone.

"You need be under no alarm. I have no intention of suggesting anything of the kind."

"Our business here," began Brasher—I must own that his manner is a little ponderous—"is of a scientific, I may say also, and at the same time, of a judicial nature. Our object is the Pursuit of Truth and the Advancement of Inquiry."

"Have you been trying another smoke?" inquired Tress, nodding his head toward me.

Before I had time to answer, Brasher went droning on: "Our friend here tells me that you say this pipe is haunted."

"I say it is haunted because it *is* haunted."

I looked at Tress. I half suspected that he was poking fun at us. But he appeared to be serious enough.

"In these matters," remarked Brasher, as though he were giving utterance to a new and important truth, "there is a scientific and non-scientific method of inquiry. The scientific method is to begin at the beginning. May I ask how this pipe came into your possession?"

Tress paused before he answered.

"You may ask." He paused again. "Oh, you certainly may ask. But it doesn't follow that I shall tell you."

"Surely your object, like ours, can be but the Spreading About of the Truth?"

"I don't see it at all. It is possible to imagine a case in which the spreading about of the truth might make me look a little awkward."

"Indeed!" Brasher pursed up his lips. "Your words would almost lead one to suppose that there was something about your method of acquiring the pipe which you have good and weighty reasons for concealing."

"I don't know why I should conceal the thing from you. I don't suppose either of you is any better than I am. I don't mind telling you how I got the pipe. I stole it."

"Stole it!"

Brasher seemed both amazed and shocked. But I, who had had previous experience of Tress' methods of adding to his collection, was not at all surprized. Some of the pipes which he calls his, if only the whole truth about them were publicly known, would send him to jail.

"That's nothing!" he continued. "All collectors steal! The eighth commandment was not intended to apply to them. Why, Pugh there has 'conveyed' three-fourths of the pipes which he flatters himself are his."

I was so dumfounded by the charge that it took my breath away. I sat in astounded silence.

Tress went raving on: "I was so shy of this particular pipe when I had obtained it, that I put it away for quite three months. When I took it out to have a look at it, something about the thing so tickled me that I resolved to smoke it. Owing to peculiar circumstances attending the manner in which the thing came into my possession, and on which I need not dwell—you don't like to dwell on that sort of thing, do you, Pugh?—I knew really nothing about the pipe. As was the case with Pugh, one peculiarity I learned from actual experience. It was also from actual experience that I learned that the thing was—well, I said haunted, but you may use any other word you like."

"Tell us, as briefly as possible, what it was you really did discover."

"Take the pipe out of the box!" Brasher took the pipe out of the box and held it in his hand. "You see that creature on it. Well, when I first had it, it was underneath the pipe."

"How do you mean that it was underneath the pipe?"

"It was bunched together underneath the stem, just at the end of the mouthpiece, in the same way in which a fly might be suspended from the ceiling. When I began to smoke the pipe I saw the creature move."

"But I thought that unconsciousness immediately followed."

"It did follow, but not before I saw that the thing was moving. It was because I thought that I had been, in a way, a victim of delirium that I tried the second smoke. Suspecting that the thing was drugged I swallowed what I believed would prove a powerful antidote. It enabled me to resist the influence of the narcotic much longer than before, and while I still retained my senses I saw the creature crawl along under the stem, and over the bowl. It was that sight, I believe, as much as anything else, which sent me silly. When I came to again I then and there decided to present the pipe to Pugh. There is one thing more I would remark. When the pipe left me the creature's legs were twined about the bowl. Now they are withdrawn. Possibly you, Pugh, are able to cap my story with a little one which is all your own."

"I certainly did imagine that I saw the creature move. But I supposed that while I was under the influence of the drug imagination had played me a trick."

"Not a bit of it! Depend upon it, the beast is bewitched. Even to my eye it looks as though it were, and to a trained eye like yours, Pugh! You've been looking for the devil a long time, and you've got him at last."

"I—I wish you wouldn't make those remarks, Tress. They jar on me."

"I confess," interpolated Brasher—I noticed that he had put the pipe down on the table as though he were tired of holding it—"that to *my* thinking, such remarks are not appropriate. At the same time what you have told us is, I am bound to allow, a little curious. But I require ocular demonstration. I haven't seen the movement myself."

"No, but you very soon will do so if you care to have a pull at the pipe on your own account. Do, Brasher, to oblige me!"

"It appears, then, that the movement is only observable when the pipe is smoked. We have at least arrived at step No. 1."

"Here's a match, Brasher. Light up, and we shall have arrived at step No. 2."

Tress lit a match, and held it out to Brasher. Brasher retreated from his neighborhood.

"Thank you, Mr. Tress, I am no smoker, as you are aware. And I have no desire to acquire the art of smoking by means of a poisoned pipe."

Tress laughed. He blew out the match and threw it into the grate.

"Then I tell you what I'll do—I'll have up Bob."

"Bob? Why Bob?"

Bob—whose real name was Robert Haines, though I should think he must have forgotten the fact, so seldom was he addressed by it—was Tress' servant. He had been an old soldier, and had accompanied his master when he left the service. He was as depraved a character as Tress himself. I am not sure even that he was not worse than his master. I shall never forget how he once behaved toward myself. He actually had the assurance to accuse me of attempting to steal the Wardour Street relic which Tress fondly deluded

himself was once the property of Sir Walter Raleigh. The truth is that I had slipped it with my pocket-handkerchief into my pocket in a bit of absence of mind. A man who could accuse *me* of such a thing would be guilty of anything. I was therefore quite at one with Brasher when he asked what Bob could possibly be wanted for. Tress explained.

"I'll get him to smoke the pipe," he said.

Brasher and I exchanged glances, but we refrained from speech.

"It won't do him any harm," said Tress.

"What—not a poisoned pipe?" asked Brasher.

"It's not poisoned—it's only drugged."

"*Only* drugged!"

"Nothing hurts Bob. He is like an ostrich. He has digestive organs which are peculiarly his own. It will only serve him as it served me—and Pugh—it will knock him over. It is all done in the Pursuit of Truth and for the Advancement of Inquiry."

I COULD see that Brasher did not altogether like the tone in which Tress repeated his words. As for myself, it was not to be supposed that I should put myself out in a matter which in no way concerned me. If Tress chose to poison the man, it was his affair, not mine. He went to the door, and shouted: "Bob! Come here, you scoundrel!"

That is the way in which he speaks to him. No really decent servant would stand it. I shouldn't dare to address Nalder, my servant, in such a way. He would give me notice on the spot. Bob came in; he is a great hulking fellow, who is always on the grin. Tress had a decanter of brandy in his hand. He filled a tumbler with the neat spirit.

"Bob, what would you say to a glassful of brandy—the real thing, my boy?"

"Thank you, sir."

"And what would you say to a pull at a pipe when the brandy is drunk?"

"A pipe?" The fellow is sharp enough when he likes to be. I saw him look at the pipe upon the table and then at us, and then a gleam of intelligence came into his eyes. "I'd do it for a dollar, sir."

"A dollar, you thief?"

"I meant ten shillings, sir."

"Ten shillings, you brazen vagabond?"

"I should have said a pound."

"A pound! Was ever the like of that? Do I understand you to ask a pound for taking a pull at your master's pipe?"

"I'm thinking that I'll have to make it two."

"The deuce you are! Here, Pugh, lend me a pound."

"I'm afraid I've left my purse behind."

"Then lend me ten shillings—Ananias!"

"I doubt if I have more than five."

"Then give me the five. And Brasher, lend me the other fifteen."

Brasher lent him the fifteen. I doubt if we shall either of us ever see our money again. He handed the pound to Bob.

"Here's the brandy—drink it up." Bob drank it without a word, draining the glass of every drop. "And here's the pipe."

"Is it poisoned, sir?"

"Poisoned, you villain! What do you mean?"

"It isn't the first time I've seen your tricks, sir—is it now? And you're not the one to give a pound for nothing at all. If it kills me you'll send my body to my mother—she'd like to know that I was dead."

"Send your body to your grandmother! You idiot, sit down and smoke!"

Bob sat down. Tress had filled the pipe, and handed it, with a lighted

match, to Bob. The fellow declined the match. He handled the pipe very gingerly, turning it over and over, eyeing it with all his eyes.

"Thank you, sir—I'll light up myself if it's the same to you. I carry matches of my own. It's a beautiful pipe, entirely. I never saw the like of it for ugliness. And what's the slimy-looking varmint that looks as though it would like to have my life? Is it living, or is it dead?"

"Come, we don't want to sit here all day, my man."

"Well, sir, the look of this here pipe has quite upset my stomach. I'd like another drop of liquor, if it's the same to you."

"Another drop! Why, you've had a tumblerful already! Here's another tumblerful to put on top of that. You won't want the pipe to kill you—you'll be killed before you get to it."

"And isn't it better to die a natural death?"

Bob emptied the second tumbler of brandy as though it were water. I believe he would empty a hogshead without turning a hair! Then he gave another look at the pipe. Then, taking a match from his waistcoat-pocket, he drew a long breath, as though he were resigning himself to his fate. He struck the match on the seat of his trousers, and as the flame, shaded by his hand, was gathering strength, he looked at each one of us in turn. When he looked at Tress I distinctly saw him wink his eye. What my feelings would have been if a servant of mine had winked his eye at me I am unable to imagine! The match was applied to the tobacco, a puff of smoke came through his lips—the pipe was alight!

DURING this process of lighting the pipe we had sat—I do not wish to use exaggerated language, but we had sat and watched that alcoholic scamp's proceedings as though we were witnessing an action which would leave its mark upon the age. When we saw that the pipe was lighted we gave a simultaneous start. Brasher put his hands under his coat-tails and gave a kind of hop. I raised myself a good six inches from my chair, and Tress rubbed his palms together with a chuckle. Bob alone was calm.

"Now," cried Tress, "you'll see the devil moving."

Bob took the pipe from between his lips.

"See what?" he said.

"Bob, you rascal, put that pipe back into your mouth, and smoke it for your life!"

Bob was eyeing the pipe askance.

"I dare say, but what I want to know is whether this here varmint's dead or whether he isn't. I don't want to have him flying at my nose—and he looks vicious enough for anything."

"Give me back that pound, you thief, and get out of my house, and bundle."

"I ain't going to give you back no pound."

"Then smoke that pipe!"

"I am smoking it, ain't I?"

With the utmost deliberation Bob returned the pipe to his mouth. He emitted another whiff or two of smoke.

"Now—now!" cried Tress all excitement, and wagging his hand in the air.

We gathered round. As we did so Bob again withdrew the pipe.

"What is the meaning of all this here? I ain't going to have you playing none of your larks on me. I know there's something up, but I ain't going to throw my life away for twenty shillings—not quite, I ain't."

Tress, whose temper is not at any time one of the best, was seized with quite a spasm of rage.

"As I live, my lad, if you try to cheat me by taking that pipe from

between your lips until I tell you, you leave this room that instant, never again to be a servant of mine."

I presume the fellow knew from long experience when his master meant what he said and when he didn't. Without any attempt at remonstrance, he replaced the pipe. He continued stolidly to puff away. Tress caught me by the arm.

"What did I tell you? There—there! That tentacle is moving."

The uplifted tentacle *was* moving. It was doing what I had seen it do, as I supposed, in my distorted imagination—it was reaching forward. Undoubtedly Bob saw what it was doing; but, whether in obedience to his master's commands, or whether because the drug was already beginning to take effect, he made no movement to withdraw the pipe. He watched the slowly advancing tentacle, coming closer and closer toward his nose, with an expression of such intense horror on his countenance that it became quite shocking. Farther and farther the creature reached forward, until on a sudden, with a sort of jerk, the movement assumed a downward direction, and the tentacle was slowly lowered until the tip rested on the stem of the pipe. For a moment the creature remained motionless.

I was quieting my nerves with the reflection that this thing was but some trick of the carver's art, and that what we had seen we had seen in a sort of nightmare, when the whole hideous reptile was seized with what seemed to be a fit of convulsive shuddering. It seemed to be in agony. It trembled so violently that I expected to see it loosen its hold of the stem and fall to the ground. I was sufficiently master of myself to steal a glance at Bob. We had had an inkling of what might happen. He was wholly unprepared. As he saw that dreadful, inhuman-looking creature coming to life, as it seemed, within an inch or two of his nose, his eyes dilated to twice their usual size. I hoped, for his sake, that unconsciousness would supervene through the action of the drug, before, through sheer fright, his senses left him. Perhaps mechanically, he puffed steadily on.

The creature's shuddering became more violent. It appeared to swell before our eyes. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the shuddering ceased. There was another instant of quiescence. Then—the creature began to crawl along the stem of the pipe!

It moved with marvelous caution, the merest fraction of an inch at a time. But still it moved! Our eyes were riveted on it with a fascination which was absolutely nauseous. I am unpleasantly affected even as I think of it now.

Slowly, slowly it went, nearer and nearer to the smoker's nose. Its mode of progression was in the highest degree unsightly. It glided—never, so far as I could see, removing its tentacles from the stem of the pipe. It slipped its hindmost feelers onward, until they came up to those which were in advance. Then, in their turn, it advanced those which were in front. It seemed, too, to move with the utmost labor, shuddering as though it were in pain.

We were all, for our part, speechless. I was momentarily hoping that the drug would take effect on Bob. Either his constitution enabled him to offer a strong resistance to narcotics, or else the large quantity of neat spirit which he had drunk acted—as Tress had malevolently intended that it should do—as an antidote. It seemed to me that he would *never* succumb. On went the creature—on and on, in its infinitesimal progression. I was spellbound. I would have given the world to scream, to have been able to utter a sound. I could do nothing else but watch.

The creature had reached the end of the stem. It had gained the amber mouthpiece. It was within an inch of the smoker's nose. Still on it went. It seemed to move with greater freedom on the amber. It increased its rate of progress. It was actually touching the foremost feature on the smoker's countenance. I expected to see it grip the wretched Bob, when it began to oscillate from side to side. Its oscillations increased in violence. It fell to the floor. That same instant the narcotic prevailed. Bob slipped sideways from the chair, the pipe still held tightly between his rigid jaws.

We were silent. There lay Bob. Close beside him lay the creature. A few more inches to the left, and he would have fallen on it and squashed it flat. It had fallen on its back. Its feelers were extended upward. They were writhing and twisting and turning in the air.

TRESS was the first to speak.

"I think a little brandy wouldn't be amiss." Emptying the remainder of the brandy into a glass, he swallowed it at a draft. "Now for a closer examination of our friend." Taking a pair of tongs from the grate he nipped the creature between them. He deposited it upon the table. "I rather fancy that this is a case for dissection."

He took a penknife from his waistcoat-pocket. Opening the large blade, he thrust its point into the object on the table. Little or no resistance seemed to be offered to the passage of the blade, but as it was inserted, the tentacula simultaneously began to writhe and twist. Tress withdrew the knife.

"I thought so!" He held the blade out for our inspection. The point was covered with some viscid-looking matter. "That's blood! The thing's alive!"

"Alive!"

"Alive! That's the secret of the whole performance!"

"But——"

"But me no buts, my Pugh! The mystery's exploded! One more ghost is lost to the world! The person from whom I *obtained* that pipe was an Indian juggler—up to many tricks of the trade. He, or someone for him, got hold of this sweet thing in reptiles—and a sweeter thing would, I imagine, be hard to find—and covered it with some preparation of, possibly, gum arabic. He allowed this to harden. Then he stuck the thing—still living, for this sort of gentry is hard to kill—to the pipe. The consequence was that when anyone lit up, the warmth was communicated to the adhesive agent—again some preparation of gum, no doubt—it moistened it, and the creature, with infinite difficulty, was able to move. But I am open to lay odds with any gentleman of sporting tastes that *this* time the creature's traveling days are done. It has given me rather a larger taste of the horrors than is good for my digestion."

With the aid of the tongs he removed the creature from the table. He placed it on the hearth. Before Brasher or I had a notion of what it was he intended to do he covered it with a heavy marble paper-weight. Then he stood upon the weight, and between the marble and the hearth he ground the creature flat.

WHILE the execution was still proceeding, Bob sat up upon the floor.

"Holloa!" he asked—"what's happened?"

"We've emptied the bottle, Bob," said Tress. "But there's another where that came from. Perhaps you could drink another tumblerful, my boy?"

Bob drank it.

The BRIDE of OSIRIS

by Otis Adelbert Kline

"The features were twisted in a horrid grimace as they looked down at the half-fainting girl."

The Story So Far

DORIS LEE is kidnaped and carried to an underground city beneath Chicago to become the bride of Mezzar Hashin, who rules there in Egyptian fashion under the name of Osiris. Alan Buell and Dan Rafferty, trying to find and rescue Doris, are captured in the subterranean city of Karneter and led before Osiris for trial. Rafferty is assigned a post as electrician, but Buell is chosen to impersonate the Osiris N at the Festival of Re, when he will be put to death.

CHAPTER 9

DELRA, VESTAL VIRGIN

WHEN Dan Rafferty was dragged out of the Hall of the Two Truths he thought he emerged in bright sunlight. One of the Am-mits summoned a giant soldier who lolled at the entrance with a score of companions and handed him a strip of papyrus. After scanning the characters thereon, the fellow removed Rafferty's manacles and led him away. They were walking the streets of a city that reminded Dan of the Orient with its flat-roofed buildings and gaudily attired inhabitants; yet somehow it was different. It was almost as if he had been conveyed to another world. Even the blue vault of heaven above him seemed unnatural—almost unreal. The sun, too, had an artificial look. Mystified, he hurried on.

They passed through a noisy bazaar wherein was displayed a great variety of merchandise—shimmering silks and satins of a thousand brilliant hues, rare tapestries, rugs, bric-à-brac, jewelry, dried fruits, sweet-

meats, perfumes, crockery, baskets—a hodgepodge of things Eastern over the prices of which busy merchants haggled spiritedly with thrifty purchasers.

Beyond this was a more quiet street in which half-naked children romped. Here and there Rafferty observed veiled women peering curiously down at him from latticed windows.

They came at length to a great rugged building from the interior of which issued sounds familiar to the ears of Dan Rafferty—the whirring roar of enormous electric generators. The soldier turned him over to a portly, red-faced individual who rolled up his sleeve and locked a steel armlet, on which a number was imprinted, just above his elbow. He was then guided by a second man, a guard with a spear and simitar, into what appeared to be a sort of dormitory. His guide showed him to a sleeping alcove, above the curtained entrance of which was a number corresponding to that on his armlet. An attendant brought a dull blue one-piece garment that left arms and shoulders bare and came down to the knees; also a pair of sandals. These he was commanded to don. His own wearing apparel was then taken away and he was conducted through a series of rooms and corridors to a quiet, soft-spoken individual who evidently had considerable authority. Here he was questioned about his previous experience as an electrician and, on divulging that he had been a trouble-shooter, was given a set of tools and an assignment.

"They have been having trouble with some light switches in the Temple of Re," said the soft-spoken person. "Seboul, here, will conduct you thither and help you repair them."

He motioned to a beardless youth, dressed and outfitted like Rafferty.

"Seboul," he said, "this is Baku, a new slave in the Department of Electricity. You will go with him to the Temple of Re and assist him in repairing the switches."

Seboul bowed solemnly.

"We go at once, master," he replied. "Come, Baku."

"Baku!" muttered Rafferty as they passed out the door and down the street. "And they hand me that in place of an honest Irish name!"

"Pardon?" queried Seboul.

"I was just sayin'," replied Rafferty, "that it's an uncommon foine day."

"Not uncommon. We always have good weather in Karncter."

"Do yez, now? I was noticin' somethin' peculiar about the sky, and the sun, too, for that matter."

"No doubt they could be improved," said Seboul. "In fact they only reached their present state of perfection a few years ago. When the great-grandfather of the present Lord of Karncter founded the city one could see the joints where the glass was fastened together. The sun, moon and stars were then moved by man-power, too, but all this has been done away with. The second Lord of Karneter discovered a method of welding the sheets of glass together so they now appear as one piece, and the third inaugurated the system of moving all heavenly bodies with electric machinery. He also improved and perfected the rays of the sun to such a degree that flowers, plants and trees thrive as well as in the upper world."

