Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

"THE GIANT WORLD," a startling new story by Ray Cummings, begins in this issue

om the Tombs of Ancient Eqypt the
RACLE OF HERMES
ILL ANSWER YOUR
RSONAL QUESTIONS

answers often so startling, so
sing, astounding, logical and
ch to the point that you feel
; persuaded to believe
here must be something
uncanny and perhaps super-
about this remarkable
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ou will inherit erty?
ou will ever l?
about the girl shall marry?
ou will live to ge?
e one you love you?
ou will marry ?
—will you make or mar your fortune by gambling?
—if you will ever recover from your present troubles?
—facts about the man you shall marry?
—if your beloved or friends will prove true?
—if you will ever find treasure?

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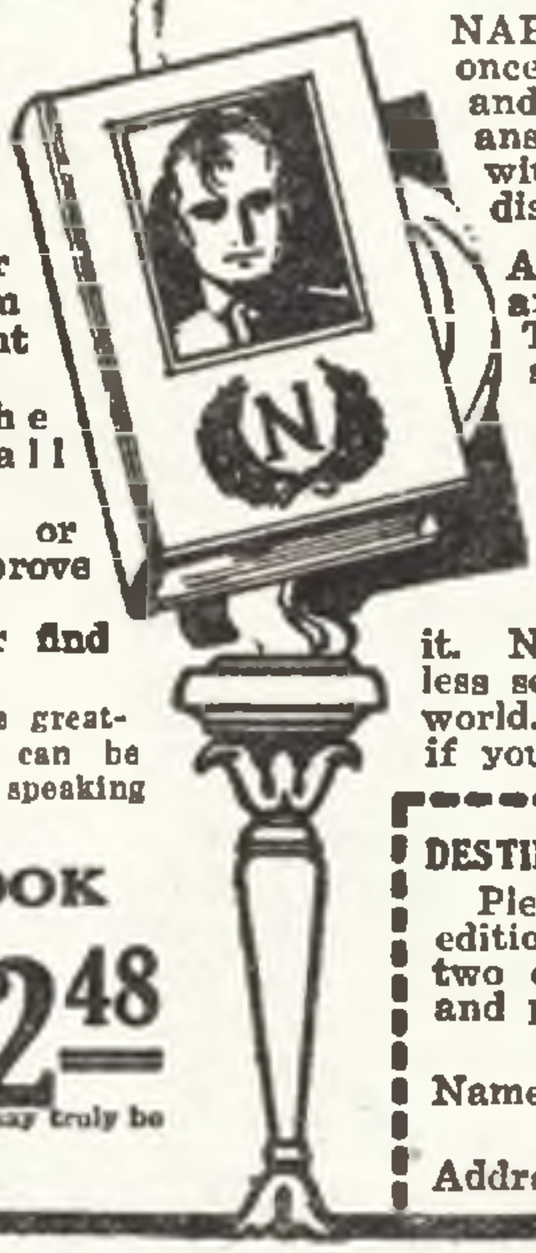

NAPOLEON, the greatest figure in all history, once asked: "Will my name be immortalized and will posterity applaud it?" The Oracle answered: "Thy name will be handed down, with memory of thy deeds, to the most distant posterity."

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XI NUMBER 1

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YOU, the readers of WEIRD TALES, are of two minds regarding the November issue, to judge from your letters to The Eyrie. It was either "the best issue yet," "full of marvelous tales," or "the worst you have put out in months," "a sad let-down from the previous issues this year."

The rock on which the readers seem to split is *The Invading Horde,* which was the cover-design story of that issue. Lieutenant Burks' sensational story of the blotting out of American civilization by Asiatic hordes found ardent admirers among the readers of this magazine, and drew many enthusiastic letters of commendation; but it also was bitterly lashed by others.

As an example of the diversity in reader comment, here are extracts from several letters:

"Just finished reading the November Weird," writes A. T. Hallman, of Oakland California. "It is getting better with each number. *The Invading Horde* is unbeatable."

"About two months ago you put out what I thought was the best issue in history," writes R. W. Jimerson, of San Francisco, "but last month's (November number) I regarded as by far the worst."

"I have just read your November issue and see that you are keeping up the good work," writes Roger Smith, of New York City.

"*The Invading Horde,* in your November issue, is the most tiresome, pointless yarn you have ever printed," writes Arthur J. Burris, of Kansas City, Missouri. "The worst part of the would-be scientific tales you print is their boring length. Furthermore, I do not see that a *scientific* story belongs in WEIRD TALES."

"I have just finished the November issue of WEIRD TALES, which is very fine," writes Clifford Kornoelse, of Chicago. "The best story in the issue is *The Invading Horde.* Next in order of merit are *The Time-Raider, Other Earths,* and *The Lord of the Tarn.*"

John Allen, of Minneapolis, goes into detail as to why he dislikes Lieutenant Burks' story. "*The Invading Horde,*" he writes, "is in my humble opinion the worst, the poorest attempt at a weird-scientific story that I have

(Continued on page 6)

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7 Out of 10 Are Prospects!

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Men, here is a wonder! If you're looking for a rapid-fire seller—an item that sells for a popular price—an item that nets you 100 per cent profit—an item that appeals to 7 out of 10 men—an item that sells itself on demonstration—I've got it! Is it any wonder that scores of my men are reporting sales of

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(Continued from page 4)

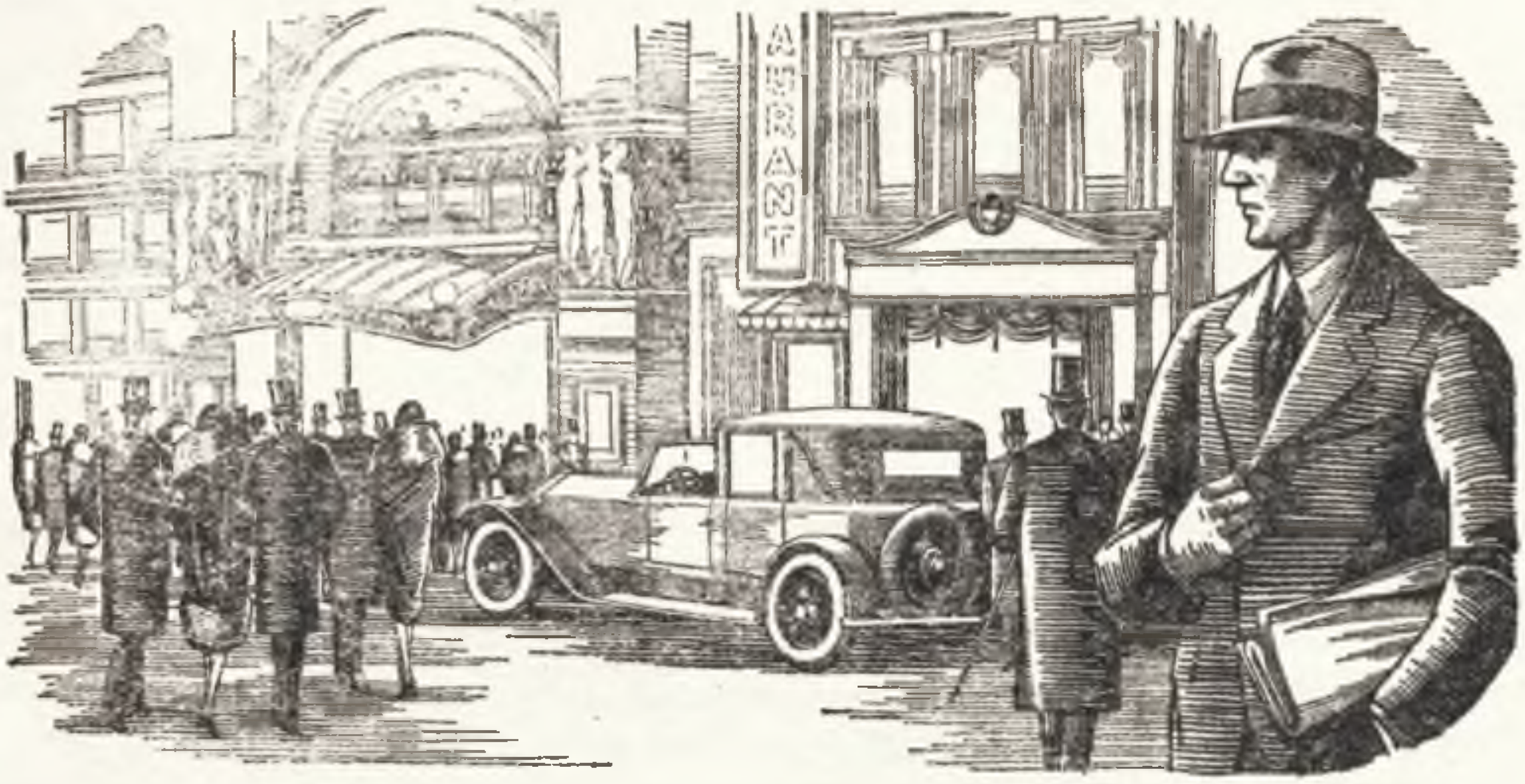
ever suffered through. It has absolutely no place in your magazine, for many of the stories you have printed in the past deserve the appellation of literature. But this yarn is terrible. In the first place, we level the entire chain of Appalachian Mountains 'overnight'; then mine enough stone to build a foundation 200 feet thick covering the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Mississippi; and on top of this little trifle of engineering playfully erect 500-story buildings covering the continent. We then enslave all who toil and who produce anything of value except 'noble thoughts' and 'great dreams' eighteen generations long, with their feet in the air; we take our toilers' clothes away from them, dub them 'Menials' and chase them down cellar to support our Thirtieth Century civilization by agricultural and labor methods which would have made a First Century farmer blush for shame. We then have a little war, using the results of centuries of scientific study to produce our weapons and direct our forces from the master mind of the story, the grandiloquent 'I', whose mental processes, judged by his military activities, would cause a feeble-minded amœba to hang the place where his head ought to be, and Binet to blow out his brains in despair. The gem of the story is perhaps the episode where the wonderful 'I' admits himself that he is good, sends three (or is it four?) radiograms to his departmental military chiefs, and then, making no provision for further contact, communication or observation, 'sleeps the sleep of utter exhaustion,' evidently entirely overcome by the effort which he has just put forth. If the story is intended as a burlesque on some of the more improbable of the weird-scientific stories, with a few of the 'delusions of grandeur' incidental to paranoia and dementia præcox thrown in for seasoning, it is a howling success; otherwise my money is placed on the probability that the janitor had access to the typewriter during the absence of the editor."

The Invading Horde is "worth a full year's subscription to WEIRD TALES," in the opinion of L. Hastings, of Engadine, Michigan. It is "intensely gripping and admirably constructed," writes Laurence Mitchell, of San Pedro, California. "Invade W. T. with more stories of this type," writes Joseph Kish, of Verdunville, West Virginia. "I don't like this story," writes Titus Keller, of Knoxville, Tennessee, "because the heroes are killed."

Cecil Fuller of Tulare, California, writes to The Eyrie: "Let's have more stories by Sax Rohmer, H. G. Wells and Otis Adelbert Kline. They're good. In the November issue, *The Invading Horde* by Burks tips the scales as the best story. But no issue seems complete without a story of Jules de Grandin—by all means print one of this series in *every* issue. That's vitally important. It adds the finishing touch to 'the perfect magazine'."

"In the October issue of WEIRD TALES," writes Miss Vivian McAllister, of Portland, Oregon, "Seabury Quinn and Nictzin Dyalhis are the prize

(Continued on page 136)



Always outside of things — that's where I was just twelve short months ago. I just didn't have the cash, that was all. No theatres, no parties, no good restaurants. No real enjoyment of life. I was just getting by, just existing. What a difference today! I drive my own car, have a good bank account, enjoy all the amusements I please.

I Couldn't Get The Good Things Of Life

Then I Quit My Job And "Found" Myself!

HOW does a man go about making more money? If I asked myself that question once, I asked it a hundred times!