"Yez don't tell me, now! The heavens sort of runs by clockwork, so to speak. Begorry, whoever doped that out had some head on him."

"Mezzar Hashin the First was a great prophet, teacher and scientist," replied the youth. "My grandfather, who knew him personally, has told me much about him."

"Yer grandfather? Yez don't mane to tell me you've lived all yer life underground!"

"Not only I, but my father and grandfather before me. My great-grandfather came here with Mezzar Hashin, first Osiris of Karneter, when he founded this city."

"That must've been before the Civil War. They didn't know much about electricity then."

"Not in the upper world. But it is said that the wisdom of Mezzar Hashin the First, in things material as well as spiritual, far transcended that of all others of his time."

"Sure and he must've been a smart bozo. Begorry, that's a swell-lookin' structure we're comin' to—the wan wid the gardens and wall around it. What do yez call it?"

"That," Seboul replied, "is the Temple of Re."

A moment later they came before a tall iron gate. A guard stopped them while he jotted down the numbers of their armlets on a sheet of papyrus. Then his companion swung the gate back, admitting them to a beautiful garden in which were long stretches of velvety grass, patches of flowers and shrubs that bloomed luxuriantly, numerous clumps of date palms and fig trees, and limpid pools where sparkling fountains played.

As they followed the winding, tree-bordered path which led to the great white building in the center, Rafferty noticed a number of white-clad girls gathering fruits and flowers while a small group of their companions fired slim, gold-feathered arrows at a target, displaying considerable skill. Seboul informed him that they were vestal virgins. He also saw a few men with shaven heads, wearing yellow robes—priests of Re—and many blue-clad garden slaves.

At the pillared portico of the temple a guard stopped them and asked their business.

"We were sent to repair some defective switches in the temple," Seboul told him.

The guard pressed a button which rang a bell inside, and presently a yellow-robed priest appeared.

"It's time the Department sent repair men," he grumbled, on being informed of their business. "Come with me."

They followed him through a vestibule, and thence into a room, the size and magnificence of which dazzled Rafferty. It was rectangular in shape, with an arched ceiling, the top of which was fully a hundred feet above their heads. Large statues of the lesser Egyptian deities were placed at intervals along the frescoed walls, on which were depicted in bright colors, scenes of battle, of hunting and of sacrifice. At the far end of the room was a huge disk of burnished gold from which the rays of hidden lights were reflected in all directions. A thin spiral of smoke curled upward from an altar in front of the disk, while on the right and left, respectively, there were colossal images of Osiris and Isis. It was to the base of the latter that he led them. A battery of multicolored footlights, he said, refused to respond properly to the various switches, and they were to be used at services that very evening.

After putting Seboul to work cleaning and testing the bulbs in front of the image, Rafferty went around behind it and removed the wall plate which concealed the switch mechanism. The priest, after watching him for a moment, departed, grumbling about the inefficiency of the Department of Electricity.

DELVING into the bewildering array of wires and contact plates, Rafferty soon found the cause of the trouble—a short, due to faulty insulation, had burned out several fuses. He had retaped the exposed wires and was about to replace the fuses, when the sound of a light footfall behind him caused him to turn. His look of surprize turned to one of

frank admiration as he gazed into a pair of big brown eyes turned covertly in his direction. Their owner, a graceful girl in the clinging white garments of a vestal virgin, instantly averted them and passed on toward the altar. He stared after her, enraptured.

"A peach!" he murmured. "An angel from heaven in this haythen place!"

His eyes took in the details of her costume as she poured powdered incense on the altar from a narrow, jewel-encrusted vase. Her jet-black hair was circled by a square-linked chain of ivory. A similar chain gathered her white garment to her slender waist. On her feet were sandals of soft, white leather.

Her task completed, she started back toward him. Dan saw that she was headed for a door behind the image. She smiled slightly as she approached, and he gathered courage to speak to her.

"Hello," he said. "Me name's Dan Rafferty, at your service."

She paused, looked quickly around her as if in fear of being seen, then smiled once more, displaying a perfect set of dazzling white teeth.

"How interesting," she replied.

"Sure, and you're the most interestin' sight I've seen in ages," said Dan. "Won't yez tell me your name?"

"It's Delra," she answered, and turned to go.

"Faith, Delra, yez needn't hurry away."

"I must go at once. We might be seen."

"And then they'd feed me to the crocodile, would they?"

"They would."

"Same as Jethlo?"

Her face blanched.

"I was so sorry," she said, "but it was all his fault. He insisted on coming. Sessed saw him and told the High One."

"Who is Sessed?"

"One of the temple guards. He is very jealous of me, although I have never encouraged him. He is quite annoying."

"Tell me where to find him," growled Rafferty, "and I'll punch him in the eye."

"No, no! You would be whipped, and perhaps executed."

"I'm comin' to see yez again, just the same, Delra. By the way, do yez know of a girl hereabout named Doris Lee?"

"Do I know of her? Assuredly. She who was Doris Lee in the upper world is to become Isis, Bride of Osiris, at the Festival of Re."

"Where is she now?"

"In the Temple of Isis, of course. She is being schooled and prepared for her part in the coming ceremonies. I must go now. I see Sessed coming and I think he is watching me. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Delra."

Rafferty watched her until the softly-closed door shut her from view. Then he turned to his task with a sigh.

"Sure, that's a wonderful girl," he murmured, fumbling with the fuses. "But here I'm thinkin' all about mesilf and lavin' Buell out in the cold. He's got to find his girl, and she's in the Temple of Isis, whatever and wherever that is, and what's more, it's up to Dan Rafferty to help him. But first av all I've got to find Buell. It's wan divvil av a mess!"

CHAPTER 10

THE DEATH WATCH BEGINS

BUELL was conducted by the Ammits to an inner chamber of the Temple of Osiris. It was a small room with a low ceiling, lighted at one end by two red lamps of grotesque pattern, one on each side of a huge individual who sat behind a small table.

"We bring the Osiris N," said the Am-mits in unison. Then they withdrew, leaving Buell alone in the center of the floor.

The features of the man behind the table were hidden by a jet-black mask, but it was evident that his head, concealed by a scarlet hood on which a grinning skull was perched, was enormous. His shoulders, too, covered with a garment of bright scarlet, were as broad as those of two men. He rose suddenly, the skull on his headpiece almost touching the ceiling.

"Welcome, Osiris N, to the gateway which leads to the inner Karneter," he said in a deep, rumbling voice. "I am Odd."

"You are, sure enough," thought Buell, but he said nothing.

The huge fellow pulled a cord and two attendants entered. They removed Buell's clothing, wrapped a black garment about him, put a black hood on his head and shod him with black sandals. Then they left quietly, taking his clothing with them.

"Now that you are suitably attired I will show you about Karneter," rumbled the giant. "Then we will proceed with your training."

He unwound a stout chain from about his waist. One end was attached to a ring in his huge leather belt. The other he wrapped around the waist of Buell, drew it tight, and secured it with a padlock.

"Come," he said.

They walked out side by side, the giant stooping as he passed through the door. Each man held up a portion of the six feet of chain between them.

"Why the chains?" asked Buell. "It seems to me that they are unnecessary."

"It is the law of Karneter," replied the giant. "The N must be bound to Odd until sunrise on the day of the Festival of Re."

"Sort of death watch, I suppose."

"You might call it that, though I have never heard the expression."

After traversing a maze of halls and passageways they came to a long, curved corridor much wider and taller than the others. At intervals of about a hundred feet along the wall at the right were circular openings some twenty feet in diameter. These were covered with heavy netting and in each of them a huge fan with eight-foot blades roared sonorously.

"These are the ventilators that bring air to Karneter from the upper world," explained Odd. "Far above us are others, revolving in an opposite direction, which draw out the foul air."

"Funny I've never seen or heard of any of the outlets," said Buell.

"You wouldn't. They are through buildings that have been built or purchased for the purpose. Some are houses with open inner courts. Others are factory buildings with tall chimneys that never smoke. All air is filtered, sterilized by heat, and then cooled and given the proper amount of moisture before it comes through those openings. The air in Karneter is, therefore, purer than that of the upper world—the large cities in particular."

Buell was impressed, but it was not until he had been taken out under the artificial sun and sky and had learned its history that he began to have some realization of the power and resources of the man against whom he had pitted his relatively puny strength.

"At night," said Odd, "the moon, stars and planets will come out and move across the sky, just as they do in the upper world. The only apparent difference to the naked eye will be that the skies are always cloudless. Tonight I will show you the ruddy Mars, due south, the full moon rising in the east, and blue-white Jupiter just ready to drop be-

low the horizon in the west. We will watch the progress of the big dipper as it circles the North Star. Rising early in the morning we will see Saturn winking craftily down at us, followed by the silver-hued Venus, gliding along the plane of the ecliptic —the brilliant herald of the rising sun."

"Marvelous!" exclaimed Buell.

"Also," continued Odd, "with the aid of a telescope you can follow the movements of Mercury, Uranus and Neptune. You can see the moons that circle the planets, the beautiful, wraithlike nebulæ, and the double stars. When a comet comes to visit the solar system its appearance and movements are watched and duplicated here."

"But why this elaborate duplication of the terrestrial heavens?" inquired Buell.

"Our priests are both astronomers and astrologers. They could not properly conduct their holy offices without making their daily and nightly observations. It is a necessary part of the religion of Re. The appearance of the sky from the outer world is communicated to our master star-controller from our two secret observatories in the upper world, at stated intervals by telephotograph. On cloudy nights there are, of course, no telephotographs, but the appearance of the sky as it should look is duplicated here just the same."

"I can not understand," said Buell, "why any individual or group of individuals should take the trouble to build an artificial world when there are vast uncolonized areas where this trouble would not be necessary. A city such as this might be founded in Africa or South America without a fourth of the trouble, labor and expense involved here."

"Mezzar Hashin the First planned a city that would endure," replied Odd, "a city that would retain its identity and traditions though kingdoms fall to the swords of the conquerors, empires crash and disintegrate, and even the mighty republics fade away. Every nation of which we have historic records had a period of growth which, if not cut off before its time, reached a climax of great splendor and power, then crumbled with decay from within or was crushed by stronger peoples from without. On the ground above our heads people live in peace and plenty in the second city of the greatest republic in the world. They may continue thus for a half-century, a century even, but as a city, they are doomed, even as their nation is doomed. Some day they will reach their climax of splendor and power—lean, jealous, hungry hordes will rush in from Asia or Europe, perhaps both, and the proud people of America will bow their necks to the yoke of the conqueror."

"You are wrong, Odd," replied Buell, vehemently. "They would have to kill the last male able to bear arms before my people would surrender their liberty."

The giant smiled, the smile of one who is tolerant because of superior knowledge and power.

"History repeats itself," he said, "and every nation on the face of the earth is doomed. With us in Karneter it is different. No other nation knows of the existence of this city, which is growing rapidly—will soon be a nation in fact, both in extent and in point of numbers. We are not troubled by wars, floods, drouths, storms, famine or pestilence. What we want, and can not obtain or manufacture here, we take from the upper world by means of our clever agents. They work with us for a price, yet even they do not know of our existence. Great quantities of gold, silver, jewels and other valuables disappear from the huge sleeping country above us, never to be recovered. Crime rings, gangsters, and others of their

ilk are blamed, but our agents are seldom caught. When caught, they do not tell for whom they are working for the simple reason that they do not know. Beautiful girls and women vanish, hundreds of them a year, and are never heard from again. The white slave traffic is usually blamed and each incident soon forgotten by the public.

"Our trusted priests are establishing temples in all parts of the world like the one conducted by Mezzar Hashin in Chicago. Brains, beauty, wealth and power come to us through these sources. People adopt our religion and renounce the upper world without knowing where or what Karneter really is, for religion is an emotional, rather than a logical thing—a thing of faith rather than of knowledge. Some regret their decisions when first introduced here, but our mighty ruler has ways of making good subjects of most of them. Those who refuse to submit gracefully to our laws and customs are put at hard labor, which eventually cures or kills them."

While they were conversing, Buell's guide was leading him through the most populous district of Karneter, and he marveled, as Rafferty had, at the size and metropolitan aspect of the place.

After they had visited the busy bazaar they circled through a beautiful portion of the residence district and came before the magnificent Temple of Re. While the giant Odd was conversing with one of the guards at the gate, who appeared to be an old friend, two men in blue costumes of slaves showed their numbers and passed through. Buell, who was standing several feet behind Odd, caught his breath sharply as he saw that one of the men was Dan Rafferty.

"Dan," he cried, "what are you doing here?"

"Hist!" Dan waited until his companion had gone on ahead. "I just learnt that yer girl is in the Temple of Isis. She's going to marry——"

Buell felt a tug at the chain that circled his waist. A deep voice boomed in his ear.

"Come, N. We will visit the Temple of Re. Do not debase yourself by talking to mere slaves. Remember that you are soon to be a god."

Buell scarcely noticed the marvelous gardens, the wandering vestal virgins, yellow-robed priests and blue-clad slaves. The richly and artistically designed temple which would ordinarily have aroused his interest and admiration elicited only absent-minded "yes's" and "oh's" as Odd enthusiastically pointed out this or that object of reverence and related the history of the building.

When they had passed out into the garden and were headed for the gate once more, Buell said, "There are other temples in Karneter, I presume."

"Only two. The Temples of Osiris and Isis."

"Are we to visit them?"

"You have already been in the Temple of Osiris. In fact that is where we are quartered. You did not see the grounds and gardens because we left through an underground passageway. The Hall of the Two Truths where judgment was passed on you is the main room in the Temple of Osiris. It is always kept in darkness, the only light coming from the throne itself or the eye above it when the mighty Osiris is present to dispense justice."

"And the Temple of Isis?"

"It is some distance from here. Would you prefer to visit it today, or seek rest and refreshment now and leave it for another day?"

Buell did not want to appear overanxious. On the other hand, he certainly didn't want to pass up a chance to learn where Doris was

quartered and catch sight of her if possible—perhaps converse with her.

"Let's clean up this round of the temples today," he said. "It will give us more time for rest and study tomorrow."

"Good. This way, then."

CHAPTER 11

THE MAN IN THE DUNGEON

BACK at their quarters in the power house, Rafferty and Seboul, in company with a number of other blue-clad slaves of the Department of Electricity, partook of a hearty meal consisting of stewed beef and mushrooms, date bread, and black Arabian coffee. The Irishman was surprized to learn that everything, even the beef, had been grown in Karneter.

"We have pastures and fattening pens in the south end of the city," explained Seboul. "As for mushrooms, there are none produced in the upper world that can compare with ours in size, excellence of flavor or vigor of growth."

After the meal the men rose and filed past a guard who noted their numbers and handed assignments to each. Rafferty read the neatly typed order on the strip of papyrus given him:

"Go to shaft seventy-four, guided by Seboul, and repair power circuit."

He turned to his comrade, who was engaged in deciphering his own order.

"Where is this shaft sivventy-four?" he asked.

Seboul shook his head.

"It's a bad place to work in," he replied. "The deepest of the new safety shafts in Karneter. If there is something wrong with the power circuit it means that it is rapidly filling with water, for they can't do much in that shaft with the hand-pumps. We must go quickly."

They picked up their tool kits and hurried out, following the same street they had taken that morning. To his surprize, Rafferty noticed that Seboul was again leading him to the Temple of Re.

"Haven't yez got yer wires crossed, lad?" he asked.

Seboul looked puzzled.

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand."

"Ain't yez headin' wrong? This is where we just came from."

"Shaft seventy-four is beneath the dungeons which are under the Temple of Re," explained Seboul.

They were stopped at the gate as before, and again at the pillared temple portico. Then the surly, yellow-robed priest who had been their guide that morning, conducted them to the rear of the temple, where Rafferty looked slyly about with the hope of seeing Delra, the vestal virgin. They descended a flight of winding stairs. Then the priest took them through an enormous basement in which were great quantities of canned and dried food and casks and bottles of wine. At the head of another stairway he halted.

"Follow these stairs to the third level below this," he said. "Then take the A passageway which leads to the main corridor of the top dungeon, follow it to the central stairway and descend thence to the seventh level, where you will find workmen who will direct you to the proper shaft."

"Mebby we better make a note av it," suggested Dan.

"That isn't necessary," replied Seboul. "Come. I will guide you."

They descended to the third level as directed, and Dan saw that the thing was not quite so complicated as it sounded. Three narrow passageways marked "A," "B," and "C," branched out from the foot of the stairs.

"Faith, it's simple as A, B, C," said Rafferty as they entered the A passageway.

"It isn't so simple farther down," replied Seboul, "but we'll find the way."

As they passed along the dimly lighted main corridor of the upper dungeon, Dan noticed the inmates of the cells. All were chained to rings in the walls with metal collars about their necks, just as he and Buell had been chained when they awoke in Karneter.

At the second level the rays of light grew feebler, and ere they had passed the third they were compelled to use their pocket flashlights. On reaching the fourth level they were confronted by a confusing maze of corridors, cells and passageways. This was the deepest, darkest, and most feared dungeon in Karneter, according to Seboul. Prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment here usually begged for death sentences instead. There was no attempt at sanitation as in the upper dungeons, and vermin were allowed free range. The air was heavy with moisture and reeked with the stench of offal and the decaying bodies of those victims whom death had mercifully removed from this realm of frightfulness. The cells were irregular in form, more like crude caves, and there were no bars across them, though the chains and rings were much heavier and stronger than those which held the prisoners in the upper dungeons. As Rafferty and his companion hurried off down one of the passageways, their flashlights held before them and their handkerchiefs tied over their noses to filter the air they breathed, a dozen huge gray rats, disturbed at their business of devouring an emaciated corpse, showed their teeth and squealed menacingly. Dan caught a glimpse of the face. The lips, cheeks and end of the nose had already been eaten away. A rat was tugging at the blue-white tongue which protruded from the sagging, grinning jaws, while another nibbled hungrily at a glassy, lidless eye. The Irishman shuddered and passed on.

Suddenly, to his intense surprize, he became aware that Seboul was not with him. His pause, brief though it was, had separated them. Before him lay a half-dozen winding passageways, any one of which his fellow slave might have taken. He waited for a moment, then shrugged his broad shoulders and took the central one. Although it occurred to him to call, he hated to do this, as he did not want his companion to think him afraid, and felt confident that he could make his way alone.

He had gone but a short distance when he was startled by a sudden tug at his garment and a low voice at his side.

"Where to, slave? Only empty cells and gnawed bones lie beyond here. Are you lost?"

He turned and beheld a face that was wrinkled, ugly and emaciated. The prisoner, for such he was, as evidenced by the collar and chain, had been horribly mutilated—his right ear cut off and his right eye gouged out. His bony frame protruded here and there through rents in the filthy rags that had evidently once been yellow, and his clawlike hands trembled as he clung to Dan's garment.

"Sure and yez guessed it right," replied Dan, "but don't claw at me clothes like that. I won't run away."

The man released his hold on Dan's clothing.

"Your pardon, friend," he said. "It's so long since I've seen a human being, other than the masked, voiceless guard who brings my food, that I could not bear to see you leave without a moment's conversation. Where did you say you were bound for?"

"Shaft sivventy-four, whatever that may be."

"I can direct you, but stay and talk yet a while. The work can wait and you have a good excuse."

"They say the damned thing's fillin' wid water," replied Dan. "Tip me off now, and I'll see yez whin I come back."

"You promise?"

"What're yez tryin' to do? Make a liar out av me?"

"Not at all. You appear honest. Go back to the first group of cross-passageways you find. Follow the second one to your right as you leave this one, and you will reach shaft seventy-four."

"Thanks. I'll be back as soon as I get the pumps to workin'."