I know the answer now—you bet. I know the way good money is made, and I'm making it. Gone forever are the days of cheap shoes, cheap clothes, walking home to save carfare, pinching pennies to make my salary last from one pay-day to the next one. I own one of the finest radio stores you ever saw, and I get almost all the radio service and repair work in town. The other radio dealers send their hard jobs to me, so you can see how I stand in my line.

But—it's just a year ago that I was a *poorly-paid clerk*. I was struggling along, on a starvation salary, until by accident my eyes were opened and I saw just what was the matter with me. Here's the story of just how it happened.

ONE of the big moments of my life had come. I had just popped the fatal question, and Louise said "Yes!"

Louise wanted to go in and tell her father about it right away, so we did. He sort of grunted when we told him the news, and asked Louise to leave us alone. And my heart began to sink as I looked at his face.

"So you and Louise have decided to get married," he said to me when we were alone. "Well, Bill, just listen to me. I've watched you often here at the house with Louise and I think you're a pretty good, upstanding young fellow. I knew your father and mother, and you've always had a good reputation here, too. But let me ask you just one question—how much money do you make?"

"Twenty-eight a week," I told him.

He didn't say a word—just wrote it down on a piece of paper.

"Have you any prospects of a better job or a good raise sometime soon?" he asked.

"No sir, I can't honestly say that I have," I admitted. "I'm looking for something better all the time, though."

"Looking, eh? How do you go about it?"

Well, that question stopped me.

How did I? I was willing to take a better job if I saw the chance all right, but I certainly had laid no plans to make such a job for myself. When he saw my confusion he grunted. "I thought so," he said, then he held up some figures he'd been scribbling at.

"I've just been figuring out your family budget, Bill, for a salary of twenty-eight a week. I've figured it several ways, so you can take your pick of the one you like best. Here's Budget No. 1. I figure you can afford a very small unfurnished apartment, make your payments on enough plain, inexpensive furniture to fix such an apartment up, pay your electricity, gas and water bills, buy just about one modest outfit of clothes for both of you once each year, and save three dollars a week for sickness, insurance and emergencies. But you can't eat. And you'll have to go without amusements until you can get a good substantial raise in salary."

I began to turn red as fire.

"That budget isn't so good after all," he said, glancing at me, "maybe Budget No. 2 will sound better—"

"That's enough, Mr. Sullivan," I said. "Have a heart. I can see things pretty clearly now, things I was kidding myself about before. Let me go home and think this over." And home I went, my mind in a whirl.

AT home I turned the problem over and over in my mind. I'd popped the question at Louise on impulse, without thinking it out. Everything Mr. Sullivan had said was gospel truth. I couldn't see anything to do, any way to turn. But I had to have more money.

I began to thumb the pages of a magazine which was lying on the table beside me. Suddenly an advertisement seemed almost to leap out at my eyes, an advertisement telling of big opportunities for trained men to succeed in the great new Radio field. With the advertisement was a coupon offering a big free book full of information. I sent the coupon in, and in a few days received a handsome 64-page book, printed in two colors, telling all about the opportunities in the Radio field and how a man can prepare quickly and easily at home to take advantage of these opportunities. I read the book carefully, and when I finished it I made my decision.

What's happened in the twelve months since that day seems almost like a dream to me now. For ten of those twelve months, I've had a Radio business of my own! At first, of course, I started it as a little proposition on the side, under the guidance of the National Radio Institute, the institution that gave me my Radio training. It wasn't long before I was getting so much to do in the Radio line that I quit my measly little clerical job, and devoted my full time to my Radio business.

Since that time I've gone right on up, always under the watchful guidance of my friends at the National Radio Institute. They would have given me just as much help, too, if I had wanted to follow some other line of Radio besides building my own retail business—such as broadcasting, manufacturing, experimenting, sea operating, or any one of the score of lines they prepare you for. And to think that until that day I sent for their eye-opening book, I'd been wailing "I never had a chance!"

NOW I'm making real money. Louise and I have been married six months, and there wasn't any kidding about budgets by Mr. Sullivan when we stepped off, either. I'll bet that today I make more money than the old boy himself.

Here's a real tip. You may not be as bad off as I was. But, think it over, are you satisfied? Are you making enough money, at work that you like? Would you sign a contract to stay where you are now for the next ten years, making the same money? If not, you'd better be doing something about it instead of drifting.

This new Radio game is a live-wire field of golden rewards. The work, in any of the 20 different lines of Radio, is fascinating, absorbing, well paid. The National Radio Institute—oldest and largest Radio home-study school in the world—will train you inexpensively in your own home to know Radio from A to Z and to increase your earnings in the Radio field.

Take another tip—No matter what your plans are, no matter how much or how little you know about Radio—clip the coupon below and look their free book over. It is filled with interesting facts, figures and photos, and the information it will give you is worth a few minutes of anybody's time. You will place yourself under no obligation—the book is free, and is gladly sent to anyone who wants to know about Radio. Just address J. E. Smith, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. 1-K7, Washington, D. C.

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Dept. 1-K7, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith:

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HAUNTED ISLAND

by WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

On a low, black isle in the Spanish Main
  Strange things occur, 'tis said,
And night by night the moon gloats white
  On the conclave of the dead.

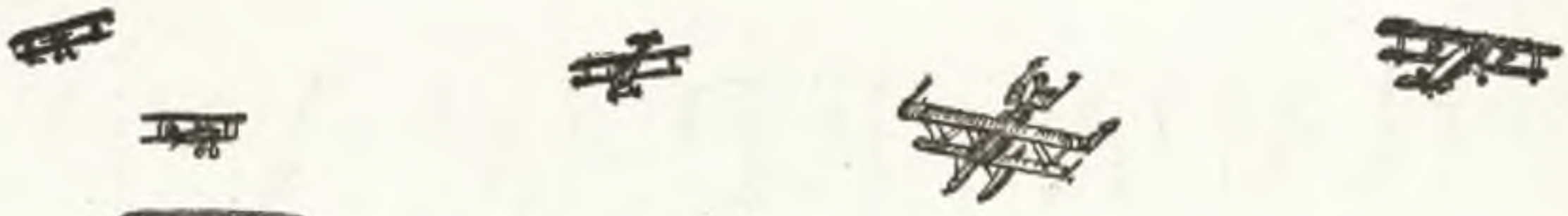
In the dead of night when the wind is low
There are grim, white shapes that come and go—
Ghostly galleons drifting by
On the rolling sea where moon-tints lie;
Mist-hung shadows of masts and spars,
Hazy hulks under haloed stars;
The creak of block and the flap of sail
And ghastly shapes on the after rail.

Raucous song in the forest dim;
Splash of oars at the beach's brim,
Boats beached high at the water's edge
And the gleam of sword on a shelving ledge;
Click of cutlas and rasp of spade,
Whispering voices in palm-fringed glade
Where ghostly forms in the dusk convene
With a chest full of treasure borne between.

A sharp command and a rush of feet;
A clash of arms in the dim retreat;
Muffled oaths and a musket's roar
And pale-hued lights on the moonlit shore;
Crimson sands 'neath a slim, red moon,
Ghosts of men by the green lagoon
And a formless shape that swings high and free
From a moldy rope on a gnarled tree.

In the dead of night when the wind is low
There are grim, white shapes that come and go;
Hazy barques on the pounding surf;
Rattle of spade in the sandy turf;
The tread of feet and voices low
And the gleam of gold in the lantern's glow
Till rising dawn's first cold, gray strand
Strikes flame from a shore of barren sand.

On a low, black isle in the Spanish Main
  Strange things occur, 'tis said,
And night by night the moon gloats white
  On the conclave of the dead.



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Five railroads are going into air transportation—in which Europe is way ahead of us. (Do we ever let Europe stay in the lead?) The Guggenheim Foundation is financing air passenger lines. There are 16 air mail routes already operating. Ocean steamship lines are testing air mail planes from ship to land. The American Express Air Service is under way.

Now is the time to get into Aviation and expand with its rapid growth. Get a kick out of your work—earn big money—meet the best people—travel—in short, get ahead in the world.

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"An instant the lightning showed this fantastic tableau."

"*TIENS,* Friend Trowbridge, you work late tonight."

Jules de Grandin, debonair in faultlessly pressed dinner clothes, a white gardenia sharing his lapel buttonhole with the red ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur, paused at the door of my consulting-room, glimpsed the box of coronas lying open on the table, and straightway entered, seating himself opposite me and selecting a long, black cigar with all the delighted precision of a child choosing a bonbon from a box of sweets.

I laid aside the copy of Baring's *Diagnosis in Diseases of the Blood* I had been studying and helped myself to a fresh cigar. "Have a pleasant time at the Medical Society dinner?" I asked, somewhat sourly.

"But yes," he agreed, nodding vigorously while his little blue eyes shone with enthusiasm. "They are a delectable crowd of fellows, those New York physicians. I regret you would not accompany me. There was one gentleman in particular, a full-blooded Indian, who—but you do not listen, my friend; you are *distrait.* What is the trouble?"

"Trouble enough," I returned ungraciously. "A patient's dying for no earthly reason that I can see except that she is."

"Ah? You interest me. Have you made a tentative diagnosis?"

"Half a dozen, and none of 'em checks up. I've examined her and re-examined her, and the only thing I'm absolutely certain of is that she's fading away right before my eyes, and nothing I can do seems an earthly bit of good."

"U'm. Phthisis, perhaps?"

"Not a bit of it. I've tested her sputum numerous times; every result is negative. There isn't a thing wrong with her organically, and her temperature is almost always normal, fluctuating slightly at times one way or the other, but hardly ever more than one or two degrees. I've made several blood counts, and while she runs slightly under the million mark, the deficiency isn't enough to cause alarm. About the only objective symptoms she displays are a steady falling off in weight and a progressive pallor, while subjectively she complains of loss of appetite, slight headaches and profound lassitude in the morning."

"U'm," he repeated thoughtfully, expelling a twin cloud of smoke from his narrow nostrils and regarding the ash of his cigar as though it were something of intense interest, "and how long has this condition of affairs obtained?"

"About three months. She's a Mrs. Chetwynde, wife of a likable young chap who's superintending a piece of railway construction for an English company in Burma. He's been away about six months or so, and while she would naturally be expected to pine for him to some extent —they've been married only a couple of years—this illness has been going on only since about the middle of August."

"U'm!" He knocked the ash from his cigar with a deft motion of his little finger and inhaled a great lungful of strong, fragrant smoke with careful deliberation. "This case interests me, Friend Trowbridge. These diseases which defy diagnosis are the things which make the doctor's trade exciting. With your permission I will accompany you when next you visit Madame Chetwynde. Who knows? Together we may find the doormat under which the key of her so mysterious malady lies hidden. Meantime, I famish for sleep."

"I'm with you," I agreed as I closed my book, shut off the light and accompanied him upstairs to bed.

THE Chetwynde cottage was one of the smallest and newest of the lovely little dwellings in the Rookwood section of town. Although it contained but seven rooms, it was as completely a piece of art as any miniature painted on ivory, and the appointments and furnishings comported perfectly with the exquisite architectural artistry of the house. Jules de Grandin's round little eyes danced delightedly as he took in the perfect harmony existing inside and out when we parked my car before the rose-trellised porch and entered the charming reception hall. "*Eh bien,* my friend," he whispered as we followed the black-and-white-uniformed maid toward the stairs, "whatever her disease may be, she has the *bon goût*—how do you say? good taste?—this Madame Chetwynde."

Lovely as a piece of Chinese porcelain—and as frail—Idoline Chetwynde lay on the scented pillows of her Louis Treize bed, a negligée of knife-plaited crêpe de chine trimmed with fluffy black marabou shrouding her lissom form from slender neck to slenderer ankles, but permitting occasional high-lights of ivory body to be glimpsed through its sable folds. Little French-heeled mules of scarlet satin trimmed with black fur were on her stockingless feet, and the network of veins showed pale violet against the dead-white of her high-arched insteps. Her long, sharp-chinned face was a rich olive hue in the days of

her health, but now her cheeks had faded to the color of old ivory, and her fine, high forehead was as pale and well-nigh as translucent as candle-wax. The long, beautifully molded lips of her expressive mouth were more an old rose than a coral red, and her large gray eyes, lifted toward the temples like those of an Oriental, shone with a sort of patient resignation beneath the "flying gull" curve of her intensely black brows. Her hair, cut short as a boy's at the back, had been combed across her forehead from right to left and plastered down with some perfumed unguent so that it surmounted her white face like a close-wrapped turban of gleaming ebon silk. Diamond studs, small, but very brilliant, flickered lambently in the lobes of her low-set ears. Some women cast the aura of their feminine allure about them as a bouquet of roses exudes its perfume. Idoline Chetwynde was one of these.

"Not so well this morning, thank you, Doctor," she replied to my inquiry. "The weakness seems greater than usual, and I had a dreadful nightmare last night."

"H'umph, nightmare, eh?" I answered grumly. "We'll soon attend to that. What did you dream?"

"I—I don't know," she replied languidly, as though the effort of speaking were almost too much for her. "I just remember that I dreamed something awful, but what it was I haven't the slightest notion. It really doesn't matter, anyway."

"*Pardonnez-moi, Madame,* but it matters extremely much," de Grandin contradicted. "These things we call dreams, they are sometimes the expression of our most secret thoughts; through them we sometimes learn things concerning ourselves which we should not otherwise suspect. Will you try to recall this unpleasant dream for us?"

As he spoke he busied himself with a minute examination of the patient, tapping her patellar tendons, feeling along her wrists and forearms with quick, practised fingers, lifting her lids and examining the pupils of both her luminous eyes, searching on her throat, neck and cardiac region for signs of abrasions. "*Eh bien,*" and "*morbleu, c'est étrange!*" I heard him mutter to himself once or twice, but no further comment did he make until he had completed his examination.

"Do you know, Dr. Trowbridge," Mrs. Chetwynde remarked as de Grandin rolled down his cuffs and scribbled a memorandum in his notebook, "I've been gone over so many times I've begun to feel like an entry at the dog show. It's really not a bit of use, either. You might just as well save yourselves and me the trouble and let me die comfortably. I've a feeling I shan't be here much longer, anyway, and it might be better for all concerned if——"

"*Zut!*" de Grandin snapped the elastic about his pocketbook with a sharp report and leveled a shrewd, unwinking stare at her. "Say not so, *Madame.* It is your duty to live. *Parbleu,* the garden of the world is full to suffocation with weeds; flowers like yourself should be most sedulously cultivated for the joying of all mankind."

"Thank you, Doctor," Mrs. Chetwynde smiled slowly in acknowledgment of the compliment and pressed the ebony-and-silver bell which hung over the ornamental head of her bed.

"*Madame* has called?" The swart-visaged maid-servant appeared at the door of the chamber with a promptitude which led me to suspect her ear had never been far from the keyhole.

"Yes, Dr. Trowbridge and Dr. de Grandin are leaving," her mistress replied in a tired voice.

"*Adieu, Madame,*" de Grandin murmured in farewell, leaning forward and possessing himself of the

slender hand our hostess had not troubled to lift as we turned to go. "We go, but we shall return anon, and with us, unless I greatly mistake, we shall bring you a message of good cheer. No case is hopeless until——"

"Until the undertaker's been called?" Mrs. Chetwynde interrupted with another of her slow, tired smiles as the little Frenchman pressed his lips to her pale fingers and turned to accompany the maid and me from the room.

"Be careful—sir," the maid cautioned, with just enough space between the command and the title of courtesy to rob her utterance of all semblance of respect. De Grandin, turning from the stairs into the hall, had almost collided with a statuette which stood on a pedestal in a niche between the staircase and the wall. To me it seemed the woman bent a look of almost venomous hate on him as he regained his footing on the highly polished floor and wheeled about to stare meditatively at the figurine into which he had nearly stumbled.

"This way—if you please, sir," the servant admonished, standing by the front door and offering his hat in a most suggestive manner.

"Ah, yes, just so," he agreed, turning from the statue to her, then back again. "And do you suffer from the mosquitoes here at this time of year, *Mademoiselle?*"

"Mosquitoes?" the woman's reply was half word, half scornful sniff at the little foreigner's irrelevant remark.

"Precisely, the mosquito, the gnat, the *moustique,*" he rejoined with a humorous lift of his brows. "The little, buzzing pests, you know."

"No, sir!" The answer served notice there was no more to be said on the subject.

"Ah? Perhaps it is then that *Madame* your mistress delights in the incense which annoys the moths, yes?"

"No, sir!"

"*Parbleu, ma vierge*, there are many strange things in the world, are there not?" he returned with one of his impish grins. "But the strangest of all are those who attempt to hold information from me."

The servant's only reply was a look which indicated clearly that murder was the least favor she cared to bestow on him.

"*Lá, lá,*" he chuckled as we descended the steps to my car. "I did her in the eye, as the Englishmen say, that time, did I not, my friend?"

"You certainly had the last word," I admitted wonderingly, "but you'll have to grant her the last look, and it was no very pleasant one, either."

"*Ah bah,*" he returned with another grin, "who cares how old pickleface looks so long as her looks reveal that which I seek? Did not you notice how she stiffened when I hinted at the odor of incense in the house? There is no reason why they should not burn incense there, but, for some cause, the scent is a matter of utmost privacy—with the maid, at least."

"U'm?" I commented.

"Quite right, my friend, your objection is well taken," he responded with a chuckle. "Now tell me something of our fair patient. Who is she, who were her forebears, how long has she resided here?"

"She's the wife of Richard Chetwynde, a naturalized Englishman, who's been working on an engineering job in India, as I told you last night," I replied. "As to her family, she was a Miss Millatone before her marriage, and the Millatones have been here since the Indians—in fact, some of them have been here quite as long, since an ancestress of hers was a member of one of the aboriginal tribes—but that was in the days when the Swedes and Dutch were contending for this part of the

country. Her family are rather more than well to do, and——"

"No more, my friend; you have told me enough, I think," he interrupted. "That strain of Indian ancestry may account for something which has caused me much wonderment. Madame Chetwynde is a rarely beautiful woman, my friend, but there is that indefinable something about her which tells the careful observer her blood is not entirely Caucasian. No disgrace, that; *parbleu*, a mixture of strain is often an improvement of the breed, but there was a certain—how shall I say it?—foreignness about her which told me she might be descended from Orientals, perhaps; perhaps from the Turk, the Hindoo, the——"

"No," I cut in with a chuckle, "she's what you might call a hundred and ten per cent American."

"U'm," he commented dryly, "and therefore ten per cent nearer the bare verities of nature than the thinner-blooded European. Yes. I think we may win this case, my friend, but I also think we shall have much study to do."

"Oh"—I looked at him in surprize—"so you've arrived at a hypothesis?"

"Hardly that, my friend. There are certain possibilities, but as yet Jules de Grandin has not the courage to call them probabilities. Let us say no more for the time being. I would think, I would cogitate, I would meditate upon the matter." Nor could all my urging extract a single hint concerning the theory which I knew was humming like a gyroscope inside his active little brain as we drove home through the rows of brilliant maple trees lining the wide streets of our pretty little city.

A SPIRITED altercation was under way when we arrived at my house. Taking advantage of the fact that office hours were over and no patients within earshot, Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, was engaged in the pleasing pastime of expressing her unvarnished opinion with all the native eloquence of a born Irishwoman. "Take shame to yerself, Katy Rooney," she was advising her niece as de Grandin and I opened the front door, "sure, 'tis yerself as ought to be ashamed to set foot in me kitchen an' tell me such nonsense! Afther all th' doctor's been afther doin' fer yez, too! Desertin' th' pore lady while she's sick an' in distriss, ye are, an' widout so much as sayin' by yer lave to th' doctor. Wurra, 'tis Nora McGinnis that's strainin' ivery nerve in her body to kape from takin' her hand off th' side o' yer face!"

"Take shame ter meself, indade!" an equally belligerent voice responded. " 'Tis little enough ye know of th' goin's on in that there house! S'posin' 'twas you as had ter live under th' same roof wid a haythen statchoo, an' see th' misthress ye wuz takin' yer wages from a-crawlin' on her hands an' knees before th' thing as if she was a haythen or a Protestant or sumpin, instid of a Christian woman! When first I come to Missis Chetwynde's house th' thing was no larger nor th' span o' me hand, an' ivery day it's growed an' growed until it's as long as me arm this minit, so it is, an' no longer ago than yestiddy it wunk it's haythen eye at me as I was passin' through th' hall. I tell ye, Nora darlin', what wid that black statchoo a-standin' in th' hall an' gittin' bigger an' bigger day be day, an' th' missis a-crawlin' to it on her all-fours, an' that slinky, sneaky English maid o' her'n actin' as if I, whose ancistors wuz kings in Ireland, wuz no better than th' dirt benathe her feet, an' belike not as good, I'd not be answerable fer me actions another day—th' saints hear me when I say it!"

I was striding toward the kitchen with intent to bring the argument to an abrupt close when de Grandin's

fingers suddenly bit into my arm so sharply that I winced from the pressure. "No, no, Friend Trowbridge," he whispered fiercely in my ear, "let us hear what else she has to say. This information is a gift from heaven, no less!" Next moment he was in the kitchen, smiling ingratiatingly at the two angry women.

"Dr. de Grandin, sor," began Nora, anxious to refer the dispute to his arbitration, " 'tis meself that's ashamed to have to own this gurrul as kin o' mine. When Mrs. Chetwynde wuz taken sick, Dr. Trowbridge got her to go over an' cook fer th' pore lady, fer all our family's good cooks, though I do say it as shouldn't. An' now, bad cess to her, she's fer up an' lavin' th' pore lady in th' midst of her trouble, like as if she were a Scandinavian or Eyetalian, or some kind o' stinkin' furriner, beggin' yer pardon, sor."

"Faith, Doctor," the accused Kathleen answered in defense, "I'm niver th' one to run out from a good situation widout warnin', but that Chetwynde house is no Christian place at all, at all. 'Tis some kind o' haythen madhouse, no less."

De Grandin regarded her narrowly a moment, then broke into one of his quick smiles. "What was it you did say concerning a certain statue and Madame Chetwynde?" he asked.

"Sure, an' there's enough ter say," she replied, "but th' best part of it's better left unsaid, I'm thinkin'. Mrs. Chetwynde's husband, as belike you know, sor, is an engineer in India, an' he's forever sendin' home all sorts o' furrin knickknacks fer souvenirs. Some o' th' things is reel pretty an' some of 'em ain't so good. It were about three months ago, just before I came wid her, he sent home th' statchoo of some old haythen goddess from th' furrin land. She set it up on a pedistal like as if it were th' image of some blessed saint, an' there it stands to this day, a-poisonin' th' pure air o' th' entire house.

"I niver liked th' looks o' th' thing from th' first moment I clapped me two eyes on it, but I didn't have ter pass through th' front end o' th' house much, an' when I did I turned me eyes away, but one day as I was passin' through th' hall I looked at it, an' ye can belave me or not, Doctor, but th' thing had growed half a foot since last time I seen it!"

"Indeed?" de Grandin responded politely. "And then——"

"Then I sez to meself, sez I, 'I'll jist fix *you,* me beauty, that I will,' an' th' next evenin', when no one wuz lookin', I sneaked into th' hall an' doused th thing 'wid howly wather from th' church font!"

"Ah? And then——?" de Grandin prompted gently, his little eyes gleaming with interest.

"Ouch, Doctor darlin', if I hadn't seen it I wouldn't a' belaved it! May I niver move off'n this spot if th' blessed wather didn't boil an' stew as if I'd poured it onto a red-hot sthove!"

"*Parbleu!*" the Frenchman murmured.

"Th' next time I went past th' thing, so help me hivin, if it didn't grin at me!"

"*Mordieu,* do you say so? And then——?"

"An' no longer ago than yestiddy it wunk its eye at me as I went by!"