DAN followed the directions of the mutilated prisoner, and was soon traversing the new passageway. He wondered what the fellow wanted of him. Was it merely companionship, or something else? Judging from the color of the rags that hung on his bony frame, the man had once been a priest. He was puzzling over the enigma when a light flashed some distance ahead of him and he heard someone shout, "Baku. Where are you, Baku?"

A moment passed before he remembered this was the name by which he was to be known in Karneter.

"Coming, Seboul," he replied. "Kape yer shirt on."

His fellow slave dashed breathlessly up.

"I have no cause for removing my shirt," he replied solemnly, "but we must hurry. The shaft is filling rapidly in spite of all the pumps that can be inserted. A score of workmen were drowned just before I arrived."

The two men ran down the passageway. Presently Dan saw lights ahead and heard the murmur of voices. A hundred feet farther on they came to a group of men working excitedly around a concrete-edged hole about fifteen feet in diameter.

"Here is the master electrician," shouted Seboul to a tall, beetle-browed man who was evidently an overseer.

The man looked Dan over.

"See what's wrong with that power circuit, and be quick about it," he ordered.

A half-dozen groups of slaves were working wildly at as many hand-pumps. The water they pumped out was apparently being forced to a higher level, as the pumps were connected with pipes which pierced the floor above. Disregarding these, Dan hurried to the power pump. He disconnected the two wires which led to the powerful motor and held the ends close together. A jagged spark sputtered across the intervening space.

"Nothing wrong with the circuit," he said. "Must be the motor."

He examined the wiring underneath, found a loose connection, and had the motor humming in less than five minutes. The futile efforts of the hand-pumping crews were then discontinued and the overseer allowed the exhausted men a few minutes of rest before ordering them to disconnect their pumps.

Peering over the edge of the shaft, Rafferty saw the water, far below him, sinking steadily. Turning away, he noticed one of the slaves who seemed more exhausted than the others, lying flat on his back. He recognized Ammut, once Samuel Whitford the banker, who had donated a hundred thousand dollars to Mezzar Hashin when he joined his followers.

"What's the big hole in the ground for?" Rafferty asked Seboul as they stood beside the rapidly humming motor.

"It is one of the many safety shafts which the High One is sinking

at various points in Karneter as a precaution against floods or leaks. At one point the waters of Lake Michigan are kept out only by walls of thick glass. In the event of a flood from that source or from any of the numerous springs which we are constantly damming with concrete, they will act as safety reservoirs for the water, and thus give us ample time to repair the leaks. This shaft is not completed and the workman at the bottom suddenly struck a huge spring. The motor on the power pump failed to work and many of the men were drowned. Their bodies are lying in the passageway across from us now, waiting to be conveyed to the crematory."

"Are all bodies burned in Karneter?" inquired Rafferty.

"No. Only those of slaves or others who can not afford caskets. The bodies of the wealthy are placed in leaden caskets and shot out into the lake with a special device we have for the purpose. The caskets are equipped with planes and propellers which carry them for a stated distance, when they sink to the bottom and are eventually covered by the drifting sand. But we waste time here, and the overseer is observing us. As the motor is now in working order we had best go back and report."

"Suits me," replied Dan. "I sure ain't crazy about this place."

They had traversed the long passageway and arrived at the six-point intersection, Seboul taking the lead as usual, when Rafferty was suddenly reminded of his promise to the imprisoned man. He hated to spend any more time in the stinking dungeon than was absolutely necessary, but being a man of his word, he halted, made sure that his companion had not observed him, and then plunged silently down the passageway which he had previously taken by mistake.

CHAPTER 12

THE TEMPLE OF ISIS

BUELL and Odd, after leaving the Temple of Re, set out in what the former believed was a southerly direction. At least it was southerly by the bearings he took from the artificial sky, and he assumed that this corresponded to the directions in the upper world. If it didn't, then it would at least suffice for the world he was in.

They passed through a park, in the center of which stood a large building of black marble which Odd said was the building of civic administration. Thence through a district in which smart shops displayed their wares, and down a broad avenue lined with royal palms and faced on either side by magnificent estates. Odd explained that these were the homes of the more wealthy citizens of Karneter.

Presently, far down the avenue, Buell descried a beautiful building, Gothic in type, a mass of pointed towers, spires and minarets. In the distance the building looked blue. Buell first ascribed this to the effect of the intervening air or perhaps the reflection of the sky, but as he drew nearer he discovered that it actually was blue—a light robin's-egg shade, trimmed with ornaments of burnished gold.

At length they drew up before a golden gate, the high walls on each side of which also were blue.

"The Temple of Isis," announced Odd.

As they approached, Buell had noticed two tall guards before the gate. Now, to his surprize, he saw that they were women—and such women! Neither could have been less than six feet two inches in height, broad of shoulder, full-breasted, and with muscular arms and legs that would have made them formidable antagonists in the boxing ring or on

the wrestling mat. They were armed, like the guards at the Temple of Re, with a spear and simitar apiece.

"The N would view the Temple of Isis ere he goes on his long journey," said Odd, addressing one of the Amazonian guards.

Leaning her tall spear against the wall, she unfastened the gate and swung it back. As they passed through, Buell noticed that she smiled archly up at his tall companion. It appeared that she was flirting with him, nor did her coyness seem out of place, for although she was a giantess to Buell, she appeared quite dainty and petite when compared to the huge Odd.

"I see that you have large women in Karneter as well as big men," remarked Buell.

"Not many," Odd replied. "About two hundred of each. The women guard the Temple of Isis and the men the Temple of Osiris."

"I had no idea there were so many giants in the world," said Buell.

"Perhaps there are not in the upper world," his guide replied. Our race began here with only a few which Mezzar Hashin the First brought with him from the upper world. But by eugenic marriages, eliminating all individuals who are undersized, we have grown quite rapidly in numbers, for giants. We are fed special rations to keep up our vitality, and in addition, have a medicine mixed with our food at certain intervals, that acts beneficially on our thyroid glands—the real cause of our superior size."

"I presume, then, that all of you are more or less related."

"That is true. The girls at the gate are both distant cousins of mine." He sighed. "I suppose that I shall have to marry one of them soon. I dislike the thought of matrimony, but we are only permitted the freedom of a single life up to the age of thirty, and I am now twenty-nine. If I do not choose a suitable mate before that time one will be chosen for me by the scientists."

"Are there many men as large as you?"

"None quite so large," was the reply. "That is why I was chosen for the post I now occupy. If one of the young men now growing up becomes larger than I his name will be Odd and he will take my place while I will become an officer of the Temple Guards."

As was the case with the Temple of Re, the grounds were beautifully landscaped with flowers, trees and shrubbery. Slaves clad in dark blue labored here as in the temple of the sun god, but all were women. Maidens, attired in clinging, light blue garments trimmed with gold, wandered about the grounds gathering flowers and fruits. These, Odd said, were the vestal virgins of Isis. Older and more matronly-appearing women, attired in heavier and stiffer garments of the same light shade of blue, but trimmed with silver, and with their heads shaven, so Odd informed Buell, were priestesses of Isis.

They drew near to the portal of the temple, and Buell saw that it was guarded by more giantesses, some of them fully seven feet in height. He also observed that tall Amazons were posted at intervals around the walls.

At the portico they paused a moment while Odd made known their intentions to the guard. An elderly priestess came out in a few moments and escorted them through the door.

The beauty and magnificence of the exterior of the building had given promise of a splendid interior, but Buell was hardly prepared for the dazzling glory of the huge auditorium in which he found himself. The vault of cerulean blue above his head formed the setting for thousands of tiny lights, each constantly appearing,

disappearing and reappearing, as if a gigantic swarm of fireflies had been hovering there. Set in the gold-tinted walls were life-size paintings depicting the exploits of Isis as recorded in Egyptian mythology, showing her watering the crops of her worshipers, thus insuring them a bounteous harvest, and representing her as a giver of dreams, inflicter of diseases and restorer of health. As in the Temple of Re, statues of the lesser deities lined the walls. At the far end of the room, incense smoldered on an altar before a large golden throne set with precious stones and upholstered with blue velvet. On each side of this throne, huge statues, one of Anubis and the other of Horus, knelt as if in adoration or supplication.

Buell surveyed the scene with wonder and admiration. The elderly priestess, with a backward glance in his direction, left them in the middle of the floor.

"Look well on these splendors," admonished Odd. "You are being accorded a special privilege. Throughout the year no man is allowed to enter this temple or even the temple grounds under pain of death, at other than stated hours on the regular days of worship, except the High One. The N, however, is permitted a last look at its glories before entering the inner Karneter. The Odd, being his constant companion, must accompany him."

BUELL scarcely heard the rumbling voice, so engrossed was he by the sight of a figure that had come through a doorway at his right, the slight, shapely figure of a girl encased in a clinging filmy garment of light blue gossamer silk that harmonized with the blue of her eyes. The band of blue velvet that bound her fluffy hair held a glittering star in place above her forehead. She wore belt, sandals, breastplates and armlets of burnished gold. It was not these things, however, that held Buell's attention as he watched her coming toward him with her pudgy companion, a fat priestess who read aloud to her from a papyrus scroll, but the walk and appearance of the girl herself. Scarcely crediting the evidence of his senses, he waited until she drew closer. Then he *knew!*

"Doris!" he cried.

She turned, then with a little gasp of recognition ran into his arms.

"I knew you would come, Alan," she murmured, looking up with brimming eyes. "I have been so frightened and so——"

There was a bellowing roar from Odd.

"What sacrilege is this?"

Alan was jerked backward with such violence that he lost his balance and fell to the floor at the feet of the giant.

Buell saw red. Hot flames of anger scorched every fiber of his being as he heard Odd muttering something about the sacred person of Isis, Bride of Osiris. His hands encountered a slack coil of the heavy chain that bound him to the monster. Acting more through instinct than reason, he gathered it in both hands, leaped to his feet, and swung for the face of the giant. At the first blow Odd toppled like a great oak cut nearly through. As Buell swung the heavy chain once more, he fell with a crash.

There was a squeal of alarm and rage. Then someone leaped upon Buell's back, clawing at his face. It was the fat priestess.

Shaking her off, he dived for the belt pouch of the prostrate Odd, took a bunch of keys therefrom and rapidly tested them on the padlock that held the chain about his waist. At last he found the right one, turned the lock, and leaped free of his shackles.

Meanwhile the squealing priestess had alarmed the guards at the main door. Two of them came running toward him.

"Oh, Alan, they will kill you!" Doris Lee's eyes were wide with fear.

"Does this door lead into the garden?" he asked.

"Yes, but it is guarded."

"Come. It's our only chance. If we can win through to the wall I think I can get you out of here."

As they hurried through the narrow side entrance, their pursuers, now only a hundred feet behind them, set up a clamor that Buell felt sure would alarm the outer guards.

He was right. A giantess stood with feet braced at the doorway, her spear-point barring his progress. Doris screamed when he ran forward as if to throw himself on the keen point. Suddenly, just as he seemed about to be impaled, he swerved to one side, ran forward again, and dived. It was a brilliant flying tackle, the equal of any he had ever made in his football days. The giantess dropped her spear, clutched wildly at the doorway for support, and missing it, toppled and fell down the steps. Releasing his hold, Buell caught up the long spear, and taking Doris' hand, raced off with her through the shrubbery.

They followed a winding path for some distance unmolested. Then a garden slave, sensing the meaning of the uproar behind them, barred their progress for a moment. Buell presented his spear and the slave fled, panic-stricken. He smiled grimly as they ran forward again.

"I wouldn't have used it on a woman," he said, "but it sure had the desired effect. Hello! Here's the wall. We'll be out of here now in a jiffy."

The wall was fully fifteen feet in height, and made more formidable by a row of down-curved spikes that projected near the top. A low hedge about three feet wide and composed of exceedingly thorny shrubs further added to its inaccessibility.

Placing his foot on the spear-shaft just behind the head, Buell snapped off the keen point. Then, pausing but a moment to calculate the distance, he ran forward, planted the butt of the shaft on the ground, and vaulted for the summit. Alighting on the edge of the wall rather than the top, for the pole was a trifle shorter than the wall, he endeavored to twist his body over. He half succeeded in this, but the smooth top offered no hand-hold, and he fell back on the curved spikes. The fact that they were curved downward saved him from injury, and the spikes themselves saved him from falling among the thorny bushes below.

Quickly clambering to the top of the wall, he held the spear-shaft, which still leaned against the wall between two of the spikes, down to Doris.

"Take hold of this," he said, "and I'll pull you up."

"B-but the spikes," she quavered, "and those thorny bushes. I might fall."

"It is the only way. Be brave."

She came forward and took hold of the shaft. Leaning far out, he swung her clear of the bushes. Then, just as he had drawn her half-way up the wall, a giantess darted from the shrubbery behind and seized her around the waist, pulling her from the shaft. Buell swung it back for a blow at her captor, when two huge hands seized his ankles from behind, tipping him over backward.

Two Amazonian guards, laughing exultantly, handed him down the human ladder which they had formed against the wall with the aid of seven of their companions.

CHAPTER 13

RAFFERTY LIMBERS HIS JOINTS

ALONE in the narrow, winding passageway, Dan Rafferty moved forward cautiously. Presently the rays from his pocket flashlight revealed the wrinkled, disfigured countenance of the prisoner who had begged for a word with him.

"Yez'll have to be brief," he said. "Me matey will be lookin' for me in a few minutes, and I don't want to be pinched just for the pleasure av listenin' to your blarney."

The shackled man stared up at him with a crafty look in his single, beady eye. The other—the one that had been gouged out—was closed in a ghastly wink.

"You wish to get out of Karneter, do you not?" he asked.

"Sure, and I would like nothin' better, provided two or three very good friends of mine could be included in the party."

"Who are these friends?"

"Alan Buell, now called the Osiris N, whativver that may be, and who I understand is to be kilt at the Festival of Re. Also his girl, Doris Lee. They say she's goin' to become Isis and marry that Hashish gink. Likewise a girl named Delra, who works in the Temple of Re—that is providin' she wants to go. I've made up me mind to ask her the first chance I get."

The prisoner stood suddenly erect. There was a quiet dignity in his manner as he replied.

"You are fortunate in having come to me, for I am the only man in Karneter who can and will help you, and that for a trifling service. Behold me, Alcibar, once High Priest of Re, and second in command in Karneter, reduced to this." For a moment his voice choked with emotion. Then he continued: "Wealth, luxury, pomp, position—all were mine. Then came the lies, foul slanderous lies, whispered in the ear of the High One by a man I had loved as a brother—a man I had advanced to the position next to mine. I was accused of plotting to overthrow Mezzar Hashin and establish myself as the Osiris. There was not a thread of truth in the accusations, but the High One—the Fiendish One, as I now know him to be—believed them, or pretended to do so. I was tortured, mutilated, maimed, but through it all I maintained my innocence. Then I was committed to this, the punishment of the lowest, the most debased criminals in Karneter. And Sethral, he who had betrayed my friendship, was made High Priest of Re in my stead."

"Tough luck," commented Rafferty, "but get to the point. What do yez want me to do? Assassinate them two guys? And what do I get in return?"

"You have tools in that bag that will cut through this chain. Release me and I pledge you my word that I will get you and your friends out of Karneter. As for Sethral and Hashin, think you that I would permit anyone to cheat me of my vengeance? Both shall die by my hand and mine alone."

"Suits me," replied Dan, "if you're handin' me the straight dope, although I'd like wan good sock at that Hashin guy mesilf. Anyhow I'm willin' to take a chance. A slim chance is better than none at all."

He laid his tool kit on the floor and unbuckled the flap. The largest pair of nippers he had failed to more than nick the chain.

"Have to file it," he said. He straightened up suddenly, listening. "The divvil. No time for that either. I hear somebody comin'."

"Leave the file with me," whispered Alcibar as the sound of voices and footsteps grew louder. "You can say you lost it if you are ques-

tioned. I'll find a way to communicate with you as soon as I am free."

"All right, here goes."

Rafferty handed him the file, buckled the flap of his tool kit, and hurried off. Arriving at the six corners he saw lights and heard voices in the main passageway.

"Seboul," he called.

"Is that you, Baku?"

Two men were coming toward him: Seboul and one of the dungeon guards.

"Sure it's me. Where the divvil did yez go?"

"I missed you at the stairway. Then I searched, with the assistance of the guard."

"Guess I got mixed up," said Dan. "I walked past a lot of skeletons and a few corpses. Then, seein' you weren't wid me, I turned around and came back here."

"You did the right thing. We will go up now. Better keep close to me so we won't be separated again."

They made their way up the stairways and through the various passageways into the rear of the temple without further incident. They were met by the sour-faced priest who had guided them.

"You did a poor job on the image of Isis this morning," he grumbled. "None of the lights will work now. Why doesn't the Department send men who understand their business?"

"I had it workin' this morning," replied Rafferty. "Mebby somewan has jimmed up the works. Let's look it over, Seboul. You test the light bulbs and I'll check up on the switches."

"See that it works this time," warned the priest. "If it doesn't I'll report you to the Department."

"Don't worry, Cap," responded Dan. "When I get through wid it it'll work."

The surly priest left, muttering to himself, and the two men set to work.

As before, Dan investigated the switches and wires behind the image while Seboul tested the lights in front. The identical short that he had repaired that morning seemed to be causing the trouble. A spark had apparently burned through the coating of tape he had applied.

RAFFERTY spread the wires farther apart and applied a double thick coating. He was tightening the last screw in the wall plate when he heard a door open softly behind him. Quickly turning, he beheld Delra the vestal virgin. She was carrying the narrow, jewel-incrusted vase from which she had poured incense on the altar that morning.

Scarcely had she stepped through the doorway when a man, dressed in the uniform of a temple guard, came up behind her and seized her roughly by the arm.

"One minute, elusive one," he said. "Haven't you played with me long enough? I saved you from the unwelcome attentions of Jethlo, yet you spurn me. What further task would you have me perform that I may win your favor?"

Attempting to pull away, but failing in this, the girl looked scornfully up at him.

"Save me from your own attentions, Sessed," she replied. "Release me now, or I shall scream."

The fellow laughed. Suddenly he clapped his huge hand over her mouth. The vase dropped to the floor and shattered, its fragments mingling with the finely powdered incense.

"Now scream—yell all you want to."

The presence of Dan Rafferty had not been noted by either the girl or man. Stepping quietly up to Sessed, Rafferty tapped him on the shoulder.

"Come, now. Behave like a gintleman and let go av the little lady."

Sessed regarded him with a sneer.

"Attend to your own affairs, slave," he retorted.

"Faith, I'll attend to you first."

Rafferty swung straight for the point of the man's jaw. Had the blow landed it would undoubtedly have settled the dispute, but Sessed was a trained fighter. He leaped back just in time to avoid the heavy fist of the Irishman. Then he whipped out his simitar.

"Put down that meat-ax and fight like a man," jeered Rafferty.

The girl was tugging at his arm.

"Run," she cried. "Escape before it is too late."

The burly face of Sessed was twisted in a sneer.

"I do not fight with slaves," he said. "I merely kill them like mad dogs when they require killing. Out of the way, girl."

He advanced threateningly, although Delra was still between them.

"Hiding behind a woman will not avail you. You are doomed."

"Who's hidin' behind a woman?" Rafferty pushed Delra gently to one side. "Cut ahead, you butcher."

Sessed raised his simitar. It was then that Rafferty leaped. Seizing the wrist of his assailant with his left hand he pushed it back and downward, locking his right arm about the fellow's head at the same time.

The heavy weapon clattered to the floor, but Sessed was far from beaten. With a grunt of pain he sank his teeth into Rafferty's shoulder. It was not until then that the Irishman exerted his full strength.

"Bite like the damned dog yez are," he said. "I'll soon put a stop to it."

A swift downward push of the twisted arm and it snapped—then hung limp and useless. The grip of the guard's jaws relaxed, and he attempted to back away. He was assisted in this by a swift uppercut that lifted him clear off the floor, then sent him crashing into a corner, where he lay very still.

Glowering down at his assailant, Dan felt a soft hand on his arm. The girl was looking up at him with an expression in which were mingled admiration and fear.

"You had best go at once," she said. "Someone may come at any moment. If you are discovered your death will be certain and horrible."

Dan placed his huge hand over the small one on his arm.

"And would that make any difference to yez?"

"I wouldn't want to see a fellow countryman suffer."

"A fellow countryman? Begorry, yez don't mane to tell me——?"

"That I'm Irish? Assuredly. I worked for a wealthy woman who became a follower of Mezzar Hashin. After attending his meetings for a year or so she sold all her property and came to Karneter, not knowing where or what Karneter was. I foolishly listened to her story of a hidden paradise and came with her. She died, poor soul, died of grief when she realized what she had done. At her death I was placed here. I understand that the period of service is one year. At the end of that time I become the property of Mezzar Hashin, or if he does not want me, one of his nobles. Yes, I'm Irish. My name is Mary Mooney. My father, Pat Mooney, was a patrolman on the north side."

"Pat Mooney! I know him well. And you're his daughter! Delra—Mary darlint! There's a chance that I can find a way out av here—I and me friends. I love you, acushla." His arms went about the slender figure. "Will yez come wid me, Mary Mooney, if I can find a way out?"

"Will I come? Oh, Dan!" The thrilling rapture of her kiss told him of her consent a thousand times more agreeably than mere words.

"Seize him, men!"

Dan's heart skipped a beat at this sudden interruption. He turned to face a wall of sharp-pointed spears in the hands of a dozen stalwart temple guards. It was obvious that resistance was useless, so he held out his wrists for the manacles which two men brought forward.

The sour-faced priest who had been his guide some time before was addressing another, evidently of considerable importance and rank, to judge from the richness of the decorations on his yellow robes and his high, jewel-encrusted head-dress, in the center of which blazed a burnished golden disk.

"I saw him fighting with Sessed, most holy Sethral," the informer was saying. "The girl was standing near by."

So this was Sethral, High Priest of Re. He had a thin, ratlike face and huge, projecting upper teeth that would not stay within the confines of his receding lips. Dan saw him bend over the fallen guard.

"It seems that Sessed has been badly used," he said. Then, after a moment's examination. "Quite brutally used, in fact. He is dead."

"Is he to be taken immediately before the High One?" The sour-faced informer was speaking again.

"No. The High One is to be troubled with no more cases until after the Festival of Re, for which he is now preparing. Confine this murderer and desecrator in the fourth dungeon until such time as the mighty Osiris is ready to pass judgment on him."

"And the girl?"

"For the present, five lashes will suffice."

Helpless rage gave way to dark despair as Dan, some twenty minutes later, was chained to the wall in the deepest, filthiest dungeon in Karneter, and left in its black solitude.

CHAPTER 14

THE FESTIVAL OF RE

HALF dazed though he was by the sudden turn of events which had again separated him from Doris and placed him in the hands of the Amazonian guards of the Temple of Isis, Buell struggled desperately to escape. The fact that he could not bring himself to strike a woman, even though that woman was a giantess and a trained fighter, made his efforts futile, and he soon found himself spread-eagled on the ground with a heavy female seated on his legs and two others holding his arms.

The sound of a familiar rumbling voice was followed by the appearance of the huge, masked face of its owner looming above him. Two livid welts showed on the exposed part of Odd's forehead. His usual calm manner, however, had not changed.

"Fool!" was all he said. Stooping, he made the heavy chain fast once more around Buell's waist. Then, motioning for the giantesses to release him, he dragged him to his feet and led him away.

Buell felt sure he would be punished for his attempted escape, but when? How? They reached the inner chamber of the Temple of Osiris which they had left that morning, without a word passing between them. Odd sat down behind the table with the two red lamps, motioned Buell to a chair, and took up a roll of papyrus.

"Your lessons will now commence," he rumbled.

Buell spent the rest of the day learning rituals and incantations and practising certain maneuvers with which it was essential that the N should be familiar. In fact, all his time up to the night before the Festival of Re was taken up in this manner, with the exception of a short walk, morning and evening, in the garden, mealtime, and the six hours

that were permitted him at night for sleep. All this time he was chained to Odd, not even being allowed to remove his clothing at night.

It seemed to Buell that they retired much earlier than usual on the night before the festival, though he had no means of making certain. He noticed, too, that a feeling of extreme drowsiness crept over him as soon as he stretched himself on his cot—something that had not happened before. "Perhaps they have doped me," he thought, but his eyes closed languorously, heavily, and deep sleep temporarily shut out further worries.

His awakening was gradual and quite pleasant. He thought at first he was dreaming, as the sounds of soft, sweet music slowly penetrated his consciousness. As he lay there with eyes closed, his other senses gathered impressions. It seemed that the cot had been transformed to a downy bed with soft, silken coverlets. Instead of the damp smell of the inner chambers of the temple, he breathed sweet, pure air, laden with the delicate fragrance of jasmine, and tinged with a hint of musk and sandalwood.

Presently the music grew louder and he opened his eyes. The sense of sight confirmed the evidence of his other senses and added to it. He was indeed lying in a soft bed, a most luxurious bed with a scarlet canopy and silken coverlets, in a large room that was gorgeously decorated and lavishly furnished. The scent of jasmine came through a latticed window at his left—the music and faint odors of musk and sandalwood from a bevy of Oriental dancing girls who swayed in rhythmic unity as they played their stringed instruments just beyond the foot of his bed. Seeing him awake, they quickly withdrew, the music dying out as the last girl tripped through the door.

Then he noticed, for the first time, that he was attired in a soft, silken sleeping garment. The chain was no longer about his waist, nor was the giant, Odd, in sight.

A soft-footed servant approached his bed, salaamed thrice, and said: "Your bath is prepared, mighty Osiris."

The title of Osiris meant that Buell's day of doom had arrived. Somehow, sometime, during that day it was the intention of the powers of Karneter that he meet his death. As he had been taught certain rituals and incantations he might reasonably expect that the ceremonies in which they were to be used would all be enacted before the blow fell. On the other hand, it might be that they had taught him some things that he could not use in order that he might be thrown off his guard when the fatal moment arrived. If anything was to be done about saving Doris and himself it must be done quickly. He must be ever on his guard, yet seemingly resigned to his fate.

Leaping out of bed with assumed cheerfulness, he bathed luxuriously. After a brisk rub-down he donned the garments brought by the servant, rich garments of white silk, similar in every respect to those which had been worn by Mezzar Hashin in the Hall of the Two Truths. The headpiece, however, had a black "N" inscribed on the burnished disk that blazed above the center of the forehead.

Another servant, entering the doorway, salaamed thrice as had the first, and announced that breakfast was served. Following the man to a magnificent dining room, he breakfasted in state, served by beautiful slave girls who pressed all manner of dainties on him.

After breakfast a servant brought him a black mask that completely covered his face, a short, heavy shep-

herd's crook, and a three-lashed whip. Masked, and holding the crook and whip crossed over his breast after the manner of Osiris, he left the building and mounted to the cushioned seat of a golden litter with a scarlet canopy, borne by twelve of the scarlet-robed priests of Osiris. The giant temple guards salaamed respectfully as he was carried out the gate. A row of them fell in line on each side of the litter and over at the left he could see lines of priests, vestal virgins and more temple guards forming.

Somewhere back in the procession a band of musicians struck up the strains of a marching song—a weird, shrieking blare of sound, rhythmic as the measured steps and chanting voices of the marchers, yet discordant if judged by modern standards.

Lining the streets in multi-hued holiday attire, the populace did homage to the Osiris N, making obeisance as the litter passed them. As they progressed the crowds grew thicker until the giant guards were compelled to push them back to let the procession through.

At the gate of the Temple of Re, where the crowd was thickest, the procession paused. The huge commander of the guards of Osiris was greeted by the commander of the guards of Re. The noise of the musicians ceased. Buell saw a fleet-footed messenger, dispatched by the latter commander, run to the portal of the temple. Scarcely had he entered it ere the distant beating of a giant drum sounded—throbbing, pulsating, thunderous in volume. The gates were flung wide and Buell was again carried forward by the scarlet-robed priests.

GARBED in the bridal robes of Isis, Doris Lee sat beneath the pale blue canopy of her palanquin in the Temple of Re, surrounded by her vestal virgins, her priestesses and her giant Amazonian guards. After her attempted escape from the Temple of Isis and her subsequent recapture she had expected punishment of some sort, but the pale blue lines beneath her eyes—the unwonted whiteness of her cheeks, had not been due to this cause alone, but rather to the fear that some dire punishment would be visited on Buell—that he would not be permitted to live even to the day on which Mezzar Hashin had previously decreed that he should die.

As no punishment had been visited on her she concluded that the person of Isis was held sacred, and fervently hoped that this might also be true in the case of the Osiris N. She had, however, prepared for emergency on the day before. While walking through the armory of her temple with her pudgy instructress she had managed to snatch unseen a slender dagger from a pile that lay on one of the tables. With the resolve that its keen blade should pierce her heart ere Mezzar Hashin could claim her for his own, she had concealed it beneath her garments and calmly entered the palanquin in which she was borne, at the head of her retinue, to the Temple of Re.

The multicolored footlights of the colossal image of Isis at the left of the altar had flashed on as she was carried through the portal of the temple, the walls of which were lined with spectators, representing, for the most part, the wealth and nobility of Karneter. Past these she was borne, to a position directly in front of the brilliantly lighted image of the goddess she now represented. The equally huge image of Osiris at the other side of the altar remained dark, and a space in front of it as large as that occupied by her own retinue was empty of people.

Directly in front of the altar crouched the yellow-robed priests of Re, their hands clasped in supplication, their faces toward the great

blazing disk above it. Sethral, the High Priest, strode back and forth before the altar, muttering incantations as he walked and flinging a handful of incense from the jeweled vase he carried on the smoldering altar-fire each time he passed it.

The drowsy mumbling of the High Priest was suddenly interrupted by the clear voice of a runner who dashed through the doorway at the far end of the room.

"The Osiris N comes!" he shouted. "Prepare to greet the Osiris N."

The heart of Doris Lee leaped to her throat as she grasped the significance of his words. Alan was alive! He was coming to the temple! There was yet hope!

Far above her head in the central dome of the temple she heard the sudden rumble of the huge drum as it roared the welcome of the mighty sun god to the Osiris N. There ensued a period of watching, during which no sound was heard save the throbbing of the great drum. Then she saw an erect, white-clad figure borne through the doorway on a golden litter carried by scarlet-robed priests. At the same moment the footlights illuminated the colossus of Osiris which stood at the right of the altar, and the spectators—even her own retinue, the yellow-clad priests of Re, and the High Priest himself—salaamed three times before the oncoming figure.

Could it be that this was really Alan? Grave doubts assailed her. Would these nobles, even Sethral, second in command in Karneter, bow thus before a prisoner—a man condemned to death?

The mask hid his features, but as he drew closer she plainly made out the black "N" on the disk that fronted his headpiece—the mark which her instructress had assured her would constitute the only difference between his costume and that of Mezzar Hashin. As he took up his position before the image of Osiris, surrounded by his priests and vestal virgins and flanked by his gigantic guards, the beating of the great drum ceased, and was replaced by a burst of plaintive Oriental music.

Then, from the doorway at the left of the altar, came a troupe of dancing girls, vestal virgins of Re. As they danced before the palanquin of the Osiris N, Doris noticed that the back of one girl, more beautiful and graceful than the others, was covered with red welts on which blood had dried and caked.

The dance over, the girls withdrew and the music changed to a funeral dirge in which the voices of the yellow-robed priests joined.

The palanquin of the Osiris N was lowered and he stepped majestically to the floor, then walked to a place directly in front of the blazing image of the sun god. There followed a long ritual in which he took an active part, and during which Sethral, the High Priest, disappeared through a door at the right of the altar. The priests departed, one by one, until the Osiris N was left alone. After a few incantations he walked to the left of the altar. Scarcely had he taken his position there, when the Osiris, wearing a black mask, appeared as if by magic directly opposite him. The Osiris made a series of mystic passes which were faithfully duplicated by the Osiris N as by a mirror. It was then that Doris noticed that the Osiris held his crook in his right hand and his whip in his left, while the Osiris N help the whip in the right hand and the crook in the left.

Suddenly the High Priest reappeared, wearing a hideous crocodile mask. In this character he was no longer Sethral, High Priest of Re, but Set, the crocodile god, mortal enemy of Osiris. Snapping the teeth of his mask, he advanced threateningly toward the two men, who drew close together as if for mutual pro-

tection. Then, with teeth still clashing, he rushed up the steps at the right of the altar and disappeared.

Still timing their movements in perfect unison, the Osiris and the Osiris N deposited their whips and crooks before the altar. A moment later, side by side, they mounted the steps up which the High Priest had gone and were also lost to view.

Doris turned to her instructress.

"Where have they gone, Thansor?" she asked.

"Into the most holy place, there to kneel with their backs to the golden disk in order that they may receive the *Sa*, the divine blessing of Re."

"Then what will they do?"

"Have patience, glorious Isis, and you shall soon see for yourself."

For several moments following, all was still as death. It seemed that the entire audience had stopped breathing, waiting for and expecting something to happen.

Suddenly, from the hidden room, there came the sound of a muffled blow. Then there fluttered out from behind the disk a curious thing—a hideous, unbelievable thing. Doris watched it, fascinated with horror—a huge bird with body, wings and claws like that of an owl, but with the head of a man! The features, pale and deathlike, were the features of Alan Buell, and they were twisted in a horrid grin as they looked down at the half-fainting girl. It hovered aimlessly for a moment above the altar, then circled, and flying directly upward, disappeared through one of the ventilators. As it disappeared, the image of Osiris was darkened.

Eyes wide with terror, Doris seized the arm of her instructress.

"Thansor, tell me quickly, what was that?"

"That," replied Thansor with a hint of exultation in her voice, "was the *Ba*—the soul of the Osiris N."

The startling denouement of this story will be related in the concluding chapters in next month's WEIRD TALES.

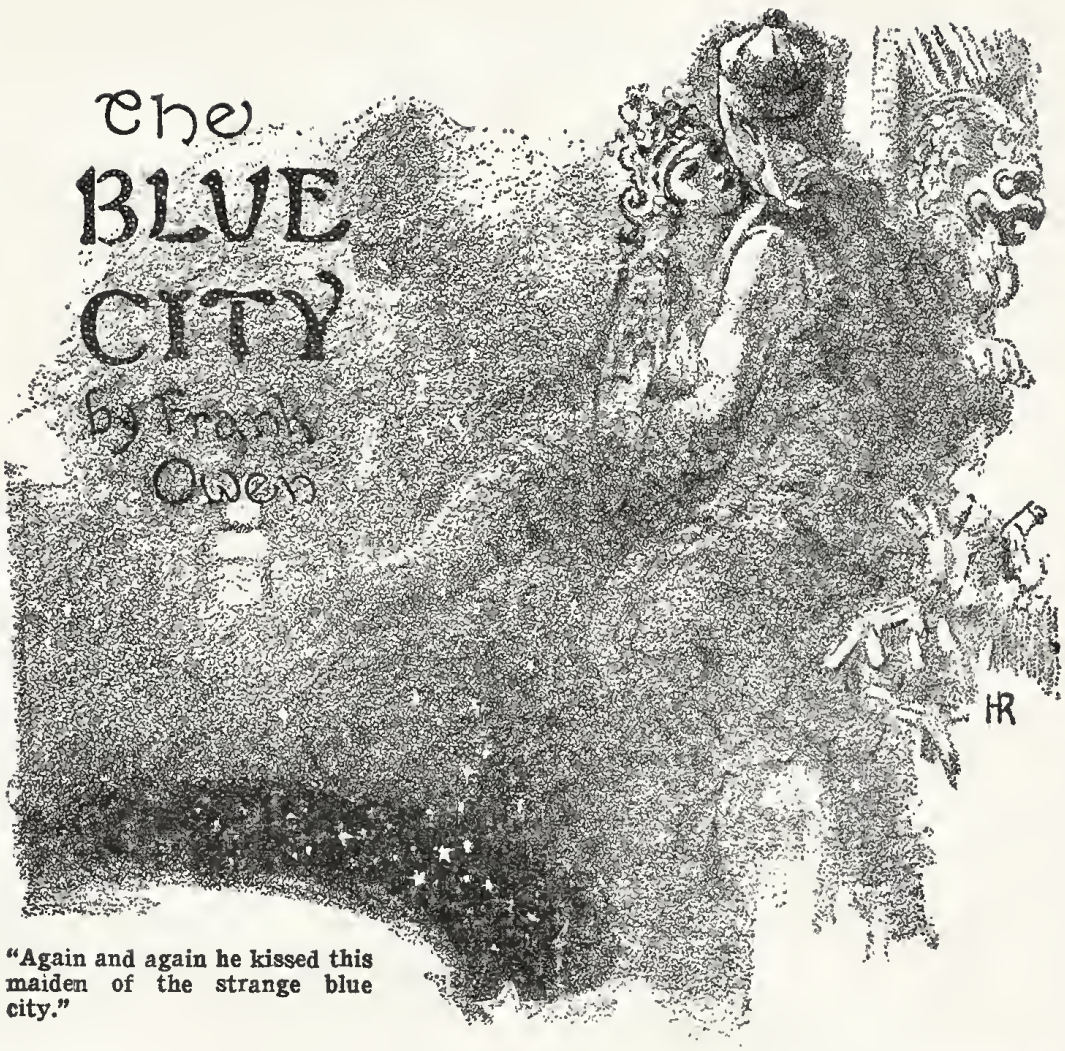
SEPTEMBER

By A. LESLIE

A drunken monk in scarlet gown
  And twisted cap of stars,
With ribald jest comes reeling down
  Staid Summer's corridors.
Deep drafts of sun-wine, yellow as
  The flaunting Black Flag's loot,
He pledges from his tilted glass
  Of dawn-sky, in salute.
White brew of moons that shine afar,
  Red fruit-wine, sharp and sweet,
Add flavor to his tales of war,
  Zest to his dancing feet.
He prates of warriors cold and stern,
  White-clad and grimly armed
With wind-swords, till the woodlands burn
  With signal fires alarmed.

The BLUE CITY

by Frank Owen



"Again and again he kissed this maiden of the strange blue city."

HWEI-TI sat in his garden. A gentle breeze was blowing, fragrant with the perfume of peach-blossoms. The sun streamed down warmly. He sighed. It seemed too bad that he had but six months to live. He was wealthy. Money meant no more to him than shriveled lotus petals. Though he were to live hundreds of years he could not exhaust his treasuries. Again he sighed and breathed deeply of the pungent air. Never had he felt in more perfect health, and yet the hand of death was reaching down to grasp him. He was still young. He had not yet reached half the span of ordinary life. He had worked hard to acquire a fortune, so hard that he had forsaken all earthly pleasures. He had never married. He was the last of his family. It was too bad that there was no offspring to carry on the splendid tradition of his old and venerated ancestors.

But now he was about to die. Woo Ling-foh, the prophet, had predicted it and never had his prognostications failed. He had predicted fire and flood, earthquake and plague, and always had his words come true. He had read the stars. His eyes traveled about the skies as though they were set free from his body. To the farthermost realms of space they roamed, and many were the mysteries into which they peered.

Woo Ling-foh and Hwei-Ti had

known each other for many years. The old mystic was a most interesting companion and countless were the tranquil hours Hwei-Ti passed listening to his quaint philosophies.