"And you did say something concerning Madame Chetwynde praying to this——"

"Doctor"—the woman sidled nearer and took his lapel between her thumb and forefinger—"Doctor, 'tis meself as knows better than to bear tales concernin' me betters, but I seen sumpin last week that give me th' cowld shivers from me big toes to me eye-teeth. I'd been shlapin' as paceful as a lamb that hadn't been born yet, when all of a suddent I heard sumpin downstairs that sounded like

burgulars. 'Bad cess ter th' murtherin' scoundrils,' says I, 'comin' here to kill pore definseless women in their beds!' an' wid that I picks up a piece o' iron pipe I found handy-like beside me door an' shtarts ter crape downstairs ter lane it agin th' side o' their heads.

"Dr. de Grandin, sor, 'tis th' blessed truth an' no lie I'm tellin' ye. When I come to th' head o' th' stheps, there was Mrs. Chetwynde, all barefooty, wid some sort o' funny-lookin' thing on her head, a-lightin' haythen punk-sthicks before that black haythen image an' a-goin' down on her two knees to it!

" 'Katy Rooney,' sez I to meself, 'this is no fit an' proper house fer you, a Christian woman an' a good Catholic, to be livin' in, so it's not,' an' as soon as iver I could I give me notice to Mrs. Chetwynde, an' all th' money in th' mint couldn't hire me to go back to that place agin, sor."

"Just so," the little Frenchman agreed, nodding his sleek blond head vigorously. "I understand your reluctance to return; but could you not be induced by some consideration greater than money?"

"Sure, an' I'd not go back there fer——" Katy began, but he cut her short with a sudden gesture.

"Attend me, if you please," he commanded. "You are a Christian woman, are you not?"

"To be sure, I am."

"Very good. If I told you your going back to Madame Chetwynde's service until I give you word to leave might be instrumental in saving a Christian soul—a Christian body, certainly—would you undertake the duty?"

"I'd do most annything ye towld me to, sor," the woman replied soberly, "but th' blessed saints know I'm afeared to shlape under th' same roof wid that there black thing another night."

"U'm," de Grandin took his narrow chin in his hand and bowed his head in thought a moment, then turned abruptly toward the door. "Await me here," he commanded. "I shall return."

Less than two minutes later he re-entered the kitchen, a tiny package of tissue paper, bound with red ribbon, in his hand. "Have you ever been by the Killarney lakes?" he demanded of Katy, fixing his level, unwinking stare on her.

"Sure, an' I have that," she replied fervently. "More than onct I've sthood beside th' blue wathers an'——"

"And who is it comes out of the lake once each year and rides across the water on a great white horse, attended by——" he began, but she interrupted with a cry that was almost a scream of ecstasy:

" 'Tis th' O'Donohue himself! Th' brave O'Donohue, a-ridin' his grrate white harse, an' a-headin' his band o' noble Fayneans, all ridin' an' prancin' ter set owld Ireland free!"

"Precisely," de Grandin replied. "I, too, have stood beside the lake, and with me have stood certain good friends who were born and bred in Ireland. One of those once secured a certain souvenir of the O'Donohue's yearly ride. Behold!"

Undoing the tissue paper parcel he exhibited a tiny ring composed of two or three strands of white horsehairs loosely plaited together. "Suppose I told you these were from the tail of the O'Donohue's horse?" he demanded. "Would you take them with you as a safeguard and re-enter Madame Chetwynde's service until I gave you leave to quit?"

"Glory be, I would that, sor!" she replied. "Faith, wid three hairs from th' O'Donohue's horse, I'd take service in th' Divil's own kitchen an' brew him as foine a broth o' brimsthone as iver he drank, that I would. Sure, th' O'Donohue is more than a match fer any murtherin' haythen

that iver came out o' India, I'm thinkin', sor."

"Quite right," he agreed with a smile. "It is understood, then, that you will return to Madame Chetwynde's this afternoon and remain there until you hear further from me? Very good."

To me, as we returned to the front of the house, he confided: "A pious fraud is its own excuse, Friend Trowbridge. What we believe a thing is, it is, as far as we are concerned. Those hairs, now, I did extract them from the mattress of my bed; but our superstitious Katy is brave as a lion in the belief that they came from the O'Donohue's horse."

"Do you mean to tell me you actually take any stock in that crazy Irishwoman's story, de Grandin?" I demanded incredulously.

"*Eh bien,*" he answered with a shrug of his narrow shoulders, "who knows what he believes, my friend? Much she may have imagined, much more she may have made up from the activity of her superstitious mind; but if all she said is truth I shall not be so greatly surprized as I expect to be before we have finished this case."

"Well!" I returned, too amazed to think of any adequate reply.

"TROWBRIDGE, my friend," he informed me at breakfast the following morning, "I have thought deeply upon the case of Madame Chetwynde, and it is my suggestion that we call upon the unfortunate lady without further delay. There are several things I should very much like to inspect in her so charming house, for what the estimable Katy told us yesterday has thrown much light on things which before were entirely dark."

"All right," I assented. "It seems to me you're taking a fantastic view of the case, but everything I've done thus far has been useless, so I dare say you'll do no harm by your tricks."

"*Morbleu,* I warrant I shall not!" he agreed with a short nod. "Come, let us go."

The dark-skinned maid who had conducted us to and from her mistress the previous day met us at the door in answer to my ring and favored de Grandin with an even deeper scowl than she had shown before, but she might as well have been a graven image for all the attention he bestowed on her. However:

"*Mon Dieu,* I faint, I am ill, I shall collapse, Friend Trowbridge!" he cried in a choking voice as we approached the stairs. "Water, I pray you; a glass of water, if you please!"

I turned to the domestic and demanded a tumbler of water, and as she left to procure it, de Grandin leaped forward with a quick, catlike movement and pointed to the statuette standing at the foot of the stairs. "Observe it well, Friend Trowbridge," he commanded in a low, excited voice. "Look upon its hideousness, and take particular notice of its height and width. See, place yourself here, and draw a visual line from the top of its head to the woodwork behind, then make a mark on the wood to record its stature. Quick, she will return in a moment, and we have no time to lose!"

Wonderingly, I obeyed his commands, and had scarcely completed my task when the woman came with a goblet of ice-water. De Grandin pretended to swallow a pill and wash it down with copious drafts of the chilled liquid, then followed me up the stairs to Mrs. Chetwynde's room.

"*Madame,*" he began without preliminary when the maid had left us, "there are certain things I should like to ask you. Be so good as to reply, if you please. First, do you know anything about the statue which stands in your hallway below?"

A troubled look flitted across our patient's pale face. "No, I can't say I do," she replied slowly. "My husband sent it back to me from India several months ago, together with some other curios. I felt a sort of aversion to it from the moment I first saw it, but somehow it fascinated me, as well. After I'd set it up in the hall I made up my mind to take it down, and I've been on the point of having it taken out half a dozen times, but somehow I've never been able to make up my mind about it. I really wish I had, now, for the thing seems to be growing on me, if you understand what I mean. I find myself thinking about it—it's so adorably ugly, you know—more and more during the day, and, somehow, though I can't quite explain, I think I dream about it at night, too. I wake up every morning with the recollection of having had a terrible nightmare the night before, but I'm never able to recall any of the incidents of my dream except that the statue figures in it somehow."

"U'm?" de Grandin murmured noncommittally. "This is of interest, *Madame*. Another question, if you please, and, I pray you, do not be offended if it seems unduly personal. I notice you have a *penchant* for attar of rose. Do you employ any other perfume?"

"No," wonderingly.

"No incense, perhaps, to render the air more fragrant?"

"No, I dislike incense, it makes my head ache. And yet"—she wrinkled her smooth brow in a puzzled manner—"and yet I've thought I smelled a faint odor of some sort of incense, almost like Chinese punk, in the house more than once. Strangely enough, the odor seems strongest on the mornings following one of my unremembered nightmares."

"H'm," de Grandin muttered, "I think, perhaps, we begin to see a fine, small ray of light. Thank you, *Madame;* that is all."

"THE moon is almost at the full, Friend Trowbridge," he remarked apropos of nothing, about 11

"Hear my prayer. O mighty Spirit!
Smite and strike and make impotent
Demons from across the water."

o'clock that night. "Would it not be an ideal evening for a little drive?"

"Yes, it would not," I replied. "I'm tired, and I'd a lot rather go to bed than be gallivanting all over town with you, but I suppose you have something up your sleeve, as usual."

"*Mais oui,*" he responded with one of his impish smiles, "an elbow in each, my friend—and other things, as well. Suppose we drive to Madame Chetwynde's."

I grumbled, but complied.

"Well, here we are," I growled as we passed the Chetwynde cottage. "What do we do next?"

"Go in, of course," he responded.

"Go in? At this hour of night?"

"But certainly; unless I am more mistaken than I think, there is that to be seen within which we should do well not to miss."

"But it's preposterous," I objected. "Who ever heard of disturbing a sick woman by a call at this hour?"

"We shall not disturb her, my friend," he replied. "See, I have here the key to her house. We shall let ourselves in like a pair of wholly disreputable burglars and dispose ourselves as comfortably as may be to see what we shall see, if anything."

"The key to her house!" I echoed in amazement. "How the deuce did you get it?"

"Simply. While the sour-faced maid fetched me the glass of water this morning I took an impression of the key in a cake of soap I had brought for that very purpose. This afternoon I had a locksmith prepare me a duplicate from the stamp I had made. *Parbleu,* my friend, Jules de Grandin has not served these many years with the *Sûreté* and failed to learn more ways than one of entering other peoples' houses!"

Quietly, treading softly, we mounted the veranda steps, slipped the Judas-key into the front door lock and let ourselves into Mrs. Chetwynde's hall. "This way, if you please, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin ordered, plucking me by the sleeve. "If we seat ourselves in the drawing-room we shall have an uninterrupted view of both stairs and hall, yet remain ourselves in shadow. That is well, for we have come to see, not to be seen."

"I FEEL like a malefactor——" I began in a nervous whisper, but he cut me off sharply.

"Quiet!" he ordered in a low breath. "Observe the moon, if you please, my friend. Is it not already almost peering through yonder window?"

I glanced toward the hall window before which the black statuette stood and noticed that the edge of the lunar disk was beginning to show through the opening, and long silver beams were commencing to stream across the polished floor, illuminating the figure and surrounding it with a sort of cold effulgence. The statue represented a female figure, gnarled and knotted, and articulated in a manner suggesting horrible deformity. It was of some kind of black stone or composition which glistened as though freshly anointed with oil, and from the shoulder-sockets three arms sprang out to right and left. A sort of pointed cap adorned the thing's head, and about the pendulous breasts and twisting arms serpents twined and writhed, while a girdle of skulls, carved from gleaming white bone, encircled its waist. Otherwise it was nude, and nude with a nakedness which was obscene even to me, a medical practitioner for whom the human body held no secrets. As I watched the slowly growing patch of moonlight on the floor it seemed the black figure grew slowly in size, then shrunk again, and again increased in stature, while its twisting arms and garlands of con-

torting serpents appeared to squirm with a horrifying suggestion of waking into life.

I blinked my eyes several times, sure I was the victim of some optical illusion due to the moon rays against the silhouette of the statue's blackness, but a sound from the stairhead brought my gaze upward with a quick, startled jerk.

Light and faltering, but unquestionably approaching, a soft step sounded on the uncarpeted stairs, nearer, nearer, until a tall, slow-moving figure came into view at the staircase turn. Swathed from breast to insteps in a diaphanous black silk night-robe, a pair of golden-strapped boudoir sandals on her little naked feet and a veil of black tulle shrouding her face, Idoline Chetwynde slowly descended the stairs, feeling her way carefully, as though the covering on her face obscured her vision. One hand was outstretched before her, palm up, fingers close together; in the other she bore a cluster of seven sticks of glowing, smoking Chinese punk spread fanwise between her fingers, and the heavy, cloyingly sweet fumes from the joss-sticks spiraled slowly upward, surrounding her veiled head in a sort of nimbus and trailing behind her like an evil-omened cloud.

Straight for the black image of the Indian goddess she trod, feeling each slow, careful step with faltering deliberation, halted a moment and inclined her head, then thrust the punk-sticks into a tiny bowl of sand which stood on the floor at the statue's feet. This done, she stepped back five slow paces, slipped the gilded sandals off and placed her bared feet parallel and close together, then with a sudden forward movement dropped to her knees. Oddly, with that sense for noting trifles in the midst of more important sights which we all have, I noticed that when she knelt, instead of straightening her feet out behind her with her insteps to the floor, she bent her toes forward beneath her weight.

For an instant she remained kneeling upright before the black image, which was already surrounded by a heavy cloud of punk-smoke; then, with a convulsive gesture, she tore the veil from before her face and rent the robe from her bosom, raised her hands and crossed them, palms forward, in front of her brow and bent forward and downward till crossed hands and forehead rested on the waxed boards of the floor. For a moment she remained thus in utter self-abasement, then rose upright, flinging her hands high above her head, recrossed them before her face and dropped forward in complete prostration once more. Again and again she repeated this genuflection, faster and faster, until it seemed her body swayed forward and back thirty or forty times a minute, and the soft pat-pat of her hands against the floor assumed a rhythmic, drumlike cadence as she began a faltering chant in eager, short-breathed syllables:

Ho, Devi, consort of Siva and daughter of Himavat!
Ho, Sakti, fructifying principle of the Universe!
Ho, Devi, the Goddess;
Ho, Gauri, the Yellow;
Ho, Uma, the Bright;
Ho, Durga, the Inaccessible;
Ho, Chandi, the Fierce;
Listen Thou to my Mantra!
Ho, Kali, the Black,
Ho, Kali, the Six-armed One of Horrid Form,
Ho, Thou about whose waist hangs a girdle of human skulls as if it were a precious pendant;
Ho, Malign Image of Destructiveness——

She paused an instant, seeming to swallow rising trepidation, gasped for breath a moment, like a timid but determined bather about to plunge into a pool of icy water, then:

Take Thou the soul and the body of this woman prostrate before Thee,
Take Thou her body and her spirit, freely and voluntarily offered,

Incorporate her body, soul and spirit into
Thy godhead to strengthen Thee in
Thine undertakings.
Freely is she given Thee, Divine Destroyer,
Freely, of her own accord, and without
reservation,
Asking naught but to become a part of
Thee and of Thy supreme wickedness.

Ho, Kali of horrid form,
Ho, Malign Image of Destructiveness,
Ho, eater-up of all that is good,
Ho, disseminator of all which is wicked,
Listen Thou to my Mantra!

"*Grand Dieu,* forgive her invincible ignorance; she knows not what she says!" de Grandin muttered beside me, but made no movement to stop her in her sacrilegious rite.

I half rose from my chair to seize the frenzied woman and drag her from her knees, but he grasped my elbow in a viselike grip and drew me back savagely. "Not now, foolish one!" he commanded in a sibilant whisper. And so we watched the horrid ceremony to its close.

For upward of a quarter-hour Idoline Chetwynde continued her prostrations before the heathen idol, and, either because the clouds drifting across the moon's face played tricks with the light streaming through the hall window, or because my eyes grew undependable from the strain of watching the spectacle before me, it seemed as though some hovering, shifting pall of darkness took form in the corners of the room and wavered forward like a sheet of wind-blown sable cloth until it almost enveloped the crouching woman, then fluttered back again. Three or four times I noted this phenomenon, then, as I was almost sure it was no trick of lighting or imagination, the moon, sailing serenely in the autumn sky, passed beyond the line of the window, an even tone of shadow once more filled the hall, and Mrs. Chetwynde sank forward on her face for the final time, uttered a weak, protesting little sound, half-way between a moan and a whimper, and lay there, a lifeless, huddled heap at the foot of the graven image, her white arms and feet protruding from the black folds of her robe and showing like spots of pale light against the darkness of the floor.

Once more I made to rise and take her up, but again de Grandin restrained me. "Not yet, my friend," he whispered. "We must see the tragic farce played to its conclusion."

For a few minutes we sat there in absolute silence; then, with a shuddering movement, Mrs. Chetwynde regained consciousness, rose slowly and dazedly to her feet, resumed her sandals, and walked falteringly toward the stairs.

Quick and silent as a cat, de Grandin leaped across the room, passed within three feet of her and seized a light chair, thrusting it forward so that one of its spindle legs barred her path.

Never altering her course, neither quickening nor reducing her shuffling walk, the young woman proceeded, collided with the obstruction, and would have stumbled had not de Grandin snatched away the chair as quickly as he had thrust it forward. With never a backward look, with no exclamation of pain—although the contact must have hurt her cruelly—without even a glance at the little Frenchman who stood half an arm's length from her, she walked to the stairs, felt for the bottommost tread a second, then began a slow ascent.

"*Très bon!*" de Grandin muttered as he restored the chair to its place and took my elbow in a firm grip, guiding me down the hall and through the front door.

"What in heaven's name does it all mean?" I demanded as we regained my car. "From what I've just seen I'd have no hesitancy in signing commitment papers to incarcerate Mrs. Chetwynde in an institution for the insane—the woman's suffering from a masochistic mania, no doubt of

it—but why the deuce did you try to trip her up with a chair?"

"Softly, my friend," he replied, touching fire to a vile-smelling French cigarette and puffing furiously at it. "Did you help commit that poor girl to an insane asylum you would be committing a terrible crime, no less. Normal she is not, but her abnormality is entirely subjective. As for the chair, it was the test of her condition. Like you, I had a faint fear her actions were due to some mental breakdown, but did you notice her walk? *Parbleu,* was it the walk of a person in possession of his faculties? I say no! And the chair proved it. When she did stumble against it, though it must have caused her tender body much pain, she neither faltered nor cried out. The machinery which telegraphed the sensation of hurt from her leg to her brain did suffer a short-circuit. My friend, she was in a state of complete anesthesia as regarded the outward world. She was, how do you say——"

"Hypnotized?" I suggested.

"U'm, perhaps. Something like that; although the controlling agent was one far, far different from any you have seen in the psychological laboratory, my friend."

"Then——"

"Then we would do well not to speculate too deeply until we have more pieces of evidence to fit into the picture-puzzle of this case. Tomorrow morning we shall call on Madame Chetwynde, if you please."

We did. The patient was markedly worse. Great lavender circles showed under her eyes, and her face, which I had thought as pale as any countenance could be in life, was even a shade paler than theretofore. She was so weak she could hardly lift her hand in greeting, and her voice was barely more than a whisper. On her left leg, immediately over the fibula, a great patch of violet bruise showed plainly the effects of her collision with the chair. Throughout the pretty, cozy little cottage there hung the faint aroma of burnt joss-sticks.

"Look well, my friend," de Grandin ordered in a whisper as we descended the stairs; "observe the mark you made behind the statue's head no later than yesterday."

I paused before the horrid thing, closed one eye and sighted from the tip of its pointed cap to the scratch I had made on the woodwork behind it. Then I turned in amazement to my companion. Either my eye was inaccurate or I had made incorrect measurements the previous day. According to yesterday's marks on the woodwork the statue had grown fully two inches in height.

De Grandin met my puzzled look with an unwavering stare, as he replied to my unspoken question: "Your eye does not deceive you, my friend; the hell-hag's effigy has enhanced."

"But—but," I stammered, "that can't be!"

"Nevertheless, it is."

"But, good heavens, man; if this keeps up——"

"This will not keep up, my friend. Either the devil's dam takes her prey or Jules de Grandin triumphs. The first may come to pass; but my wager is that the second occurs."

"But, for the Lord's sake! What can we do?"

"We can do much for the Lord's sake, my friend, and He can do much for ours, if it be His will. What we can do, we will; no more and certainly no less. Do you make your rounds of mercy, Friend Trowbridge, and beseech the so excellent Nora to prepare an extra large apple tart for dinner, as I shall undoubtlessly bring home a guest. Me, I hasten, I rush, I fly to New York to consult a gentleman I met at the Medical Society dinner the other night. I shall get back when I return, but, if that be

not in time for an early dinner, it will be no fault of Jules de Grandin's. *Adieu*, my friend, and may good luck attend me in my errand. *Cordieu*, but I shall need it!"

"DR. TROWBRIDGE, may I present Dr. Wolf?" de Grandin requested that evening, standing aside to permit a tall, magnificently built young man to precede him through the doorway of my consulting-room. "I have brought him from New York to take dinner with us, and—perhaps—to aid us in that which we must do tonight without fail."

"How do you do, Dr. Wolf?" I responded formally, taking the visitor's hand in mine, but staring curiously at him the while. Somehow the name given by de Grandin did not seem at all appropriate. He was tall, several inches over six feet, with an enormous breadth of shoulder and extraordinary depth of chest. His face, disproportionately large for even his great body, was high-cheeked and unusually broad, with a jaw of implacable squareness, and the deep-set, burning eyes beneath his overhanging brows were of a peculiarly piercing quality. There was something in the impassive nobility and stedfastness of purpose in that face which reminded me of the features of the central allegorical figure in Franz Stuck's masterpiece, *War*.

Something of my thought must have been expressed in my glance, for the young man noticed it and a smile passed swiftly across his rugged countenance, leaving it calm again in an instant. "The name is a concession to civilization, Doctor," he informed me. "I began life under the somewhat unconventional sobriquet of 'Johnny Curly Wolf', but that hardly seemed appropriate to my manhood's environment, so I have shortened the name to its greatest common divisor—I'm a full-blooded Dakotah, you know."

"Indeed?" I replied lamely.

"Yes. I've been a citizen for a number of years, for there are certain limitations on the men of my people who retain their tribal allegiance which would hamper me greatly in my lifework. My father became wealthy by grace of the white man's bounty and the demands of a growing civilization for fuel-oil, and he had the good judgment to have me educated in an Eastern university instead of one of the Indian training schools. An uncle of mine was a tribal medicine man and I was slated to follow in his footsteps, but I determined to graft the white man's scientific medicine onto my primitive instruction. Medical work has appealed to me ever since I was a little shaver and was permitted to help the post surgeon at the agency office. I received my license to practise in '14, and was settling down to a study of pulmonary diseases when the big unpleasantness broke out in Europe."

He smiled again, somewhat grimly this time. "My people have been noted for rather bloody work in the old days, you know, and I suppose the call of my lineage was too strong for me. At any rate, I was inside a Canadian uniform and overseas within two months of the call for Dominion troops, and for three solid years I was in the thick of it with the British. When we came in I was transferred to the A. E. F., and finished my military career in a burst of shrapnel in the Argonne. I've three silver bones in each leg now and am drawing half-compensation from the government every month. I indorse the check over to the fund to relieve invalid Indian veterans of the army who aren't as well provided with worldly goods by Standard Oil as I am."

"But are you practising in New York now, Doctor?" I asked.

"Only as a student. I've been taking some special post-graduate work in diseases of the lungs and posterior poliomyelitis. As soon as my studies

are completed I'm going west to devote my life and fortune to fighting those twin scourges of my people."

"Just so," de Grandin cut in, unable longer to refrain from taking part in the conversation. "Dr. Wolf and I have had many interesting things to speak of during our trip from New York, Friend Trowbridge, and now, if all is prepared, shall we eat?"

The young Indian proved a charming dinner companion. Finely educated and highly cultured, he was indued with extraordinary skill as a raconteur, and his matter-of-fact stories of the "old contemps'" titanic struggle from the Marne and back, night raids in the trenches and desperate hand-to-hand fights in the blackness of No Man's Land, of the mud and blood and silent heroism of the dressing-stations and of the phantom armies which rallied to the assistance of the British at Mons were colorful as the scenes of some old Spanish tapestry. Dinner was long since over and 11 o'clock had struck, still we lingered over our cigars, liqueurs and coffee in the drawing-room. It was de Grandin who dragged us back from the days of '15 with a hasty glance at the watch strapped to his wrist.

"*Parbleu,* my friends," he exclaimed, "it grows late and we have a desperate experiment to try before the moon passes the meridian. Come, let us be about our work."

I looked at him in amazement, but the young Indian evidently understood his meaning, for he rose with a shrug of his broad shoulders and followed my diminutive companion out into the hall, where a great leather kit bag which bore evidence of having accompanied its owner through Flanders and Picardy rested beside the hall rack. "What's on the program?" I demanded, trailing in the wake of the other two, but de Grandin thrust hat and coat into my hands, exclaiming:

"We go to Madame Chetwynde's again, my friend. Remember what you saw about this time last night? *Cordieu,* you shall see that which has been vouchsafed to few men before another hour has passed, or Jules de Grandin is wretchedly mistaken!"