"Of all senses," mused Woo Ling-foh, "that of sight is the greatest. Who really looks with eyes that see? In every man is hidden the shadow of his ancestors. From his shadow he can not escape. Therefore might it not be possible for one to gaze at a man so intently that one could see his ancestors reaching back dimly through the mists of the ages? However, this is purely speculative on my part. I have never had opportunity to pursue this particular road of thought farther. I have been too intent on experimenting with spiritual things. For years this has been my main subject of research, and do you know what I have come to realize? Vision is granted a man only just before his death. At that period his senses are developed to their most superb degree. Animals and people do not see things in the same manner. Visions are of different intensities. For instance, birds can not distinguish blue because of the presence of yellow granules in the retina of their eyes. Numerous animals can distinguish ultra-violet rays which are not apparent to human sight, due perhaps to the fluorescence of their eyes. I merely mention these things in a fragmentary way to emphasize my point. If such things can be, might it not also be possible for one to gaze into the spiritual world if one's vision was sufficiently tuned? Not only is it possible but it has been done. I have wandered through a silent Blue City, a city of peace and contentment and rest, a city of soft whispers and sweet tones, of beauty and rare love. Come with me upon a pilgrimage. You have not long to live, six months at best, and I will take you to realms that will make your passing splendid."

Hwei-Ti was interested. He leaned forward. "Where is this city of which you speak?"

Woo Ling-foh extended his hands. "Who knows?" he said slowly. "Who knows the exact position of anything? Most places exist only if you believe in them enough."

IN THE early evening the old mystic stopped for Hwei-Ti at his garden. The sun was setting and the rose-tinted lights of late afternoon splashed on the mountains in gorgeous splendor. They walked on and on, without heat or hurry. The air was cool and refreshing, in strange variance to the humid heat of the day that had passed. Gradually the rose-tinted lights faded, giving place to purpling mists as night crept into its own. Onward they continued up a winding mountain-road, a road upon which no other wayfarers walked, a road deserted, sad, rough.

Woo Ling-foh said nothing nor did Hwei-Ti, although it was true that the rich merchant's interest and enthusiasm were raised to a pitch never attained before. He felt, as he climbed up the crooked mountain-road, as though his old life was falling from him, like a shell that had become useless. The future held mystery. He could sense it in the air. Whether it held happiness he did not know. But he doubted it because his uttermost goal was death within six months anyway. Still the night's adventure was attractive, and he labored onward up the road beside old Woo Ling-foh, the mystic, who seemed unable to appreciate fatigue. He walked forward without effort despite his age and the steepness of the trail.

Now the mantle of night had fallen completely, the stars gleamed forth. They seemed of immense size, more brilliant than ever before.

Finally they reached the summit of the mountain—a broad, tablelike plateau that faded off into the gray of the night distances. The sky was

of a brilliant blue. It seemed to bear down upon the mountain as though it were resting prone against it. The air was keen and fragrant.

It was very light. The stars shone forth in startling splendor.

Woo Ling-foh seized Hwei-Ti by the shoulder. "They are not stars," he whispered; "they are lanterns gleaming from windows in the magical Blue City."

The moon had risen, silver-bright, cool, as sharp-cut as a diamond. Before them stretched a long white road, a road of moonbeams that spread off toward the Blue City.

Woo Ling-foh took Hwei-Ti's hand. "Come," he murmured, and together they set off down the Moon Road that swerved into the skies.

Hwei-Ti's eyes were round with amazement. Could it be possible that they were walking into the very skies? Was he mad? Was even Woo Ling-foh but a figment of his distorted imagination? And yet there was a peace, a quietude about the occasion which was extremely beautiful. If it were madness it were better than his former state. Never had he known such complete tranquillity.

Woo Ling-foh still held his arm. "Look clearly," he said softly, "and as your eyes grow accustomed to the azure light you will be able to make out the forms of houses, and perhaps if you are able to tune your vision sufficiently, people also will be apparent to you."

The light was of queer intensity, blue that made one long to slumber, blue that was maddening in its beauty, blue that was like a soft caress. Here and there gray shadows loomed. Hwei-Ti sighed. He was at peace. Dimly through the mists he could see the outlines of houses, charming little houses with happy lanterns glowing in the windows. They were all of blue, not of one tone but of many, suggesting that they were really of variegated colors softened by a glaze of blue.

It was very quiet in that strange city, but not soundless. The solitude was restful. It was like a city in the deep hush of morning before the birds had awakened or the flowers had unfolded to the dawn. Their footbeats made no sound as they passed along, and this was well, for on the fragrant air was the suggestion of sweet singing, as though some lovely lady were crooning love-melodies to the moon. Now the blue trees commenced to stir. They exhaled a sweet fragrance, fragrance of pine and fir, of myrrh and sandalwood. Onward they walked. In the houses the lamps still burned. They glowed gorgeously through the blue maze.

Hwei-Ti sighed. Vision had been granted him at last. All that he had beheld in his entire life dwarfed to naught by comparison to this.

At last they came to a house lovelier than all others. It was by no means a mansion, merely a lovely homelike dwelling with countless flowers growing all about it. Before the door of the house sat a lovely maiden. She was simply dressed in a soft blue costume. Her hair was blue-black. It shone with an exotic sheen in the lantern light that streamed through the window. Her lips were red, made more vivid and startling by the fact that they were the sole bit of color other than blue in the garden. When she smiled, her teeth gleamed white as alabaster.

As Hwei-Ti gazed into her wondrous young face he was thrilled. She was lovelier than any woman his wildest dreams had pictured. She was exquisite. She was divine. It had been the echo of her singing which had given music to the air. It was she who had been crooning to the moon. He stepped forward and bowed toward the ground. Before such beauty he was speechless. All that he desired was to worship before her. He felt as though he were

less than the dust at her feet, even though his wealth was boundless. Before the great wealth of her beauty his own wealth faded utterly.

At their approach she glanced up and smiled. One would have imagined that they had been friends always. Hwei-Ti put out his arms and she came to him with the sweet simplicity of a child. The next moment he had kissed her soft red lips and in that moment he knew that life held nothing better for him than the love of this glorious girl. Again and again he kissed this maiden of the strange Blue City. He did not stop to consider that he had found her by walking down the Moon Road that led into the sky. It was sufficient that she was in his arms, accepting his kisses. It was the zenith hour of existence.

Meanwhile old Woo Ling-foh stood near by, smiling faintly. His old wrinkled face seemed lit by a divine fire. He was patient and he waited.

The girl led the way to a bench beneath a magnolia tree. The scent of blossoms perfumed the garden. And there she sat and sang love-songs to him, sang until his senses reeled for the want of her, sang until the lanterns in the windows one by one flickered out, sang until the soft blue of the city began to fade into the glorious rose-tints of morning.

It was then that Woo Ling-foh's manner changed completely. He glanced about at the pale pink shadows, then he seized Hwei-Ti by the hand and dashed pell-mell up the Moon Road as though all the serpents that hide under the mountains of China were close at their heels. Hwei-Ti tried to protest, but the strength of the aged prophet was phenomenal. By his chaotic manner Hwei-Ti sensed that they were fleeing from some terrible horror. Yet how could horror stalk in the lovely garden of that beautiful girl?

It was sacrilege to credit such a doubt. And if danger existed, were they not cowards to flee from it, sacrificing her to an unknown fate?

AT LAST they arrived at the mountain-top from which they had walked off onto the Moon Road. Woo Ling-foh fell panting to the ground. His lean, gaunt face was colorless. He closed his eyes and moaned and moaned. He had used up all his strength in an effort to escape from the Blue City.

Hwei-Ti was amazed. He could not understand Woo Ling-foh's sudden change of front. The Blue City had been exquisitely peaceful and calm, yet it had aroused panic in the mind of the old mystic. He stood gazing off toward the majestic picture of dawn which was unfolding before him. The last star had expired, not a vestige of the Blue City remained. Gone, too, was the Moon Road, like a night-fog before the West Wind.

He bent over Woo Ling-foh and touched him upon the shoulder. Hwei-Ti was not in the best of tempers. He resented having been torn away from the magnolia garden against his will, from the presence of that little China girl who was more lovely than any vision which his wildest fancy painted.

"Why did you drag me away?" he demanded angrily.

Woo Ling-foh opened his eyes and smiled wanly. "To save you from being crushed by the dawn," he said slowly. "You are still a mortal. The terrific beauty of a rose-dawn in the Blue City would crush you to death. You would be blinded, dazzled by the light, scorched by the glory of the sun. Would you want such a hideous death of beauty? To be blasted by beauty: what more awful fate could ever be devised?"

"But the girl," pleaded Hwei-Ti hoarsely: "What has become of her? Has she been burned beyond recognition? Did we sacrifice her to a death so frightful?"

"No," replied Woo- Ling-foh, "we did not leave the girl in danger for she was in truth but a spirit and therefore she was safe in the spiritual Blue City. It has been given you to see that which few men have ever witnessed during their natural lives. You should be content. Because one can not always see the Blue City does not prove its non-existence. For neither can one see with the unaided eye the ultra-violet ray. But enough. Do not dwell too much on the happenings of the night that has passed. It would be unwise. It might unbalance your reason. Too profound meditation has its dangers. That is why no philosopher is entirely sane."

DURING the weeks that followed, Hwei-Ti sat long in his garden. He brooded over the Blue City. A great melancholy descended upon him. He was in love, in love with a gorgeous girl who lived in a spirit city. Perhaps she had been dead for fifty years. His life lay in ruins. He was very wealthy, but his wealth was not sufficient to bring that wondrous girl to him. He could not have been more despondent if he had been the veriest beggar in the market-place. He lost his desire for food. Sam-shu held no allure. He grew thin and haggard. Old Woo Ling-foh had gone off on a pilgrimage to the South, so he could not accompany him to the city once again.

Weeks rolled by. They lengthened into months. And Hwei-Ti remained in his garden. Desiring, dreaming, yearning for the magic city and the lovely girl.

And he thought of the prediction of the old philosopher, that he would not live six months. He believed it to be true, for he was ill from longing. He was on the threshold of death and he did not care. There was naught left to him in the world. Gold and jewels—what need had he for such worthless baubles? They could not buy happiness.

Then again came Woo Ling-foh.

"I am dying," murmured Hwei-Ti, "and before I finally expire I wish once more to visit the wondrous Blue City."

"I wonder," mused Woo Ling-foh. "I wonder whether death is really death, or is it life? Is it the birth of the soul? For surely when it is set free from the body, to wander untrammeled through the universe, it can not be death. However, vain speculations interest only those who like to spend their hours in such pursuits."

"I wish once more to visit the magical city," repeated Hwei-Ti.

"It would be dangerous," replied Woo Ling-foh. "We escaped with our lives only by the width of a spun golden thread. To return would be to court disaster. You are too emotional. Be content. Wander not into realms that are fraught with danger."

Hwei-Ti sprang to his feet. He seized the old man by the throat. His reason snapped. Slowly his long fingers closed about the lean old throat. "If you do not take me to the mountain-top from which we walked off into the Moon Road," he cried hoarsely, "your life shall end at this moment!"

Woo Ling-foh flung Hwei-Ti's fingers from about his throat. He was not angry at the attack, for he realized that madness was creeping over his friend. He was not afraid, but he acceded to his wishes because he believed that calm death would be preferable to the maniacal existence toward which Hwei-Ti was plunging.

So in the evening he called again at the garden and together they set off toward the mountain-road. Hwei-Ti was very weak. Only his will to reach the Blue City carried him forward. He was overtaxing his feeble strength in this one superb effort, but he did not care. His craving was to be satiated.

When they arrived at the mountain-road, Woo Ling-foh paused. "You must continue onward alone," he said slowly. "The stars do not portend well, so I can not go with you. All my movements are controlled by astrological divinings. That is why contentment and peace are mine."

Hwei-Ti made no protest at the old mystic's desertion. In fact he scarcely heeded it. It was enough that he was nearing the Blue City. His weakness was acute. His throat was parched. His tongue was dry. Time after time he staggered and fell. But ever he rose to his feet and continued onward up the sad, lonesome road. Eventually he reached the summit of the mountain. He breathed painfully. His eyes were wet with tears. He was very weak. But there before him stretched the Moon Road, a street of shimmering silver that swerved off into the Blue City.

As he walked out upon the Moon Road much of his fatigue abated. The cool air laved his tired body as though it were balm. It caressed his wasted cheeks, smoothed away the marks of worry and care. In the windows of the houses the star-lamps gleamed, and gradually he could make out the form of the houses as his vision adjusted itself to the pungent blue. Finally he heard the sound of sweet singing. His heart beat fast. Now he was weak no longer. Love, desire, made him strong.

The next moment he was in the magnolia garden and the wondrous girl was in his arms, crushed to his breast like a beautiful, fragrant flower. Contentment was complete. He kissed her soft lips again and again. Then she pushed him slowly away and continued her singing. But now she sang directly to him, a song that roses sing when their lovers return. It was magic, it was enchantment. Perhaps Woo Ling-foh was right. The Blue City was a spirit world; but if so, what mattered?

Entranced, he lingered in the garden until the rose-tipped shafts of morning crept into the skies. Slowly the blue faded into roseate magnificence. The magnolia trees sighed softly. They swayed in the breeze as though they were awaking. A few of the fragile blossoms fell upon him. The lovely, flowerlike maiden rose to her feet. She took his hand and faced toward the East. An ecstatic expression was upon her face and her soft bosom rose and fell as though she were greatly enthused. Forgotten by Twei-Ti was the panic that had seized Woo Ling-foh on that other morning when they had fled together from the gorgeous horrors about which Woo Ling-foh talked in whispers. Gone was fear, fear of death, fear of life. Only the rose tints of lovely dawn remained and this girl of songs and dreams.

Slowly the blue faded and the rose, pink, orange glow intensified. From the distance there came a great moaning, a moaning as of the sea booming upon a white coral beach. It sounded like distant thunder. It was the thunder of dawn, the crashing beauty of the sun. Slowly, majestically it loomed into view. Its brilliance was blinding, dazzling. It burned the eyes of Hwei-ti, yet he could not turn them away. One by one the star-lanterns flickered out. His body commenced to tremble. It was the most exalted moment of his life. It was like a journey to the sun. It was a beauty too intense for his poor mind to absorb. He commenced to tremble.

The roar of the waves upon the coral beach intensified. Now the whole city was golden, tipped with rose and orange. The roar was frightful. He felt as though his head were bursting. His eyes pained as though they were on fire. He could not breathe. Moaning he fell to his

knees, nor could he rise again. Yet ever he kept his eyes turned toward the sun. The sun in morning splendor beat upon him, dazzlingly beautiful but ruthless in its intensity. It burned out his eyes. It scorched his body to ashes. It crushed him beneath its glory. When he had borne pain to the uttermost, agony beyond words, the spark of his life flickered out.

All through the rose dawn he lay lifeless at the feet of the lovely girl. Softly she crooned threnodies of love to him. Until at last sunset came, the golden glow gave way to the purpling shadows of evening, then to the pungent blue of night. Gradually the lamps were lighted in the windows. A fragrant breeze cooled the air.

Abruptly the girl stopped singing. She stooped and kissed the cracked, broken lips of Hwei-Ti. He opened his eyes. As he gazed into hers, new strength came to him.

"Come," she whispered softly.

He rose to his feet. Together they sat once more beneath the magnolia tree. The garden had never before seemed more beautiful.

"You will never again have to leave the Blue City," she murmured. "Now we can be together until the very sun doth cool."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

And she replied, "Simply that you came into the Blue City with a material body. But now all that is material has been burned away. The spiritual only remains."

As she finished speaking she commenced once more to sing of old longings and young love. Hwei-Ti folded his hands. He was content. He was at peace.

A Weird-scientific Story

THE SOUL-RAY

By DON ROBERT CATLIN

PROFESSOR LATOUR surveyed the young man through thick lenses. "Yes?" he said.

The young man shifted from one foot to the other. "If you are the man who advertised——"

"Ah, yes," murmured the professor. "I had almost forgotten that I should be expecting answers to my advertisement this evening. Please step in." He waved to a leather-covered armchair near the fireplace. "Make yourself comfortable, sir, while I finish the experiment with which I was engaged when you rang."

The young man crossed to the chair and sank into its deep seat. He gazed around him, noting that the professor had gone into a kind of alcove fitted up as a laboratory, small, but complete. From time to time bright flashes of dazzling blue light came from the alcove, but the applicant for the strange position advertised by the professor sensed that the other was covertly watching him, and he evinced no curiosity concerning what was going on in the alcove.

After a short while the professor joined the young man, and stood beaming down upon him through those thick lenses. "You have reason to believe that you fulfil each require-

ment?" he asked, indicating the neatly-clipped square of paper which the young man still held in his fingers.

The other nodded, smiling. His eyes fell to the advertisement, and he reread it:

WANTED—Man to assist in experimental work; no special experience required. He may be of any age, but must be a single man, must be prepared to bury himself in his work, and have no intercourse with the outside world while engaged in my employ, which may continue for a year or more. Professor Jules Latour, 1081 West ——— St.

"Well, sir, I'm a single man; and I am prepared to—er—bury myself in my work. May I ask what——"

The professor was looking into the young man's face with an air of deliberate and penetrating scrutiny, a trick which scientific men seem to acquire, perhaps from constantly peering through instruments. His gaze seemed to have a paralyzing effect, and the other could not help shifting his chair a little so as to turn his face partly away.

As he did so his eyes fell on a large glass vessel, which he had not noticed before, standing in a corner. It was shaped like an ordinary wide-mouthed bottle, but it was the enormous size of it which arrested his attention. He had never seen a glass vessel of such large dimensions, for it must have stood nearly four feet high and was broad in proportion.

He could still feel the professor's eyes upon him, and he went on: "I am Tom Savage, sir. May I—may I ask what kind of experimental work you are carrying on?"

"Ah, you would like to hear?" Behind the professor's thick lenses, his oddly-shot eyes gleamed with the enthusiasm of a fanatic. "Look you, sir, yonder in my laboratory; do you see the body of that kitten, in the stoppered glass jar? Would you be surprized to hear that I had separated its soul from its body?"

The young man stared. "Why—I—I hardly know what to say. I hadn't known that—er—cats *had* souls."

"Neither had I, sir, until—— But I really mean what I say. I have actually materialized a perfectly visible, though intangible, soul. You saw those bright blue flashes a moment ago? They were rays of a new kind, discovered by myself, which I call Soul-Rays. Any ordinary substance exposed to the light of these rays becomes absolutely invisible and leaves no trace on sensitized photographic film. I had been testing several kinds of metals, when a most singular phenomenon occurred.

"On developing one of the films before which a tube of mercury had been exposed, I was astounded to find the perfect image of a common housefly! The film was otherwise a blank. I killed a fly and set it in front of the apparatus; and the film when developed was blank. The thing was a mystery. Was it only *living* things that were visible under the rays?

"Trembling with excitement I caught yet another fly, this time alive, and secured it in a test-tube. To my immense delight the film now showed a perfect image of the fly. I tried with other insects, and the results were always the same; the live ones gave a perfect negative, the dead ones a blank. You may imagine my excitement over the discovery, for it seemed to prove that there was something substantial about life, something not visible to the naked eye, but which must be present under the rays.

"The next step was to discover the precise moment at which the dead body of an animal became invisible. Owing to the nature of the rays, it is impossible to observe the phenomenon directly with one's eyes. It was necessary, therefore, to arrange for a series of photographic exposures, which was made possible by means of

a motor-driven motion picture camera. I placed a fly in a tube into which poisonous gas could be introduced at will, and set the camera in motion. A splendid series of negatives was the result, clearly demonstrating the fact that the insect became suddenly invisible immediately after the entry of the gas—that is to say, at the moment of death."

"A marvelous discovery, sir," said Tom Savage. "But, er—about this position——"

"It is quite necessary for you to understand something of my discoveries before we can intelligently discuss whether or not you will enter my employ," interposed the professor. "Yes, it was a most marvelous discovery. But a closer examination revealed a still more curious phenomenon. On the first negative *after* the body of the fly became invisible was a series of dark round spots. On each successive film exposure the spots were a little higher, until at last they vanished beyond its upper edge. I then put a spider in the test-tube, killed it, and the spots were again on the film, ascending as before; but now they were more numerous. Could it be possible that the spots represented the life of the insect, leaving the inanimate body, and that the number of the spots corresponded with the scale of life in which the insect existed?