Piling my companions into the back seat, I took the wheel and drove through the still, moonlit night toward the Chetwynde cottage. Half an hour later we let ourselves quietly into the house with de Grandin's duplicate key and took our station in the darkened parlor once more.

A quick word from de Grandin gave Dr. Wolf his cue, and taking up his travel-beaten bag the young Indian let himself out of the house and paused on the porch. For a moment I saw his silhouette against the glass panel of the door, then a sudden movement carried him out of my line of vision, and I turned to watch the stairs down which I knew Idoline Chetwynde would presently come to perform her unholy rites of secret worship.

The ticking pulse-beats of the little ormolu clock on the mantelpiece sounded thunderous in the absolute quiet of the house; here and there a board squeaked and cracked in the gradually lowering temperature; somewhere outside, a motor horn tooted with a dismal, wailing note. I felt my nerves gradually tightening like the strings of a violin as the musician keys them up before playing, and tiny shivers of horripilation pursued each other down my spine and up my forearms as I sat waiting in the shadowy room.

THE little French clock struck twelve sharp, silvery chimes. It had arrived, that hideous hour which belongs neither to the day which is dead nor to the new day stirring in the womb of Time, and which we call midnight for want of a better term. The moon's pale visage slipped slowly into view through the panes of the

window behind the Indian statue and a light, faltering step sounded on the stairs above us.

"*Mon Dieu,*" de Grandin whispered fervently, "grant that I shall not have made a mistake in my calculations!" He half rose from his chair, gazing fixedly at the lovely, unconscious woman walking her tranced march toward the repellent idol, then stepped softly to the front window and tapped lightly on its pane with his fingertips.

Once again we saw Idoline Chetwynde prostrate herself at the feet of the black statue; once more her fluttering, breathless voice besought the evil thing to take her soul and destroy her body; then, so faint I scarcely heard it through the droning of the praying woman's words, the front door gave a soft click as it swung open on its hinges.

Young Dr. Wolf, once Johnny Curly Wolf, medicine man of the Dakotahs, stepped into the moonlit hall.

Now I understood why he had hidden himself in the shadows of the porch when he left the house. Gone were his stylishly cut American clothes, gone was his air of well-bred sophistication. It was not the highly educated, cultured physician and student who entered the Chetwynde home, but a medicine man of America's primeval race in all the panoply of his traditional office. Naked to the waist he was, his bronze torso gleaming like newly molded metal from the furnace. Long, tight-fitting trousers of beaded buckskin encased his legs, and on his feet were the moccasins of his forefathers. Upon his head was the war-bonnet of eagle feathers, and his face was smeared with alternate streaks of white, yellow and black paint. In one hand he bore a bull-hide tom-tom, and in his deep-set, smoldering eyes there burned the awful, deadly earnestness of his people.

Majestically he strode down the hall, paused some three or four paces behind the prostrate woman, then, raising his tom-tom above his head, struck it sharply with his knuckles.

Toom, toom, toom, toom! the mellow, booming notes sounded, again and still again. Bending slightly at the knees, he straightened himself, repeated the movement, quickened the cadence until he was rising and sinking a distance of six inches or so in a sort of stationary, bobbing dance. "Manitou, Great Spirit of my fathers!" he called in a strong, resonant voice. "Great Spirit of the forest dwellers and of the people of the plains, hear the call of the last of Thy worshipers:

"Hear my prayer, O Mighty Spirit,
As I do the dance before Thee,
Do the dance my fathers taught me,
Dance it as they danced before me,
As they danced it in their lodges,
As they danced it at their councils
When of old they sought Thy succor.

"Look upon this prostrate woman,
See her bow in supplication
To an alien, wicked spirit.
Thine she is by right of lineage,
Thine by right of blood and forebears.
In the cleanly air of heaven
She should make her supplication,
Not before the obscene statue
Of a god of alien people.

"Hear my prayer, O Mighty Spirit,
Hear, Great Spirit of my fathers,
Save this woman of Thy people,
Smite and strike and make impotent
Demons from across the water,
Demons vile and wholly filthy,
And not seemly for devotion
From a woman of Thy people."

The solemn, monotonous intoning ceased, but the dance continued. But now it was no longer a stationary dance, for, with shuffling tread and half-bent body, Johnny Curly Wolf was circling slowly about the Hindoo idol and its lone worshiper.

Something—a cloud, perhaps—drifted slowly across the moon's face, obscuring the light which streamed into the hall. An oddly shaped cloud it was, something like a giant man astride a giant horse, and on his

brow there seemed to be the feathered war-bonnet of the Dakotahs. The cloud grew in density. The moon rays became fainter and fainter, and finally the hall was in total darkness.

In the west there sounded the whistling bellow of a rising wind, shaking the casements of the house and making the very walls tremble. Deep and rumbling, growing louder and louder as it seemed to roll across the heavens on iron wheels, a distant peal of thunder sounded, increased in volume, finally burst in a mighty clap directly over our heads, and a fork of blinding, jagged lightning shot out of the angry sky. A shivering ring of shattered glass and of some heavy object toppling to a fall, a woman's wild, despairing shriek, and another rumbling, crashing peal of thunder deafened me.

By the momentary glare of a second lightning-flash I beheld a scene stranger than any painted by Dante in his vision of the underworld. Seemingly, a great female figure crouched with all the ferocity of a tigress above the prostrate form of Idoline Chetwynde, its writhing, sextuple arms grasping at the woman's prone body or raised as though to ward off a blow, while from the window looking toward the west there leaped the mighty figure of an Indian brave armed with shield and war-club.

Johnny Curly Wolf? No! For Johnny Curly Wolf circled and gyrated in the measures of his tribal ghost-dance, and in one hand he held his tom-tom, while with the other he beat out the rhythm of his dance-music.

It was but an instant that the lightning showed me this fantastic tableau, then all was darkness blacker than before, and a crashing of some stone thing shattered into half a thousand fragments broke through the rumble of the thunder.

"Lights! *Grand Dieu,* lights, Friend Trowbridge!" de Grandin screamed in a voice gone high and thin with hysteria.

I pressed the electric switch in the hall and beheld Johnny Curly Wolf, still in tribal costume, great beads of sweat dewing his brow, standing over the body of Idoline Chetwynde, the hall window-panes blown from their frame and scattered over the floor like tiny slivers of frozen moonlight, and, toppled from its pedestal and broken into bits almost as fine as powder, the black statue of Kali, Goddess of the East.

"Take her up, my friend," de Grandin ordered me, pointing to Mrs. Chetwynde's lifeless body. "Pick her up and restore her to her bed. *Morbleu,* but we shall have to attend her like a new-born infant this night, for I fear me her nerves have had a shock from which they will not soon recover!"

All night and far past daylight we sat beside Idoline Chetwynde's bed, watching the faint color ebb and flow in her sunken cheeks, taking heedful count of her feebly beating pulse, administering stimulants when the tiny spark of waning life seemed about to flicker to extinction.

About 10 o'clock in the morning de Grandin rose from his seat beside the bed and stretched himself like a cat rising from prolonged sleep. "*Bon, très bon!*" he exclaimed. "She sleeps. Her pulse, it is normal; her temperature, it is right. We can safely leave her now, my friends. Anon we shall call on her; but I doubt me if we shall have more to do than wish her felicitations on her so miraculous cure. Meantime, let us go. My poor, forgotten stomach cries aloud reproaches on my so neglected mouth. I starve, I famish, I faint of inanition. Behold, I am already become but a wraith and a shadow!"

JULES DE GRANDIN drained his third cup of coffee at a gulp and passed the empty vessel back for replenishment. "*Parbleu,* my friends," he

exclaimed, turning his quick, elfin smile from Dr. Wolf to me, "it was the beautiful adventure, was it not?"

"It might have been a beautiful adventure," I agreed grudgingly, "but just what the deuce *was* it? The whole thing's a mystery to me from beginning to end. What caused Mrs. Chetwynde's illness in the first place, what was the cause of her insane actions, and what was it I saw last night? Was there really a thunderstorm that broke the black image, and did I really see——"

"But certainly, my excellent one," he cut in with a smile as he emptied his cup and lighted a cigarette, "you did behold all that you thought you saw; no less."

"But——"

"No buts, if you please, good friend. I well know you will tease for an explanation as a pussy-cat begs for food while the family dines, and so I shall enlighten you as best I can. To begin:

"When first you told me of Madame Chetwynde's illness I knew not what to think, nor did I think anything in particular. Some of her symptoms made me fear she might have been the victim of a *revenant,* but there were no signs of blood-letting upon her, and so I dismissed that diagnosis. But as we descended the stairs after our first visit, I did behold the abominable statue in the hall. 'Ah ha,' I say to me, 'what does this evil thing do here? Perhaps it makes the trouble with Madame Idoline?' And so I look at it most carefully.

"My friends, Jules de Grandin has covered much land with his little feet. In the arctic snows and in the equatorial heat he has seen the sins and follies and superstitions of men, and learned to know the gods they worship. So he recognized that image for what it was. It is of the goddess Kali, tutelary deity of the *Thags* of India, whose worship is murder and whose service is bloodshed. She goes by many names, my friends: sometimes she is known as Devi, consort of Siva and daughter of Himavat, the Himalaya Mountains. She is the Sakti, or female energy of Siva, and is worshiped in a variety of forms under two main classes, according as she is conceived as a mild and beneficent or as a malignant deity. In her milder shapes, besides Devi, 'the goddess,' she is called also Gauri, 'the yellow,' or Uma, 'the bright.' In her malignant forms she is Durga, 'the inaccessible,' represented as a yellow woman mounted on a tiger, Chandi, 'the fierce,' and, worst of all, Kali, 'the black,' in which guise she is portrayed as dripping with blood, encircled with snakes and adorned with human skulls. In the latter form she is worshiped with obscene and bloody rites, oftener than not with human sacrifice. Her special votaries are the *Thags,* and at her dreadful name all India trembles, for the law of the English has not yet wiped out the horrid practise of *thaggee.*

"Now, when I beheld this filthy image standing in Madame Chetwynde's home I wondered much. Still, I little suspected what we later came to know for truth, for it is a strange thing that the gods of the East have little power over the people of the West. Behold, three hundred thousand Englishmen hold in complete subjection as many million Hindoos, though the subject people curse their masters daily by all the gods whom they hold sacred. It seems, I think, that only those who stand closer to the bare verities of nature are liable to be affected by gods and goddesses which are personifications of nature's forces. I know not whether this be so, it is but a theory of mine. At any rate, I saw but small connection between the idol and our sick lady's illness until Friend Trowbridge told me of her strain of Indian ancestry. Then I say to me: 'Might not she, who holds

(Continued on page 141)

The FEATHERED SERPENT

"Rend and slash and tear! A second feathered loop went about the thrashing fury."

THE screech of a jaguar came from the depths of the Chiapas jungle that, sweating under a green moon, crowded to the black waters of the Usumacinta River.

Young Hammond of the red head noted that the Indian porters, camped at a little distance, were quickly astir. Miguel, the guide, was among them, ordering more wood for the fire that had been lighted to frighten away the wild beasts. The Mexican, his squat, muscular form silhouetted against the leaping flames, stood watching a porter fan to life the fire that had died to embers.

From the Indians' camp stole the Dillinghams' head porter—a darker shadow in the shadows of drooping palms and taller growths. He halted at the edge of the machete-cleared space, just outside the radius of firelight. Miguel joined him, and the two men talked in a jargon of Mexican-Indian terms that Miguel employed with the Indians. Then, as silently as he had emerged from the covert, the native slipped away.

The screech sounded again—like the cry of a woman in mortal agony. Hammond peered through the shadows at the tents of the Dillingham outfit; his glance lingered on the small

tent that sheltered Cyrene Cortelyou. He half started to his feet, the short hair prickling on the back of his neck. He brushed his hand across his eyes; the cold dew of fear wet his forehead. His eyes had not deceived him. There it was—*the Thing that no one else could see!*

Miguel crossed the firelit space and hunched himself on the ground, an arm's length from Hammond; the young scientist, with a furtive glance at the spot where the Thing had appeared, pulled himself together and addressed Miguel.

"Are Professor Dillingham and his son in their tents, Miguel?"

"*Si, Señor.*"

"And—Miss Cortelyou?"

Miguel hesitated. "*Si*—of a certainty, *Señor.*"

Halsey Hammond lost himself in a brief, glorious vision of Cyrene Cortelyou's golden beauty. Three days ago, he had not known that she was in the world. Three days ago, he was encamped, back there, with the scientific expedition. Three days ago he had not known—love! Now, how empty the world would be without it—and her!

He had first seen her coming toward him in the green dusk of the jungle, walking with her uncle and her cousin at the head of their Indian porters. Golden orchids depended from swaying branches above her tawny head; golden butterflies floated two and two across the faint game-trail along which she advanced. High among the towering palms, a bird sang to its mate—the call of love to love. And he had left his party to follow her; he would follow her all the days of his life.

"You know why I am going inland with the Dillinghams, Miguel?" Hammond did not wait for an answer, but spoke on. "You talked to their packers," he accused. "You were warned not to speak of what happened at the Temple of Xupa. But you talked, and now the porters are threatening to desert the party. I understand their lingo. I am going with the Dillinghams and make sure that the men do *not* desert."

The jaguar's screech sounded for the third time, terror-striking, splitting the heavy silence. From the jungle, in the direction of the river, a bellowing bull-alligator flung back a challenge. The forest seemed to waken, to be alive with creatures of the night. A night that festered under the green moon, that strangled with its mingled odors of flower-scents and dank decay.

The Thing still lurked in the shadows. Hammond knew that it was there, though he no longer saw it. He shivered in the sweltering, airless night. Why had it been visible to no eyes save his own? *What was it?*

He braced himself, and steadying his voice with an effort spoke: "We shall start for the ruins early in the morning. The Temple of Xupa lies two days' march from here, in the Usumacinta valley, so the professor tells me——"

"*Señor!* I have been to that place—with the other one." Miguel rolled his eyes and crossed himself; his voice fell to a hoarse whisper. "Me, I will not go to the *teocalli* of that Temple. I have say that to the Señor Dillingham. Two, twice, I have say it. Would the Señor Hammon', then, disturb the dead? The dead like not to be disturb'. Always, for those who go to that place, to the Piedras Negras city of dead people, will be the Gray Death."

"Whatever came out of the sacred Temple, it didn't get *you.* Come, now! You imagined——"

"*Señor,* with my own eyes I saw it!"

"What did it look like?"

"*Madre de Dios!* I have not the words to tell. I ran—ran——"

"But you went back. The pro-

fessor says that the scientific notes were brought out—and a letter."

"*Si, Señor.*"

"Did you see the Gray Death when you went back to search for the bodies?"

"No, *Señor.*"

"I believe, of course, that you *think* you saw—whatever it was that did for the men. A fellow could well believe anything in this cursed country." He shuddered, remembering his experience of the past two nights. "It's the green moonlight, and the queer shadows, and the evil scents—and sounds."

Miguel brought his face close to Hammond's face as he spoke, earnestly, a note of pleading in his voice, that he might be understood.

"*Señor, I saw!*"

"Very well, I'll not dispute you. Tell the porters that I carry a charm against the Gray Death. Three white men will meet it and put an end to it. Good night!"

The charm? Truly, he had one—his love for the girl who, strangely, insisted on going to these weird ruins. He went to sleep with thoughts of Cyrene in his heart. Through his dreams he pursued ghostlike things, groping for them in a green fog.

The girl—he must save the girl! Slender arms outstretched, she implored his protection. The tawny hair was disordered; the terrified brown eyes were trying to tell him something that might not be put into words. The green fog thickened—thickened——

In a last, frantic effort to reach the girl, he lunged upright—and opened his eyes on a new day.

2

HAMMOND dressed quickly—khaki trousers and jacket, high, mosquito-proof, snake-proof boots—and went outside. Professor Dillingham and his son were washing themselves, and an Indian brought water for Hammond from the black river that tunneled its way through solid walls of verdure. The professor blinked through owlish spectacles at the younger man. A worried frown creased his brow.

"I fear that the thing I predicted has happened," he said. "Cyrene is sunk in the sleep of exhaustion—almost a state of coma. She is of too fine, too delicate a nature to stand the hardships, the dangers, of such an expedition. But with her, love is as strong as death itself—it goes beyond the dissolution of the body."

Hammond took the blow standing. He had not been told *why* the girl accompanied the party to the weird ruins in the Usumacinta valley. It amounted to this, then: One she loved had perished by the Gray Death. Love was drawing her to the scene of the tragedy—a love that lasted after death. And yet he had seen that in her eyes, in the hour of their meeting, which had promised him heaven. Well, he could face hell—for her sake. She should go to the Temple. He would truly hold a charm—against the Gray Death.

These thoughts ran in his mind while he spoke commonplace regrets that Miss Cortelyou should have become over-tired. He even jested with Jack Dillingham, who was in appearance as like his father—owlish spectacles, white pith sun-helmet, loose white ducks and all—as one grain of wheat is like another.

"This late start will give your porters the idea that you're marking time. But it can't be helped. I'm afraid you've been too easy with them. What they need is a good cussing now and then—or oftener."

Jack grinned. "Just teach me a few of the most blighting ones in the Indian lingo."

"I'll attend to the cussing. Something told me, when I met your party, that you'd meet with a flock of trouble later on. There's nothing

like having a red-headed man as a trouble-chaser. You'll see!"

Almost at once the trouble materialized. No sooner had Cyrene Cortelyou—a pale, heavy-eyed Cyrene—left her tent, and orders were given to break camp, than the sullen porters demanded a hearing. In the end, the white men owned themselves defeated. Not an Indian would stir until, negotiating through Miguel, it was settled that they were not to accompany the white men all the way to the Temple.

Miguel hinted that the Indians had no faith in the white man's "charm" over the evil spirits of the region. These evil spirits were unknown to the white men. How, then, could such a charm prevail?

"How far will they go?"

Miguel shrugged. "When we are in sight of the Temple, they stop, *Señor*. They make camp. The white men can go on. If they come back——" Again he shrugged.

"You think we will not come back?"

"*Quien sabe!*"

The professor spoke up: "The natives, as you must know, Mr. Hammond, are nothing if not superstitious. Anything they can't understand, in the way of bad luck, is laid to the working of evil spirits. I've argued the question over and over with myself, since we started on this trip—that there is no such thing as manifestation of evil spirits. And the next instant I'll be saying to myself: '*How do you know there are no manifestations?*' Poling day after day through that black tunnel of the river, with no signs of humans but the occasional miserable huddle of rotting cane huts, thatched with palm leaves, and with unguessed dangers on every side—I tell you, Hammond, it gets you. *It gets you!*"

The professor passed his hand over his eyes.

"I didn't sleep well last night. You heard the jaguar, crying for her mate? Night after night I've heard it—like a woman's cry——"

"Dad, what's got you?" Jack cut in. "It must be the canned salmon. Or maybe it's the screeching parrots and the jabbering monkeys. They're bad enough; and the chiggers, fleas, ants, sandflies, snakes, and the devilish orchid flowers that look right *at* you——"

"A snake ruled the Temple of Xupa," said the professor, turning to Hammond. "A snake god—the great feathered serpent. Sacrifices were made to it. The sacrificial stone stands at the foot of a terraced flight of steps that leads down to the Usumacinta River—the black Usumacinta. The blood from the sacrificial stone ran down a channel to the water."

"Nice, cheerful sort of place," Hammond commented, and turned to see what had become of Cyrene.

A rude litter had been prepared for her. Hammond ran to help her to the canopied seat. The look in her eyes, the touch of her soft hand, gripped his heart.

A string of carved scarlet beads—like drops of blood against the blouse of golden-brown khaki—swung outward as she bent her head to enter the litter; it became entangled with an upthrusting branch of some thorny growth. Hammond freed the chain; he held it in his hand, examined minutely the exquisite carving (it was an excuse to be near her for a moment longer). . . . Afterward, picking up these beads, widely scattered, from the platform of the *teocalli* of the Temple of Xupa, his shaking hands searching out cracks and crevices of the worn stonework, his blood turned to ice-water and his heart was dust in his breast. . . .

Jack Dillingham joined them at this moment; he had seen Hammond's apparent interest in the chain.

"He gave it to her," the boy whis-

pered, as the procession got under way. "She always wears it."

MIGUEL led the way, the Indians following, a bobbing procession of peaked hats, broad of brim. Never once hesitating, he kept to his course. Palms lifted tufted tops high above the smaller growths that shut out the sunlight, making in effect a glimmering emerald twilight. Hibiscus blooms lighted the green dusk like flames. The screeching and chattering of parrots, gorgeously plumaged, flashing on the sight and away, the incessant warfare of monkeys whelmed the sound of swarming insect life. In the more open spaces, brilliant, jewel-winged butterflies flitted and floated. Flower-faces peered down from tree crotches at the adventurers; the air was drenched with perfume. Yet in all this beauty that charmed the eye, there was something sinister, ruthless.

Professor Dillingham's tall, lank figure was almost abreast of the guide; but Jack lagged sociably, talking to Hammond.

"Dad's been an armchair scientist—now he's having the time of his life. Oh, of course he is worried about Cyrene, but we believe this trip will put her straight again. The doctor thought it would. And of course the real reason for our going is the cases."

"The *cases?*"

"Yes. Zinc cases, wood-covered. You wonder what's packed away in 'em? If I told you that my father's friend, who explored the ruins of the Temple—Miguel brought out his notes and a letter—made molds of the hieroglyphics on the sacrificial stone, the great stone altar, the lintel of the doorway and the main stelæ, you'd wonder what I was talking about, wouldn't you?"

"I'm wondering," Hammond returned, "what *is* in those zinc cases?"

"Just what I said. In one case alone there are the impressions taken from that weird sacrificial stone. Man, how many humans, do you imagine, were sacrificed there?"

Hammond shuddered, remembering Miguel's warning: "The dead, they like not to be disturb'."

"Well, these molds are worth all sorts of money. We're going to bring 'em out. Miguel must have had an idea, all along, that he could double-cross us and get away with it. I'm mighty glad we fell in with you. . . . Cyrene isn't interested in the cases. She insists that we put to death the thing that killed *him*. That's all she cares about."

As the way became rougher, Jack fell silent. The adventurers tripped over trailing bijuca vines and splashed through pools left by a tropical shower. Hammond was oppressed by a heavy feeling of apprehension which he could not shake off.

What did he know of this sinister country? How could he protect Cyrene against the mysterious Gray Death that lay in wait in the wilderness Temple? The dead—they did not like to be disturbed.

The steady march along jungle paths—a network of perplexing entwinement—was exhausting. The steaming heat of the tropics stifled. The dense thickets of vegetation, rising ten feet or more on each side these game trails, shut out any breath of air that might be stirring. And now a swampy stretch must be crossed. They would make camp, and go on in the morning.

ALL about the camp lay the great forest, steaming and sweltering. Fireflies lighted the darkness. The heavy scent of ghost-white floraponda cloyed the senses. Cyrene went early to her tent. As she lifted the flap, she turned and looked at Hammond. What was in that look? Her eyes, fear-haunted—did they question him? Warn him? Hammond's thoughts

were confused. He was sure of but one thing: He loved this girl; he would stand by her though the Gray Death should claim him at the end of the journey.

A flash of the campfire's leaping flames caught and held the picture of Cyrene, against the background of the night. The golden girl! About her round, smooth throat the carved beads showed redly—like drops of blood.

Professor Dillingham sat with his gaunt knees hunched to his chin; his owlish spectacles glittered in the flickering light.

"I hope there are no jaguars in this vicinity. My sleep has been very much disturbed. A good night's rest would put me right." He got to his feet. "Tomorrow at this time, Hammond, nothing preventing, we'll see the moon rise over the Temple of Xupa. Good night!"