"I experimented with a canary bird, only yesterday, and this evening the subject was a kitten, which you may still see in that glass-stoppered bottle. Presuming, as it seems to be the only possible deduction, that these spots actually depict the soul escaping from the lifeless body, it would seem that the insect world is represented by round-shaped spots, or organisms, and the emanating spots in the case of fowls and mammals are respectively square and hexagonal. The number of the spots may, as I have already suggested, be explained by the position in the scale of life held by each creature. You follow my argument, sir?"

As the professor spoke he leaned forward toward the young man and fixed his piercing eyes upon him, Savage felt himself start as if waking from a doze, though he had clearly been conscious all the time of what the other had been saying.

"There is one experiment," went on the professor, lowering his voice to a seductive whisper, "which is indispensable before I can be really sure of the value of my discovery. *It is to get a record of what happens in the case of a human being!*"

THE young man could not restrain a feeling of repulsion at the cold-blooded manner in which an experiment on a human being was classed with those that had been made on lower forms of life. He felt, now, rather than saw, a pair of gimlet eyes fixed upon him, though his own gaze had wandered in the direction of the enormous bottle in the corner.

The enormous bottle in the corner—it was large enough to accommodate a human being!

The professor again began to speak, a strange and sinister emphasis in his voice.

"You came here in answer to an advertisement which called for a man who was single, and therefore with no close ties to bind him, and who was ready to bury himself in his work, assisting me in an experiment. I am doing you the honor to permit you to be an active participator in one of the most marvelous discoveries of psychological science. You will remove the stopper, enter the large bottle. I will prepare my apparatus. Your demise, my dear sir, will be entirely painless, I assure you."

An overpowering influence seized upon young Savage; he found his dragging feet were carrying him,

slowly but surely, to the immense glass bottle. Never had life seemed so well worth living as now when he knew that in a moment, if the professor had his way, he would be as stiff and lifeless as the kitten whose carcass still lay in its enshrouding little glass bottle.

"It will soon be over," said the professor, divining his thoughts. "And I expect I shall get a splendid series of negatives," he added in a tone of repulsive callousness.

An unquenchable spirit of revolt arose within the young man's breast, but he had fallen under the spell of the professor's words, and, try as he might, he could not resist the effects of the mesmeric trance into which the other had thrown him. He found himself being lifted, inch by inch, up the polished side of the great jar until its sharp rim rested against his spine. Suddenly the encircling arms were loosened, and he toppled backward into the yawning mouth of glass.

He lay bruised and breathless at the bottom of the jar while the professor adjusted the heavy glass stopper. The air seemed to grow more and more stuffy. Had the poison fumes begun to enter? Every pulse in his body seemed to throb and race in a wild desire for life, and he exerted a tremendous effort to get to his feet and push out the stopper. But an unknown mastery held him in check.

His breathing had no doubt exhausted some of the air inside the jar, and the partial vacuum had——

The sight of the scientist, busy manipulating the apparatus, spurred Savage to further exertion. Though he strained with all his might and main, he could but beat feebly with hands and feet against the smooth walls.

Then a strange and pungent odor filled his nostrils, and he knew that the end had come. In a half-conscious, half-spasmodic, superhuman effort of his dying agony, he hurled himself bodily against the side of the jar.

The scientist was obviously wrapped in a trance of enthusiasm that overstepped the boundary line of sanity and entered the realms of frenzy. But, as the doomed man in the jar pounded madly for freedom, his expression changed.

The last impressions limned upon Tom Savage's conscious brain were distorted visions of the professor swiftly striding toward the jar, some blunt instrument raised above his head as though to threaten, to force him into passiveness. Then, as his eyelids closed, he caught a last clear sight of the scientist as he stumbled. Came a ringing crash to his deadened ears. . . .

When he awoke, he lay sprawled half within, half without the now shattered glass bottle. His hands and face were covered with a warm, sticky substance which he knew to be blood. But he still lived; and so he scrambled to his feet—and stood motionless for a moment, staring wide-eyed at the recumbent form of the professor.

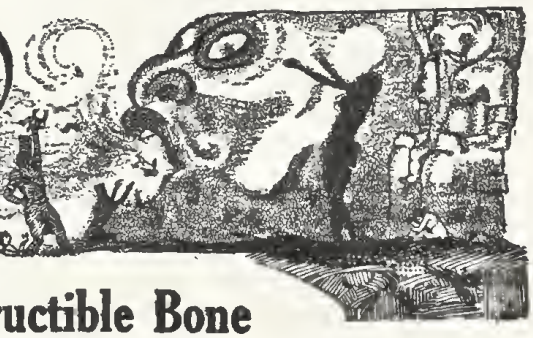
The scientist lay crumpled where he had fallen, a victim to an overworked and over-excited heart.

THEY thought Tom Savage a madman when he stumbled into the nearest police station and told his bizarre story. He was held in custody while officers investigated his singular tale. But, eventually, he was released.

Though many experiments were made, no one ever succeeded in solving the mystery of Professor Latour's Soul-Ray, nor could anyone discover its curious properties. But the photographic records of that wild evening remain, and are still an enigma to the scientific world. The most valuable part of the professor's collection consists of a roll of motion picture film depicting a man in curiously dis-

torted attitudes. They are clear, sharp-cut impressions, with the exception of the last few feet of film, in which the human form is only faintly visible, *but above the head, though still attached to it, is a ring of bright points, like the halo of some medieval saint!*

Folks Used to Believe



by ALVIN F. HARLOW

The Indestructible Bone

CERTAIN early Jewish writers had a theory that there was in each human body a bone called Luz which, being indestructible, would exist until the Day of Judgment, when with it as a nucleus, all our bodies would be reconstructed as they were. They based this conjecture upon a fantastic interpretation of a passage in *Genesis*, where Luz is evidently the name of a place rather than a bone.

An old Hebrew book called *Breshith Rabboth* tells how the Roman Emperor Hadrian, while directing an invasion of Judea, met "the rabbin Jehoshuang and asked him how God would raise man at the day of judgment? From the Luz, replied the rabbin. How do you know it? says Adrian. Bring me one and you shall see, says Jehoshuang." One was produced, and they tried by fire, pounding and all conceivable methods to destroy it, but could not.

The theory caused much discussion in the Christian world a few centuries ago, and not a few were inclined to accept it. Although the rabbis had plainly stated that the bone was located in the lower part of the back, and was about the size and shape of half a pea, yet some Gentile philosophers contended that it was one of the vertebræ, others that it was the sesamoid bone of the great toe, and still others that it was one of the triangular bones in the top of the skull.

John Dunton, in his book, *The Religion of a Bookseller* (published 1728), says that the Talmudists declare regarding the Luz that it "never suffers any Putrefaction, but remaining to the last Day, incorruptible in its primitive Consistency, is then impregnated by a Dew from Heaven, which, diffusing its Virtue like a Ferment, not only animates and quickens this Seminal Bone, but also attracts all the Atoms which formerly constituted the Body, tho' dispersed in the remotest Corners and hidden Recesses of the Universe, marshalling them in the same Order as before their Dissolution, and so recovering the Body to its Primitive State." Dunton could not agree with this idea; he "thought it not decorous to put the Angels on the Drudgery of Scavengers, as if it should at that Day be their Employment to sweep the Graves and Charnel-Houses, to sift the Elements and rake in all the Receptacles of the Dead for Men's divided Dust. When the Grand Alarm is given, God can soon fit our Souls with proper Matter for their future Bodies out of the Elements, as well as out of their own Antiquated Embers."

NIGHT WINGS

By JACK SNOW

NERLE stood for a moment in the window looking far down at the moonlit garden with its nodding, moist blossoms and lichenous, aged trunks. A moth flitted past his shoulder in search of flame. A rush of cool air swept around him, fluttering the window draperies. He was wrapped deep in thought, his mind far away, like an adventurer in strange lands. He stood on the very edge of the open window. Suddenly he felt himself falling—down—down. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the earth rushing toward him. A host of lights sped like comet-tails across his eyelids. He waited for the impact.

He was still falling—gently now—like an autumn leaf on a full, swelling breeze. Slowly he opened his eyes. The earth was only a few feet below him, he was floating toward it as gracefully as a feather loosened from the plumage of a bird. Now the tips of his toes touched the glistening, dew-beaded grass-blades and became moist and coolly damp with the crystal drops. And then just as his toes touched the grass he felt himself soaring high into the air again, rebounding as if he were the lightest of airy bubbles.

Far above the tops of the tallest trees he rose and floated on and on. How cool the breeze! How gently it caressed his tired body, as if it would soothe him into rest!

The earth lay far below him. He flew gracefully on through the silver darkness. At times he rolled on his back and watched the blue, peaceful heavens flow past him. The twinkling stars nodded as if all were understood between them and there were no mysteries at all. Again he lay with his face toward the dark, sleeping earth. How sad it looked and forsaken—the quiet, shell-like houses, the dim, deserted lanes and alleys, the feeble street lamps flickering, the melancholy trees sighing as the flowing wind plied their branches to and fro in a mournful revery and seemed to whistle a sorrowful accompaniment to its own melody as it swept around corners and rolled up hills and sank into vales!

All this Nerle saw as he flew on and on, and the flying was no effort, for he was a bit of the merest flotsam on a great soft sea. Once he passed over a town and swept low into the streets. Two men saw him and pointed and opened their mouths as if to shout in wonder, although Nerle heard no sound whatever. Again he circled around the belfry of an old church. The dust of the village lay thick on its stones, and as he swept past, three large bats fell from their perches and began swooping about in ever-increasing circles, their ribbed wings clicking through the wind like ghostly castanets.

He followed the liquid path of a stream whose waters were bathed in moonlight and leapt over mossy stones to leave them dripping with streams of the purest silver. He watched it farther on as it hurtled madly over a fall and dashed headlong onto the rocks below. He flew low enough to catch the cool spray in his face and listen to the roar of the waters and glimpse a silver fin leap for an instant from its depths.

Farther on, the stream widened into a lake, a placid, moonlit, shimmering lake, whose still surface

rippled calmly in the breeze, hurried by no rushing current. Its edges were stagnant and fringed with round lily pads and tall, slim rushes with forms like young girls, and water-moss, and peopled with water insects that scurried like bits of broken light over its deep, grassy surface. From marshes came the voices of the stream animals—the nocturnal birds, the loons sorrowing and the chants of the devout frogs.

And all the while the breezes were fondling him, flowing over his naked body, tracing his shape, fluttering his hair and touching his eyelids with cool fingertips.

And then the sense of motion seemed to lull and become gradually slighter and slighter until Nerle seemed almost to be at rest. The heavens grew dim and the stars receded and glimmered like the minutest pin-points, far, far away in a remote background of nothingness. The earth became blackness and at times all was swallowed up in the blackness—earth, sky, heavens, Nerle and stars.

Nerle lay like a dead, motionless planet midway between the stars and the earth for some minutes. Then slowly he opened his eyes. He lay flat on his back in his narrow bed, gazing up at the ceiling.

So he had dreamed again. Yes, it was a dream, like those he had had many times before. Oh, the times he had flown! The times he had swung high above the earth in triumphant flight! And the still more numerous times his power was limited to short hops when he must return to the earth as if for momentum and fly only at broken intervals! He supposed everyone had dreams of this sort; he had found many accounts of them. King and beggar alike flew by night from the downy softness of velvet couches and the unyielding hardness of beds of stone.

And each time that Nerle had flown (and he had begun in his childhood), he had thought that surely this time he would remember after he awoke how he had done it. But always the mists and fogs of reality arose to obscure the revelation. There remained with him, however, the conviction that flight was as natural, as instinctive, as walking.

Tonight he had dreamed more perfectly, more vividly than ever before, and he had awakened while the dream was yet fresh and real. He was wide awake—and he remembered! There was no doubting it, he remembered clearly, perfectly. He was not disturbed nor excited, he was entirely cool and calm. Well, why not? What else had he been expecting, waiting, hoping for? It dawned upon him that the only reason it had ever seemed difficult to fly was that he had not guessed its simplicity. How he would surprize his friends with his power! He lay staring solemnly and unblinkingly up at the ceiling.

For some time he lay motionless, his mind quivering with thought, and then he arose and crept from his bed. It was not yet morning and he could safely prove his power without fear of interference or detection.

He slipped his night-clothes from his body and stepped quietly to the window. He threw wide open the doors of the window and gazed out. It was just such a night as he had left. There was the slumbering garden; there the tall, murmuring trees; there the starry heavens and the moon like a silver lady stepping among the twinkling flowers of her garden. Already the breeze was wrapping itself about his body, filling him with intolerable delight.

He stepped from the window. He fell horribly at first, as he had in his dream. He closed his eyes and a myriad tiny balls burst into flaming light. His bare toes touched the grass

for an instant and then he soared aloft, high into the heavens. He opened his eyes. Ah, the bliss, the rapture of that flight! The floating in nothing, the contact with nothing; the complete, airy lightness; the relaxation of the strained muscles, and then the breeze—caressing, soothing, stroking, cool!

The faintest rosy glow was in the east, and toward it he was flying.

EARLY in the morning, just after dawn had broken, the old gardener who had some new rose-trees to set out under Nerle's window found the white, naked body of the sleep-walker lying on the ground beneath the window. It was moist and covered with the dews of the morning, which glistened like a magical cloak threaded with diamonds and possessed of miraculous power.

Interrogation

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Love, will you look with me
Upon the phosphor-litten labor of the worm,
Time's minister, who toils for his appointed term,
And has for fee
All superannuate loves, and all the loves to be?

Love, can you see, as I,
The corpses, ghosts, and demons mingled with the crowd?
The djinns that men have freed, grown turbulent and proud;
Alastor, Asmodai?
And all-unheeded envoys from the stars on high?

Know you the gulfs below,
Where darkling Erebus on Erebus is driven
Between the molecules—atom from atom riven
And tossing to and fro,
Incessant, like the souls on Dante's wind of wo?

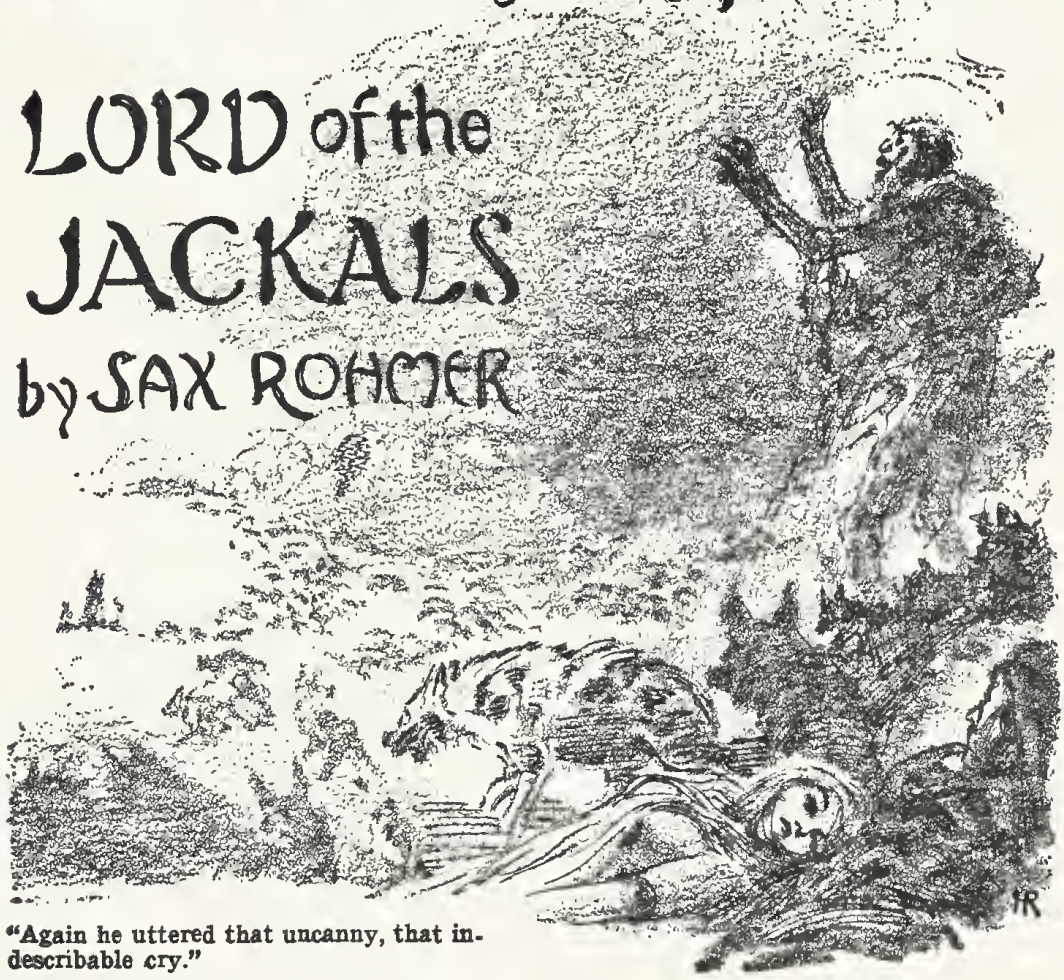
Know you the deeps above?
The terror and the vertigo of those that gaze too long
Upon the crystal noon unclouded? Are you strong
With me to prove
Even in thought or dream the dreadful pits above?

Know you the gulfs within?
The worms and dragons of the charnel caves undared?
The somber foam of seas by cryptic sirens shared?
The pestilence and sin
Borne by the flapping shroud of liches met within?

Weird Story Reprint

LORD of the JACKALS

by SAX ROHMER



"Again he uttered that uncanny, that indescribable cry."

IN THOSE days, of course [said the French agent, looking out across the sea of Yûssuf Effendis which billowed up against the balcony to where, in the moonlight, the minarets of Cairo pointed the way to God], I did not occupy the position which I occupy today. No, I was younger, and more ambitious; I thought to carve in the annals of Egypt a name for myself such as that of De Lesseps.

I had a scheme—and there were those who believed in it—for extending the borders of Egypt. Ah! my friends, Egypt after all is but a double belt of mud following the Nile, and terminated east and west by the desert. The desert! It was the dream of my life to exterminate that desert, that hungry gray desert; it was my plan—a foolish plan as I know now—to link the fertile Fáyûm to the Oases! How was this to be done? Ah!

Why should I dig up those buried skeletons? It was not done; it never could be done; therefore, let me not bore you with how I had proposed to do it. Suffice it that my ambitions took me far off the beaten tracks, far, even, from the caravan roads—far into the gray heart of the desert.

But I was ambitious, and only

nineteen—or scarcely twenty. At nineteen, a man who comes from St. Rémy fears no obstacle which Fate can place in his way, and looks upon the world as a grapefruit to be sweetened with endeavor and sucked empty.

It was in those days, then, that I learned as your Rudyard Kipling has also learned that "East is East;" it was in those days that I came face to face with that "mystery of Egypt" about which so much is written, has always been written, and always will be written, but concerning which so few people, so very few people, know anything whatever.

Yes, I, René de Flassans, saw with my own eyes a thing that I knew to be magic, a thing whereat my reason rebelled—a thing which my poor European intelligence could not grapple, could not begin to explain.

It was this which you asked me to tell you, was it not? I will do so with pleasure, because I know that I speak to men of honor, and because it is good for me, now that I can not count the gray hairs in my beard, to confess how poor a thing I was when I could count every hair upon my chin—and how grand a thing I thought myself.

One evening, at the end of a dreadful day in the saddle—beneath a sky which seemed to reflect all the fires of hell, a day passed upon sands simply smoking in that merciless sun—I and my native companions came to an encampment of Arabs.

They were Bedouins — the tribe does not matter at the moment—and, as you may know, the Bedouin is the most hospitable creature whom God has yet created. The tent of the Sheikh is open to any traveler who cares to rest his weary limbs therein. Freely he may partake of all that the tribe has to offer, food and drink and entertainment; and to seek to press payment upon the host would be to insult a gentleman.

That is desert hospitality. A spear that stands thrust upright in the sand before the tent door signifies that whosoever would raise his hand against the guest has first to reckon with the Sheikh. Equally it would be an insult to erect one's own tent in the neighborhood of a Bedouin encampment.

Well, my friends, I knew this well, for I was no stranger to the nomadic life, and accordingly, without fear of the fierce-eyed throng who came forth to meet us, I made my respects to the Sheikh Saïd Mohammed, and was reckoned by him as a friend and a brother. His tent was placed at my disposal and provisions were made for the suitable entertainment of those who were with me.

You know how dusk falls in Egypt? At one moment the sky is a brilliant canvas, glorious with every color known to art, at the next the curtain—the wonderful veil of deepest violet—has fallen; the stars break through it like diamonds through the finest gauze; it is night, velvet, violet night. You see it here in this noisy modern Cairo. In the lonely desert it is ten thousand times grander, ten thousand times more impressive; it speaks to the soul with the voice of the silence. Ah, those desert nights!

So was the night of which I speak; and having partaken of the fare which the Sheikh caused to be set before me—and Bedouin fare is not for the squeamish stomach—I sipped that delicious coffee which, though an acquired taste, is the true nectar, and looked out beyond the four or five palm trees of this little oasis to where the gray carpet of the desert grew black as ebony and met the violet sweep of the sky.

Perhaps I was the first to see him; I can not say; but certainly he was not perceived by the Bedouins, although one stood on guard at the entrance to the camp.

How can I describe him? At the time, as he approached in the moon-

light with a shambling, stooping gait, I felt that I had never seen his like before. Now I know the reason of my wonder, and the reason of my doubt. I know what it was about him which inspired a kind of horror and a revulsion—a dread.

Elfin locks he had, gray and matted, falling about his angular face, shading his strange, yellow eyes. He was dressed in rags, in tatters; he was furtive, and he staggered as one who is very weak, slowly approaching out of the vastness.

Then it appeared as though every dog in the camp knew of his coming. Out from the shadows of the tents they poured, those yapping mongrels. Never have I seen such a thing. In the midst of the yellowish, snarling things, at the very entrance to the camp, the wretched old man fell, uttering a low cry.

But now, snatching up a heavy club which lay close to my hand, I rushed out of the tent. Others were thronging out, too, but, first of them all, I burst in among the dogs, striking, kicking, and shouting. I stooped and raised the head of the stranger.

Mutely he thanked me, with half-closed eyes. A choking sound issued from his throat, and he clutched with his hands and pointed to his mouth.

An earthenware jar, containing cool water, stood beside a tent but a few yards away. Hurling my club at the most furious of the dogs, which, with bared fangs, still threatened to attack the recumbent man, I ran and seized the *dorak*, regained his side, and poured water between his parched lips.

The throng about me was strangely silent, until, as the poor old man staggered again to his feet, supported by my arm, a chorus arose about me —one long, voweled word, wholly unfamiliar, although my Arabic was good. But I noted that all kept a respectful distance from myself and the man whom I had succored.

Then, pressing his way through the throng came the Sheikh Saïd Mohammed. Saluting the ragged stranger with a sort of grim respect, he asked him if he desired entertainment for the night.

The other shook his head, mumbling, pointed to the water jar, and by dint of gnashing his yellow and pointed teeth, intimated that he required food.

Food was brought to him hurriedly. He tied it up in a dirty cloth, grasped the water jar, and, with never a glance at the Arabs, turned to me. With his hand he touched his brow, his lips, and his breast in salute; then, although tottering with weakness, he made off again with that queer, loping gait.

The camp dogs began to howl, and a strange silence fell upon the Arabs about me. All stood watching the departing figure until it was lost in a dip of the desert, when the watchers began to return again to their tents.

Saïd Mohammed took my hand, and in a few direct and impressive words thanked me for having spared him and his tribe from a grave dishonor. Need I say that I was flattered? Had you met him, my friends, that fine Bedouin gentleman, polished as any noble of old France, fearless as a lion, yet gentle as a woman, you would know that I rejoiced in being able to serve him even so slightly.

Two of the dogs, unperceived by us, had followed the weird old man from the camp; for suddenly in the distance I heard their savage growls. Then these growls were drowned in such a chorus of howling—the howling of jackals—as I had never before heard in all my desert wanderings. The howling suddenly subsided . . . but the dogs did not return.

I glanced around, meaning to address the Sheikh, but the Sheikh was gone.

Filled with wonder, then, respecting this singular incident, I entered the tent—it was at the farther end of the camp—which had been placed at my disposal, and lay down, rather to reflect than to sleep. With my mind confused in thoughts of yellow-eyed wanderers, of dogs, and of jackals, sleep came.

How long I slept I can not say; but I was awakened as the cool fingers of dawn were touching the crests of the sand billows. A gray and dismal light filled the tent, and something was scratching at the flap.

I sat up immediately, quite wide awake, and taking my revolver, ran to the entrance and looked out.

A slinking shape melted into the shadows of the tent adjoining mine, and I concluded that a camp dog had aroused me. Then, in the early morning silence, I heard a faint call, and peering through the gloom to the east saw, in black silhouette, a solitary figure standing near the extremity of the camp.

In those days, my friends, I was a brave fellow—we are all brave at nineteen—and throwing a cloak over my shoulders I strode intrepidly toward this figure. I was within ten paces when a hand was raised to beckon me.

It was the mysterious stranger! Again he beckoned to me, and I approached yet nearer, asking him if it was he who had aroused me.

He nodded, and by means of a grotesque kind of pantomime ultimately made me understand that he had caused me to be aroused in order to communicate something to me. He turned, and indicated that we were to walk away from the camp. I accompanied him without hesitation.

Although the camp was never left unguarded, no one had challenged us; and, a hundred yards beyond the outermost tent, this strange old man stopped and turned to me.

First, he pointed back to the camp, then to myself, then out along the caravan road toward the Nile.

"Do you mean," I asked him—for I perceived that he was dumb or vowed to silence—"that I am to leave the camp?"

He nodded rapidly, his strange yellow eyes gleaming.

"Immediately?" I demanded.

Again he nodded.

"Why?"

Pantomimically he made me understand that death threatened me if I remained—that I must leave the Bedouins before sunrise.

I can not convey to you any idea of the mad earnestness of the man. But, alas! youth regards the counsels of age with nothing but contempt; moreover, I thought this man mad, and I was unable to choke down a sort of loathing which he inspired in me.

I shook my head then, but not unkindly; and, waving my hand, prepared to leave him. At that, with a sorrow in his strange eyes which did not fail to impress me, he saluted me with gravity, turned, and passed out of sight.

Although I did not know it at the time, I had chosen of two paths the one that led through fire.

I slept little after this interview—if it was a real interview and not a dream—and feeling tired and unrefreshed, I saw the sun rise purple and angry over the distant hills.

You know what *khamsîn* is like, my friends? But you can not know what *simoom* is like—*simoom* in the heart of the desert! It came that morning—a wall of sand so high as to shut out the sunlight, so dense as to turn the day into night, so suffocating that I thought I should never live through it!

It was apparent to me that the Bedouins were prepared for the storm. The horses, the camels and the asses were tethered in an en-

closure specially strengthened to exclude the choking dust, and with their cloaks about their heads the men prepared for the oncoming of this terror of the desert.

My God! it was a demon which sought to blind me, to suffocate me, and which clutched at my throat with strangling fingers of sand! This, I told myself, was the danger which I might have avoided by quitting the camp before sunrise.

Indeed, it was apparent to me that if I had taken the advice so strangely offered, I might now have been safe in the village of the Great Oasis for which I was bound. But I have since seen that the *simoom* was a minor danger, and not the real one to which this weird being had referred.

THE storm passed, and every man in the encampment praised the merciful God who had spared us all. It was in the disturbance attendant upon putting the camp in order once more that I saw her.

She came out from the tent of Saïd Mohammed, to shake the sand from a carpet; the newly come sunlight twinkled upon the bracelets which clasped her smooth brown arms as she shook the gaily colored mat at the tent door. The sunlight shone upon her braided hair, upon her slight robe, upon her silver anklets, and upon her tiny feet. Transfixed I stood watching—indeed, my friends, almost holding my breath. Then the sunlight shone upon her eyes, two pools of mysterious darkness into which I found myself suddenly looking.

The face of this lovely Arab maiden flushed, and drawing the corner of her robe across those bewitching eyes, she turned and ran back into the tent.

One glance—just one glance, my friends! But never had Ulysses' bow propelled an arrow more sure, more deadly. I was nineteen, remember, and of Provence. What do you foresee, you who have been through the world, you who once were nineteen?

I feigned a sickness, a sickness brought about by the sandstorm, and taking base advantage of that desert hospitality which is unbounded, which knows no suspicion, and takes no count of cost, I remained in the tent which had been vacated for me.

In this voluntary confinement I learned little of the doings of the camp. All day I lay dreaming of two dark eyes, and at night when the jackals howled I thought of the wanderer who had counseled me to leave. One day, I lay so; a second; a third again; and the women of Saïd Mohammed's household tended me, closely veiled of course. But in vain I waited for that attendant whose absence was rendering my feigned fever a real one—whose eyes burned like torches in my dreams and for the coming of whose little bare feet across the sand to my tent door I listened hour by hour, day by day, in vain—always in vain.

But at nineteen there is no such thing as despair, and hope has strength to defy death itself. It was in the violet dusk of the fourth day, as I lay there with a sort of shame of my deception struggling for birth in my heart, that she came.

She came through the tent door bearing a bowl of soup, and the rays of the setting sun outlined her fairy shape through the gossamer robe as she entered.

At that my poor weak little conscience troubled me no more. How my heart leaped, leaped so that it threatened to choke me, who had come safe through a great sandstorm!

There is fire in the Southern blood at nineteen, my friends, which leaps into flame beneath the glances of bright eyes.

With her face modestly veiled, the Bedouin maid knelt beside me, placing the wooden bowl upon the

ground. My eager gaze pierced the *yashmak,* but her black lashes were laid upon her cheek, her glorious eyes averted. My heart—or was it my vanity?—told me that she regarded me at least with interest, that she was not at ease in my company; and as, having spoken no word, having ventured no glance, she rose again to depart, I was emboldened to touch her hand.

Like a startled gazelle she gave me one rapid glance, and was gone!

She was gone—and my very soul gone with her! For hours I lay, not so much as thinking of the food beside me—dreaming of her eyes. What were my plans? Faith! Does one have plans at nineteen where two bright eyes are concerned?

Alas, my friends, I dare not tell you of my hopes, yet upon those hopes I lived. Oh, it is glorious to be nineteen and of Provence; it is glorious when all the world is young, when the fruit is ripe upon the trees and the plucking seems no sin. Yet, as we look back, we perceive that at nineteen we were scoundrels.

The Bedouin girl is a woman when a European woman is but a child, and Sakîna, whose eyes could search a man's soul, was but twelve years of age—twelve. Can you picture that child of twelve squeezing a lover's heart between her tiny hands, entwining his imagination in the coils of her hair?

You, my friend, may perhaps be able to conceive this thing, for you know the East, and the women of the East. At ten or eleven years of age many of them are adorable; at twenty-one most of them are *passé;* at twenty-six all of them—with rare exceptions—are shrieking hags.

But to you, my other friends, who are strangers to our Oriental ways, who know not that the peach only attains to perfect ripeness for one short hour, it may be strange, it may be horrifying, that I loved, with all the ardor which was mine, this little Arab maiden, who, had she been born in France, would not yet have escaped from the nursery. But I digress.

THE Arabs were encamped, of course, in the neighborhood of a spring. It lay in a slight depression amid the tiny palm-grove. Here, at sunset, came the women with their pitchers on their heads, graceful of carriage, veiled, mysterious.

Many peaches have ripened and have rotted since those days of which I speak, but now—even now—I am still enslaved by the mystery of Egypt's veiled women. Untidy, bedraggled, dirty, she may be, but the real Egyptian woman when she bears her pitcher upon her head and glides, stately, sinuously, through the dusk to the well, is a figure to enchain the imagination.

Very soon, then, the barrier of reserve which, like the screen of the *harêm,* stands between Eastern women and love, was broken. My trivial scruples I had cast to the winds, and feigning weakness, I would sally forth to take the air in the cool of the evening; this two days later.

My steps, be assured, led me to the spring; and you who are men of the world will know that Sakîna, braving the reproaches of the Sheikh's household, neglectful of her duties, was last of all the women who came to the well for water.

I taught her to say my name—René! How sweet it sounded from her lips, as she strove in vain to roll the 'R' in our Provençal fashion. Some *ginnee* most certainly presided over this enchanted fountain, for despite the nearness of the camp our rendezvous was never discovered, our meetings were never detected.

With her pitcher upon the ground beside her, she would sit with those wistful, wonderful eyes upraised to mine, and sway before the ardor of

my impassioned words as a young and tender reed sways in the Nile breeze. Her budding soul was a love lute upon which I played in ecstasy; and when she raised her red lips to mine. . . . Ah! those nights in the boundless desert! God is good to youth, and harsh to old age!

Next to Saïd Mohammed, her father, Sakîna's brother was the finest horseman of the tribe, and his white mare their fleetest steed. I had cast covetous eyes upon this glorious creature, my friends, and secretly had made such overtures as were calculated to win her confidence.

Within two weeks, then, my plans were complete—up to a point. Since they were doomed to failure, like my great scheme, I shall not trouble you with their details, but an hour before dawn on a certain night I cut the camel-hair tethering of the white mare, and, undetected, led the beautiful creature over the silent sands to a cuplike depression, a thousand yards distant from the camp.

The Bedouin who was upon guard that night had with him a gourd of *'erksoos*. This was customary, and I had chosen an occasion when the duty of filling the sentinel's gourd had fallen upon Sakîna; to his *'erksoos* I had added four drops of dark brown fluid from my medicine chest.

It was an hour before dawn, then, when I stood beside the white mare, watching and listening; it was an hour before dawn when she for whom my great scheme was forgotten, for whom I was about to risk the anger, the just anger, of men amongst the most fierce in the known world, came running fleetly over the hillocks down into the little valley, and threw herself into my arms. . . .

When dawn burst in gloomy splendor over the desert, we were still five hours' ride from the spot where I had proposed temporarily to conceal myself, with perhaps an hour's start of the Arabs. I knew the desert ways well enough, but the ghostly and desolate place in which I now found myself nevertheless filled me with foreboding.

A seam of black volcanic rock split the sands for a great distance, forming a kind of natural wall of forbidding aspect. In places this wall was pierced by tunnel-like openings; I think they may have been prehistoric tombs. There was no scrap of verdure visible, north, south, east or west; only desolation, sand, grayness, and this place, ghostly and wan with that ancient sorrow, that odor of remote mortality which is called "the dust of Egypt."

Seated before me in the saddle, Sakîna looked up into my face with a never-changing confidence, having her little brown fingers interlocked about my neck. But her strength was failing. A short rest was imperative.

Thus far I had detected no evidence of pursuit and, descending from the saddle, I placed my weary companion upon a rock over which I had laid a rug, and poured out for her a draft of cool water.

Bread and dates were our breakfast fare; but bread and dates and water are nectar and ambrosia when they are sweetened with kisses. Oh! the glorious madness of youth! Sometimes, my friends, I am almost tempted to believe that the man who has never been wicked has never been happy!

Picture us, then, if you can, set amid that desolation, which for us was a rose-garden, eating of that unpalatable food—which for us was the food of the gods!

So we remained awhile, deliriously happy, though death might terminate our joys ere we again saw the sun, when something . . . *something* spoke to me . . .

Understand me, I did not say that *someone* spoke, I did not say that

anything *audible* spoke. But I know that, unlocking those velvet arms which clung to me, I stood up slowly —and, still slowly, turned and looked back at the frowning black rocks.

Merciful God! My heart beats wildly now when I recall that moment.

Motionless as a statue, but in a crouching attitude, as if about to leap down, he who had warned me so truly stood upon the highest point of the rocks watching us!

How long did I remain thus?

I can not pretend to say; but when I turned to Sakîna—she lay trembling on the ground, with her face hidden in her hands.

Then down over the piled-up rocks, this mysterious and ominous being came leaping. Old man though he was, he descended with the agility of a mountain goat—and sometimes, in the difficult places, *he went on all fours.*

Crossing the intervening strip of sand, he stood before me. You have seen the reproach in the eyes of a faithful dog whose master has struck him unjustly? Such a reproach shone out from the yellow eyes of this desert wanderer. I can not account for it; I can say no more. . . .

It was impossible for me to speak; I trembled violently; such a fear and such a madness of sorrow possessed me that I would have welcomed any death—to have freed me from that intolerable reproach.

He suddenly pointed toward the horizon where against the curtain of the dawn black figures appeared.

I fell upon my knees beside Sakîna. I was a poor, pitiable thing; the madness of my passion had left me, and already I was within the great Shadow; I could not even weep; I knew that I had brought Sakîna out into that desolate place—to die.

And now the man whose ways were unlike human ways began to babble insanely, gesticulating and plucking at me. I can not hope to make you feel one little part of the emotion with which those instants were laden. Sakîna clung to me trembling in a way I can never forget—never, never forget. And the look in her eyes! even now I can not bear to think of it, I can not bear——

Those almost colorless lizards which dart about in the desert places with incredible swiftness were now coming forth from their nests; and all the while the black figures, unheard as yet, were approaching along the path of the sun.

My mad folly grew more apparent to me every moment. I realized that this which so rapidly was overtaking me had been inevitable from the first. The strange wild man stood watching me with that intolerable glare, so that my trembling companion shrank from him in horror.

But evidently he was seeking to convey some idea to me. He gesticulated constantly, pointing to the approaching Arabs and then over his shoulder to the frowning rock behind. Since it was too late for flight —for I knew that the white mare with a double burden could never outpace our pursuers—it occurred to me at the moment when the muffled beat of hoofs first became audible, that this hermit of the rocks was endeavoring to induce me to seek some hiding-place with which no doubt he was acquainted.

How I cursed the delay which had enabled the Arabs to come up with us! I know now, of course, that even had I not delayed, our ultimate capture was certain. But at the moment, in my despair, I thought otherwise.

And now I cursed the stupidity which had prevented me from following this weird guide; I even thought wrathfully of the poor frightened child, whose weakness had necessitated the delay and whose fears had contributed considerably to this later misunderstanding.

The pursuing party, numbering four, and led by Saïd Mohammed, was no more than five hundred yards away when I came to my senses. The hermit now was tugging at my arm with frightful insistence; his eyes were glaring insanely, and he chattered in an almost pitiable manner.

"Quick!" I cried, throwing my arm about Sakîna, "up to the rocks! This man can hide us!"

"No, no!" she whispered, "I dare not——"

But I lifted her, and signing to the singular being to lead the way, staggered forward despairingly.

The distance was greater than it appeared, the climb incredibly difficult. My guide held out his hand to me to assist me to mount the slippery rocks; but I had much ado to proceed and also to support Sakîna.

Her terror of the man and of the place to which he was leading us momentarily increased. Indeed, it seemed that she was becoming mad with fear. When the man paused before an opening in the rocks not more than fifteen or sixteen inches in height, and wildly waving his arms in the air, his elfin locks flying about his shoulder, his eyes glassy, intimated that we were to crawl in—Sakîna writhed free of my grasp and bounded back some three or four paces down the slope.

"Not in there!" she cried, holding out her little hands to me pitifully. "I dare not! He would devour us!"

At the foot of the slope, Saïd Mohammed, who had dismounted from his horse, and who, far ahead of the others, was advancing toward us, at that moment raised his gun and fired. . . .

Can I go on?

It is more years ago than I care to count, but it is fresher in my mind than the things of yesterday. A lonely old age is before me, my friends—for I have been a solitary man since that shot was fired. For me it changed the face of the world, for me it ended youth, revealing me to myself for what I was.

Something more nearly resembling human speech than any sound he had yet uttered burst from the lips of the wild man as the report of Saïd Mohammed's shot whispered in echoes through the mysterious labyrinths beneath us.

Fate had stood at the Sheikh's elbow as he pulled the trigger.

With a little soft cry—I hear it now, gentle, but having in it a world of agony—Sakîna sank at my feet . . . and her blood began to trickle over the black rocks on which she lay.

THE man who professes to describe to you his emotions at such a frightful moment is an impostor. The world grew black before my eyes; every emotion of which my being was capable became paralyzed.

I heard nothing, I saw nothing but the little huddled figure, that red stream upon the black rock, and the agonized love in the blazing eyes of Sakîna. Groaning, I threw myself down beside her, and as she sighed out her life upon my breast, I knew —God help me!—that what had been but a youthful amour was now a life's tragedy; that for me the light of the world had gone out; that I should never again know the warmth of the sun and the gladness of the morning. . . .

The cave man, with a doglike fidelity, sought now to drag me from my dead love, to drag me into that gloomy lair which she had shrunk from entering. His incoherent mutterings broke in upon my semi-coma; but I shook him off, I shrieked curses at him. . . .

Now the Bedouins were mounting the slope, not less than a hundred yards below me. In the growing light I could see the face of Saïd Mohammed. . . .

The man beside me exerted all his strength to drag me back into the gallery or cave—I know not what it was; but with my arms locked about Sakîna I lay watching the pursuers coming closer and closer.

Then those persistent efforts suddenly ceased, and dully I told myself that this weird being, having done his best to save me, had fled in order to save himself.

I was wrong.

You have asked me for a story of the magic of Egypt, and although, as you see, it has cost me tears—oh! I am not ashamed of those tears, my friends!—I have recounted this story to you. You say, where is the magic? and I might reply: the magic was in the changing of my false love to a true. But there was another magic as well, and it grew up around me now at this moment when I lay inert, waiting for death.

From behind me, from above me, arose a cry—a cry. You may have heard of the Bedouin song, the *"Mizmûne:"*

"Ya men melek ana dêri waat sa jebb,
Id el' ish hoos' a beb hatsa azat ta lebb."

You may have heard how when it is sung in a certain fashion, flowers drop from their stalks? Also, you may have doubted this, never having heard a magical cry.

I do not doubt it, my friends! For I *have* heard a magical cry—this cry which arose from behind me! It started some chord in my dulled consciousness which had never spoken before. I turned my head—and there upon the highest point of the rocks stood the cave man. He suddenly stretched forth his hands.

Again he uttered that uncanny, that indescribable cry. It was not human. It was not animal. Yet it was nearer to the cry of an animal than to any sound made by the human species. His eyes gleamed with an awful light, his spare body had assumed a strange significance; he was transfigured.

A third time he uttered the cry, and out from one of those openings in the rock which I have mentioned, crept a jackal. You know how a jackal avoids the day, how furtive, how nocturnal a creature it is? but there in the golden glory which proclaimed the coming of the sun, black silhouettes moved.

A great wonder possessed me, as the first jackal was followed by a second, by a third, by a fourth, by a fifth. Did I say a fifth? . . . By five hundred—by five thousand!

From every visible hole in the rocks, jackals poured forth in packs. Wonder left me, fear left me; I forgot my sorrow, I became a numbed intelligence amid a desert of jackals. Over a sea of moving furry backs I saw that upstanding crag and the weird crouching figure upon it. Right and left, above and below, jackals moved . . . and all turned their heads toward the approaching Bedouins!

Again—again I heard that dreadful cry. The jackals, in a pack, thousands strong, began to advance upon the Bedouins! . . .

Not east or west, north or south, could you hope to find a braver man than was the Sheikh Saïd Mohammed; but—he fled!

I saw the four horsemen riding like furies into the morning sun. The white mare, riderless, galloped with them—and the desert behind was yellow with jackals! For the last time I heard the cry.

The jackals began to return!

FORGIVE me, dear friends, if I seem an emotional fool. But when I recovered from the swoon which blotted out that unnatural spectacle, the wizard—for now I knew him for nothing less—had dug a deep trench—and had left me, alone.

Not a jackal was in sight; the sun

blazed cruelly upon the desert. With my own hands I laid my love to rest in the sands. No cross, no crescent marks her resting-place; but I left my youth upon her grave, as a last offering.

You may say that, since I had sinned so grievously, since I had betrayed the noble confidence of Saïd Mohammed, my host, I escaped lightly.

Ah! you do not know!

And what of the strange being whose gratitude I had done so little to merit but yet which knew no bounds? It is of him that I will tell you.

Years later—how many it does not matter, but I was a man with no illusions—my restless wanderings (I being still a desert bird-of-passage) brought me one night to a certain well but rarely visited. It lay in a depression, like another well that I am fated often to see in my dreams, and, as one approached, the crowns of the palm trees which grew there appeared above the mounds of sand.

I was alone and tired out; the next possible camping-place—for I had no water—was many miles away. Yet it was written that I should press on to that other distant well, weary though I was.

First, then, as I came up, I perceived numbers of vultures in the air; and I began to fear that someone near to his end lay at the well. But when, from the top of a mound, I obtained a closer view, I saw a sight that, after one quick glance, caused me to spur up my tired horse and to fly—fly, with panic in my heart.

The brilliant moon bathed the hollow in light and cast dense shadows of the palm stems upon the slope beyond. By the spring, his fallen face ghastly in the moonlight, in a clear space twenty feet across, lay a dead man.

Even from where I sat I knew him; but, had I doubted, other evidence was there of his identity. As I mounted the slope, thousands of fiery eyes were turned upon me.

God! that arena all about was alive with jackals—jackals, my friends, eaters of carrion—which, silent, watchful, guarded the wizard dead, who, living, had been their lord!

The Knight's Tomb

By SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

(Reprint)

Where is the grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn?
Where may the grave of that good man be?—
By the side of a spring, on the breast of Helvellyn,
Under the twigs of a young birch tree!
The oak that in summer was sweet to hear,
And rustled its leaves in the fall of the year,
And whistled and roared in the winter alone,
Is gone,—and the birch in its stead is grown.
The Knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword rust;
His soul is with the saints, I trust.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 292)

an unhackneyed plot, strongly handled and well written, with the author's personality stamped on every paragraph. Readers vary in their reactions to a story, but we experienced a sense of cold chill and a touch of panic while reading that part of the story where the weird driver comes into view with his dead-cart and the ominous cry rings out through the night: "Bring out your dead!"

Truly there is a variety of weird fiction here to suit all tastes. We shall endeavor to make every issue a feast of good things for you, the readers.

"For three years," writes Mrs. Maude Irvine Owens, of Monessen, Pennsylvania, "I have been an interested reader of WEIRD TALES, and I wish to contribute my praises to your Eyrie. I don't think the readers who resent this or that type of story are considerate of the others. I hope you continue your policy of printing the various kinds of weird tales. I myself do not care for the stories of other worlds, but realizing that others might like them and being satisfied to find the majority to my liking, I don't complain. By all means continue your reprints of old established stories, for that department is a charming feature of your periodical."

"Your July issue," writes W. K. Mashburn, Jr., of New Orleans, "registers the most outstanding and needed change in WEIRD TALES' career: the improvement in the headings. Keep Rankin."

Nictzin Dyalhis, author of *The Dark Lore,* writes to The Eyrie: "I have noted with interest the pro and con of 'reprints'. After reading *The Dragon Fang,* who'd be *con?* I wouldn't have missed that for a half interest in a duck farm."

"I say let's have more weird-scientific stories," writes W. A. H., of Vicksburg, Michigan. "They rest the mind by giving us something out of the ordinary to think about. I like to forget myself and wonder if these things could possibly take place."

Mrs. Charles Brandenburg writes from Hot Springs, Arkansas: "The first thing I did on my arrival at Hot Springs was to look for WEIRD TALES. I never buy any other and haven't for two years. Why? Because your stories are so totally *different* from any other on the market. My son also enjoys the stories immensely. He doesn't like to read, but WEIRD TALES gets 'under the skin.' Whatever you do, keep up the Jules de Grandin series."

"Of all the stories I have read in WEIRD TALES, *Explorers Into Infinity* takes the first place," writes Carl Fries, of Philadelphia. "It is a story thrillingly told, but the end leaves you in the dark. Why not have Martt and

Frank go to the rescue of Brett when he goes the second time and doesn't come back? This would surely be welcomed by everybody."

Henry Bagwell, of La Junta, Colorado, writes to The Eyrie: "*The Dark Chrysalis* is so well told and so plausible that one gets the feeling that the events really happened and is rejoicing with Saul over his discovery when the end of the installment rudely awakens him. Let's have more stories by Colter."

"Beyond a doubt," writes A. J. Stinnett, of Oak Hill, West Virginia, "*The Dark Chrysalis* is the best story ever published in your magazine of wonderful stories."

Miss E. W. Dedge, of Washington, D. C., writes to The Eyrie: "I started *The Dark Chrysalis* in the June issue and I could hardly wait for the July issue to come out. I have already finished the installment and am waiting impatiently for the month to pass. You may be sure that I shall not forget to get the next issue."

"Just saw the new W. T.," writes August W. Derleth. "Congratulations on Rankin, your new artist! May he stay with you as long as you exist!"

The second installment of *The Dark Chrysalis*, by Eli Colter, won your votes as favorite story in the July issue, and *The Curse of Everard Maundy*, by Seabury Quinn, was your second choice. It will help us to select the kind of stories you like best if you will write and tell us what are your favorite stories in the present issue. And if there are any stories you dislike, let us know which ones.

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE SEPTEMBER WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)_____	_____
(2)_____	_____
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It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

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The Wolf-Woman

(Continued from page 310)

water," he said, and that night the logs were lashed together and the rafts moored to shore trees, and the barrier of crosses was strengthened.

Meanwhile, working ceaselessly, Jo had cut the ivory from the feet of the huntress he was carving, and was chiseling her pretty toes with their filbert-shaped nails. He had truly caught the grace of her dancing poise in the slender ankles, and she stood like a fairy molded of mellow gold when the sun touched the far horizon and brief night began in violet-tinted twilight.

Cressey was fascinated by the figure. "Tell Jo that I must have it. "I will pay well, five hundred dollars, even a thousand. I will take her out with me."

Reluctantly Baptiste interpreted his demand and for the first time the old ivory-carver showed emotion. Fire leaped in his eyes as he wrathfully waved Cressey aside and refused to consider even so great a sum of money for his statue of the woman.

Cressey did not argue, but in his heart he determined to obtain the ivory figure, and fell asleep planning a means to that end. He slept lightly, dreaming of the huntress, and muttering in his sleep. His broken talk wakened Johnson, who looked toward Cressey with hatred in his eyes, which changed to cunning.

Johnson cautiously slipped the thong of the crucifix from his neck and it dropped on the floor. Then for a time he lay still except for the convulsive twitching of his body and the rolling of his tortured eyes.

AT MIDNIGHT came the whimpering of the sled-dogs and baying of white hounds from afar. Immediately every man in the cabin was alert. They grabbed guns and plunged outside, waiting that dread visitation. The moon was fuller and gave silver light pricked out by velvet dark blotches of the trees. The glacial river gleamed like pearl. Another day and the party would have escaped, afloat on rafts carried by the swift-running stream, but this one night must be endured.

The huntress was not alone with her dogs, for she stood on the head of the mammoth which thundered into the plain cleared by his voracious feeding, and about them raced the white hounds. The hearts of the men were seized by icy fingers of fear even while they poured volley after volley of shots at the advancing horror and realized as they pulled the triggers that no man-invented mode of death could halt them.

The old ivory-carver, Jo, alone seemed fearless or careless of those terrific ghouls of eld, for he came leisurely from the cabin, toddling toward the barrier fence of wooden crosses and peering as if to feast his sight on the vision he had foregone during those nights he toiled at the ivory figure of the woman.

Cressey stepped to Jo's side. He had forgotten Johnson in the cabin. There was none to see Johnson spring from the couch and with the desperation of a madman seize the ivory huntress in his arms and rush from the door on shoeless feet that made no sound.

Cressey's first glimpse of him came when Johnson leaped the barrier of crosses and headed for the river raft. But the huntress had also seen that plunging human and her cry rang like the long-drawn note of a silver

(Continued on page 430)

Startling Stories

WEIRD TALES has built its success on startling stories such as can be found in no other magazine; stories with a real thrill; eery stories such as Edgar Allan Poe used to write; tales of tremendous dooms that menace the earth (such as "The Moon Menace" in this issue); tales of weird monsters; ghost-tales, and stories of the supernatural; tales of devil-worship, witchcraft, werewolves, and vampires; eldritch tales of shuddery horror; bizarre and fantastic tales; fascinating orientales; mystery stories; weird-scientific tales that plumb the future with prophetic eye. Among the many thrilling stories in the next few issues will be:

THE TIME-RAIDER, *by Edmond Hamilton*
A startling serial story of an entity from thousands of years in the future, that reaches back through Time for its victims—by the author of "The Moon Menace."

THE INVADING HORDE, *by Arthur J. Burks*
A superb weird-scientific novelette that looks far into the future, when Asiatic hordes attack America in giant submarines from the Atlantic—a tale of monopters, death-rays, and terrific battles in the air.

THE LORD OF THE TARN, *by G. G. Pendarves*
A shuddery tale of monstrous cats, the diabolical Eorl of Cumberland, and evil rites in the spectral abbey on Monk's Rock.

THE RED BRAIN, *by Donald Wandrei*
A tale of cosmic space—the stars blotted out by great dust-clouds engulfing the universe, and only the efforts of the Red Brain to drive back the swirling seas of dust.

PICKMAN'S MODEL, *by H. P. Lovecraft*
An eldritch tale of the cellars in a New England city, and unutterable monstrosities that crept from behind the crumbling walls—a horror-tale by the author of "The Outsider" and "The Rats in the Walls."

SALADIN'S THRONE-RUG, *by E. Hoffmann Price*
A fascinating story set IN Chicago, but not OF Chicago, for it breathes of spices and incense and the weird witchery of the Orient—a tale of a strange and eery murder.

THE POLTERGEIST, *by Seabury Quinn*
The old-fashioned ghost is a rarity in WEIRD TALES, but here is one that satisfies all requirements—a fascinating tale of Jules de Grandin.

THESE are but a few of the many super-excellent stories in store for the readers of WEIRD TALES. To make sure of getting your copy each month, and thus avoid the embarrassment of finding your favorite news stand sold out, just fill out the coupon below and let us send it right to your home. That's the safest way.

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(Continued from page 428)

horn. The mammoth lunged forward, the hounds leaped in white arcs of flying fur, and Johnson's scream stabbed through the din of animal howls.

They saw the huntress leap from her titanic steed to catch Johnson in her arms; saw the ivory figure knocked from his grasp. The golden hair of the huntress enveloped him like a ruddy silk mantle and her mouth was pressed to his throat.

But a greater tragedy was imminent. As if the scent of human blood maddened it, the mammoth plunged forward, his great tusks lunging between the leaping hounds to stab his human enemy; and the hounds closed in with unearthly yelpings.

Transfixed by the sight, the men at the cabin stared at the calamity they were powerless to avert, until there came a loud crunch as the mammoth's foot trod on the ivory figure of the huntress which Johnson had dropped.

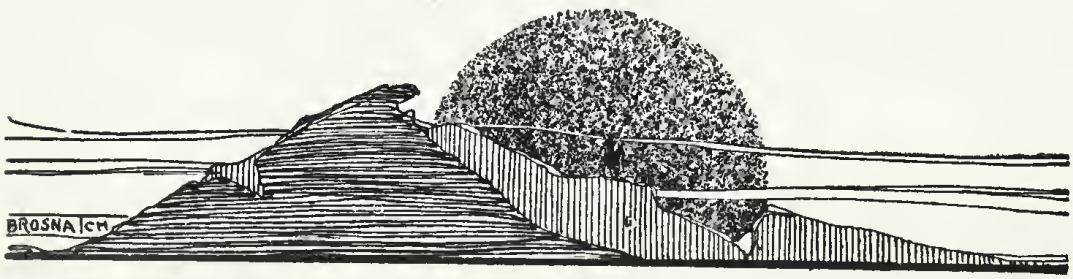
Then, as if at a signal, the ghost-beasts seemed frozen in their tracks, and from them came a glistening white mist which swayed to and fro as it rose and drifted across the face of the young moon, and the watchers saw, like a frail cloud, the shining form of that lovely, hell-born huntress, as it blew away on the wind of dawn.

Light grew swiftly. The sun came up and shone on a mountainous mass of hairy mammoth flesh and long-furred hounds lying on the tundra.

As they stood, chained to the spot by paralysis of horror, every nerve taut, the men at the cabin saw that mound of flesh subside to pulp, and a dreadful stench arose in a smoky steam. By noon there was a gelatinous mass, which by nightfall had soaked into the earth, leaving only the skeletons. A clean, cold wind from the snows sweetened the air where Jo prodded the bones with a stick to recover all that was left of his ivory huntress, a head on which the features faithfully depicted her inscrutable smile, with lips and teeth slightly parted.

Cressey did not offer to buy it, and the head still hangs above Jo's cabin door. One glance at that lovely face had power to recall all too vividly the fate of Stamwell and Johnson, for whom crosses were erected in the valley and lop-sticks near by carved with their names. Cressey did not smile nor dispute the assertion of Baptiste that he should never return to that valley.

"*M'sieu,*" said Baptiste, "dat devil-womans have dreenk your blood wan time, an' eef some day she come back, she catch you again, because all womans ees jealous, an' eef a womans git jealous eet open doors of ver' bad hells. You do what Baptiste say, you wear a li'l crucifix all time." And though not a religious man, Cressey has never since been without that symbol.



The Moon Menace

(Continued from page 330)

and smashing of their great engines, that whirled blindly about with no living hand guiding them. Abruptly then, the clamor stilled, and there reigned a deathlike silence.

Manning tore from him the last of his bonds, ran out into the clearing with staggering steps, lifting his hands toward the imperial, brilliant orb above.

The sun! The sun! The blessed old sun! Gilbert's shot had released its light again upon the world, had turned off the machine, the ray, that had blotted all light from earth. The sun! It had shriveled and killed the invading hosts of the moon men in a single moment, had slain them in their countless thousands like flowers cut down by frost.

All over the summit, in the clearing and the surrounding forests, there continued for minutes the same, deathlike silence. Then suddenly every bird was singing. . . .

6

NIGHT had come again to the summit by the time Manning prepared to leave it. In the intervening hours he had smashed into tiny pieces both the neutralizing machine and the matter-receiver in the laboratory, and had then spent some hours in exhausted sleep. He walked now

(Continued on next page)

across the dark clearing and then paused for a moment at its edge, contemplating it.

Around him there loomed the vast, dark machines of the moon men, mighty and enigmatic engines of destruction. And, too, around him lay their own shriveled, withered bodies. As yet he had given no attention to the machines. Later, he thought, men could examine them, learn from them. Later——

Manning turned to go, then paused again. His eyes had caught a sudden gleam of light in the east. It was the gleaming disk of the full moon, just floating up in the eastern sky, like a shining bubble. From it there flowed down on the clearing a sudden flood of white light, picking out the gleaming surfaces of the great machines there. For a long while Manning stood motionless, gazing up toward it. Suddenly he flung his arms wide.

"Gilbert!" he cried softly; "wherever you are, now, do you hear me? It was you saved us, it was you saved us all! Do you hear me, now?"

Only a whisper of wind broke the stillness. Suddenly hot, stinging tears rushed into Manning's eyes.

"Gilbert!"

For a moment, the silence reigned unbroken. Then a soft little breeze stirred the trees around him, and they leaned sighing branches down toward him. That was all the answer that came to the man at the clearing's edge, who stood with arms flung out toward the summer night, in greeting and farewell.

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