Jack drew nearer to Hammond, as if for company. The two men sat in silence while the moon swung up and up, bathing the land in a green flood of light. Finally he spoke in a low tone, not to disturb the professor, who tossed in his net-screened hammock.

"Hammond, as we narrow down to hours—so many before we reach the dead city of Piedras Negras and the Temple of Xupa—the more I really wonder what happened to those two white men. Professor Stuart's last note on his work ran something like this: 'Tomorrow I shall with my own hands begin to uncover the feathered serpent——' "

"Listen!" whispered Hammond. "The jaguar! It is here. It——" He broke off, to stare at Cyrene's tent; he clutched his companion's arm. "Do *you* see—anything?"

"Hammond, let's go to bed. We'll all be seeing things if we don't watch out. You're over-tired, and this queer country is on your nerves. If we had stuck to the river there would have been great danger from the rapids; but what's the good of dodging danger and being scared to death?"

3

Morning found them crossing the swampy tract. Rivulets coiled and circled about the roots of sago palms and yellow bamboo. Low-hanging limbs, swathed in vines that swung garlands of bloom over their heads, made progress difficult. In places they had to hew their way.

In the afternoon they began to climb the higher, unshaded trails, under a grueling sun. The white men had accustomed themselves to the certainty that, once in sight of their goal, they must go on without help. But when, from a rise, they looked down on the scattered ruins of the dead city Piedras Negras, it did not need Miguel's significant: "We make camp here, *Señor,*" to bring the fact vividly home to them.

"My son seems to have considerable influence over the men," said the professor, taking charge of the situation. "I trust Miguel, up to a certain point. I think his tongue ran away with him—that he bragged to the porters just by way of showing himself the hero of an adventure. I don't agree with my son that he set out to double-cross us——"

"He knows he won't get paid if he can't hold the expedition together and bring us out; but can he hold it?" Jack questioned.

"It's our only chance, son. You and Miguel together must hold it. I propose that you and I, Hammond, go on, leaving my son and Miguel in charge of the camp. Cyrene, of course, will stay with her cousin."

"Why can't you stay here, Father, while Hammond and I go ahead?"

"Jack, our very lives depend on you. I don't need to tell you what it would mean if the porters stampeded. Your party, Hammond, was

pulling up stakes and moving on, I think you said? No help within three days' march, and days of river travel; and how could we expect"—he lowered his voice, looked apprehensively in the direction of Cyrene's tent—"to reach the river with a helpless woman on our hands?"

"I agree with your father, Jack," said Hammond, soberly. "We will go down there and spy out the land. There will be just time, before the sun sets, to reach the Temple."

Hammond's blood was a-tingle. He gazed out over the level valley, islanded by irregular hummocks of lush vegetation that hid the ruins of the great prehistoric city from view. A strange excitement possessed him. Down there was the Gray Death. Fate had put him in the way of meeting it. He welcomed the chance.

"You see, Jack, it works this way. Your father and I camp over night at the Temple. Nothing happens to us. This gives the men confidence——"

"How do we know that nothing happens?" Jack stubbornly argued.

"Suppose we agree on some sort of a signal, son——"

"Professor Dillingham, please let me see the map—no, the other one," Hammond interposed. "The map of the dead city. Right! Now point out the exact location of the Temple the Xupa. Mm-m! Where are your binoculars?"

He stood—one of four helpless whites in a wilderness of savage beauty—with glasses trained on the ruins. His mind schemed and turned to find some means of coping with the situation. A white woman and three white men were dependent on ignorant, superstitious natives! But could he honestly say that superstition had not seeped into his own mind. *What lay down there?*

He handed the binoculars to Professor Dillingham. "The growth is so dense about the Temple that it can't be seen from here. I thought we might signal by mirror flashes. Not a chance!"

"Three shots at sun-up—how would that do?" the professor suggested.

"It will have to do," Hammond replied, and turned to find Miguel, dark eyes intent in the shadow of his broad-brimmed hat, watching him.

Again the sense of danger; but Hammond would not give in to it. They were at journey's end. Before the break of another day, it might be, they would face the death and solve the mystery.

Hammond hurried the professor away, waiting only to pack such necessities as would insure their comfort for the night. He did not once glance in the direction of the little tent where Cyrene, spent, exhausted, lay in the trancelike sleep that once before had overcome her. As he fitted a double load to his back, he wondered—should he not come back—if she would ever know that he had done this thing for her.

They went down the rocky hill, directing their course toward the largest mound, a truncated pyramid. The professor talked incessantly, perhaps to keep up his courage. It was a sad thing that the life of the young student-scientist, Paul, should have been blotted out. A wonderful boy. Professor Stuart—well, Professor Stuart was getting on in years. Age, naturally, must make way for youth; and he had begun to train Paul to do his work after he was gone.

The heat and the hard going finally drove Professor Dillingham to silence.

THE way was comparatively open; no jungle growths shut them in. Heat-mist rose from the ground in waves, smiting their faces until they gasped for breath. Often, and more often, they lowered their packs to ease their aching shoulders.

Then, all at once, they were there, standing before the ruined Temple

that reared a weather-scarred, time-scarred front from the platform of a squat pyramid. The professor set his pack on the ground. He blinked behind his round spectacles.

"We-l-l, Hammond, w-we're here," he quavered.

"Yes," said Hammond, gravely, lowering his own pack. "See that your automatic is working, Professor. Mine is. Now come on!"

They ascended the broken steps. Between vine-draped columns, carved grotesquely, yawned an opening that gave on blackness. Details of the carvings on the outer walls were plainly visible, though it had been almost a year, the professor told Hammond, since Professor Stuart's native laborers had cleared the spot of crowding, choking tropical vegetation.

They saw the gigantic feathered serpent, a wonderful carving in stone, writhing toward the sacrificial stone on which lay the bound figure of a victim. Fettered captives filed past a judge; an executioner awaited them. Over all rose a most high god, frowning under his heavy head-dress.

Out of a tense silence Hammond spoke: "These stone things give me the shivers, even though they *are* stone——"

"Look! Look!" the professor cried, catching at his arm.

Hammond turned a quick, startled glance in the direction in which the professor had pointed. A dense mat of twisted vines hid the carvings at the far end of the building. The mid-section of the monster, the great feathered serpent, was lost to view behind the tangled mass that *moved as if it were alive!* He started forward, but the professor dragged at his arm.

"It's nothing, I dare say—monkeys, perhaps, moving about. Come! You realize how much daylight is left to us. We must make camp, and settle down for a night watch."

The setting sun drove crimson shafts of light through the leafy roof of the tall trees. They descended to where the outfit had been left, put up the shelter tent and built a fire.

Very little was said over the supper, which Hammond cooked. Hammond insisted on taking the first watch; and the professor was soon asleep under his mosquito-proof net.

HAMMOND crouched over the flickering fire, hours later. He was cold, though his body reeked with sweat. When the moon's first rays, like a greenish vapor, touched the tops of the towering palms, he faced the black portal of the Temple, and waited. What would come out of that portal between moonrise and sunrise?

Used as Hammond was to camp activities, the stillness troubled him. Not a sound. It was as if the wilderness held its breath, waiting. An enormous bat whizzed past his head as he sat with his back against the trunk of a palm; it hung for an instant, black on the green disk of the moon. The most high god frowned down as if in scorn at the little affairs of men. To Hammond's high-keyed imagination, the reek of things dead poured from the depths of the ancient Temple. . . . He dozed.

In the pale half-hour that precedes the sunrise, he awoke. The nerve-shattering screech of a jaguar brought him upright, alive and alert. Instinctively he looked for the Thing that, night after night, had stolen from Cyrene's tent. In the half-light he saw it—a shape half human, half animal. The flesh crawled on his bones.

4

THE professor's startled face appeared at the opening of the shelter-tent.

"I must have slept straight

through the night!" he exclaimed. "I——"

"Sh-h!" Hammond cautioned. "*Something* passed, just now." He waved his hand in the direction of the Temple steps. "There!"

The professor drew his automatic, and joined Hammond.

"We will go up there and see what it is. In this uncertain light, it will be hard to——"

The jaguar's challenge, sounding very near, again disturbed the stillness. They mounted the flight, and standing on the broken pave of the platform, looked about. A sudden flurry in the branches of a wide-spreading tree that tented the vine-tangle turned the men in that direction.

They saw the tawny body of the jaguar on a lower limb; she was tensed as if for a spring. Fangs bared, green eyes slitted, she crouched. For minutes as they watched, while the light brightened, the animal faced—what?

The great cat began to turn, slowly, smoothly, as if on a pivot. Its eyes followed the movement of something that flowed with the ease of water from limb to limb. A gray mottled shape, coil on coil.

"The Gray Death!" Hammond whispered, through stiff lips.

The cat turned its head, snarled. Hammond choked back an exclamation. Cyrene's wide brown eyes stared from the head of the Thing that was part beast, part human. Oh, he must be going mad! A red splash —like drops of blood—against the sleek, tawny fur——

"My God! Don't fire!" Hammond caught at the professor's lifted arm. "You might hit—*her!*"

The professor, dumfounded, lowered his weapon. His startled glance lingered briefly on Hammond's face, as if suspecting that his companion suddenly was bereft of reason. It was plain to Hammond that the professor did not see that which, shuddering, *he* saw.

The serpent—the great feathered serpent! How could *she* cope with it? The reptile raised its flat head; it swung menacingly from side to side. Lightning was not quicker when the Gray Death threw a coil. . . . Could *he* do nothing? It seemed ages that he had stood there, in a strange, hypnotic trance.

The snake hissed a venomous warning. A tawny streak flashed through space. It met and grappled with the gray, feathered monster. Claw and teeth and fang they fought. The Gray Death threw its first loop. The jaguar slitted a length of mottled skin. Unless the reptile could throw the second coil, it could not tighten its hold on the maddened jaguar's body.

Rend and slash and tear! The second feathered loop went about the thrashing fury that was the jaguar. It tightened. A scream like the cry of a woman in mortal agony was wrenched from the struggling beast.

Broken branches whipped aside, a falling shower of leaves, convulsive writhings of the locked combatants——

The jaguar twisted her lithe body and fastened her teeth in the feathered neck of the reptile, at the base of the bony skull. Hammond, breathing like a spent runner, leaned forward. There was a mist before his eyes, a roaring in his ears. . . . *Something* thudded to the pave. . . . He dared not look. . . . Dimly, he heard the sound of three shots—the signal.

With head averted, so that he might not see the Thing that quivered in death agony under the spreading tree, he beckoned the professor.

"Go and meet them," he said. "Go!" he repeated, as the professor stared, uncomprehending. There was that in Hammond's face which compelled obedience.

HAMMOND'S face and hands were wet with icy perspiration as he set about his task. *He knew what he had to do.* It did not seem strange to him that the feathered serpent had disappeared. Wounded to death, it had crept into the jungle-growth. Where was the jaguar? He straightened, cautiously, made sure that the professor was on his way. The coast was clear, now. *No one must ever know!*

He must find them—the red beads! On hands and knees he sought them. They had lodged in cracks and hollows of the broken stonework. One by one he gathered them up, while the heart in his breast turned to dust. . . . His task was finished, now; and life, for him, was finished. Love that could break the bonds of flesh and space and spirit was everlasting. He sat on a fallen pillar and stared into space.

Voices roused him. He could not have told how long he had been sitting there—probably for hours. The sun was shining brightly. A procession of porters was coming out of the Temple; each man bore a box on his brawny shoulder.

Someone stood over Hammond. He looked up, his eyes dull with pain. It was Jack, talking excitedly, brandishing a small, rusty dagger. What was he saying?

"Cyrene vowed to kill the Gray Death; but the jaguar——"

"Where — is — Cyrene?" Hammond's pallid lips barely formed the words.

"They're bringing her in the litter. But look, Hammond! Paul's dagger! What a fight those men must have put up before the Gray Death got them!"

"The feathered serpent!" Hammond mumbled.

"*Feathered serpent!* Come, now, Hammond! You're seeing things. It's a reg'lar snake—big one, twenty feet if it's an inch."

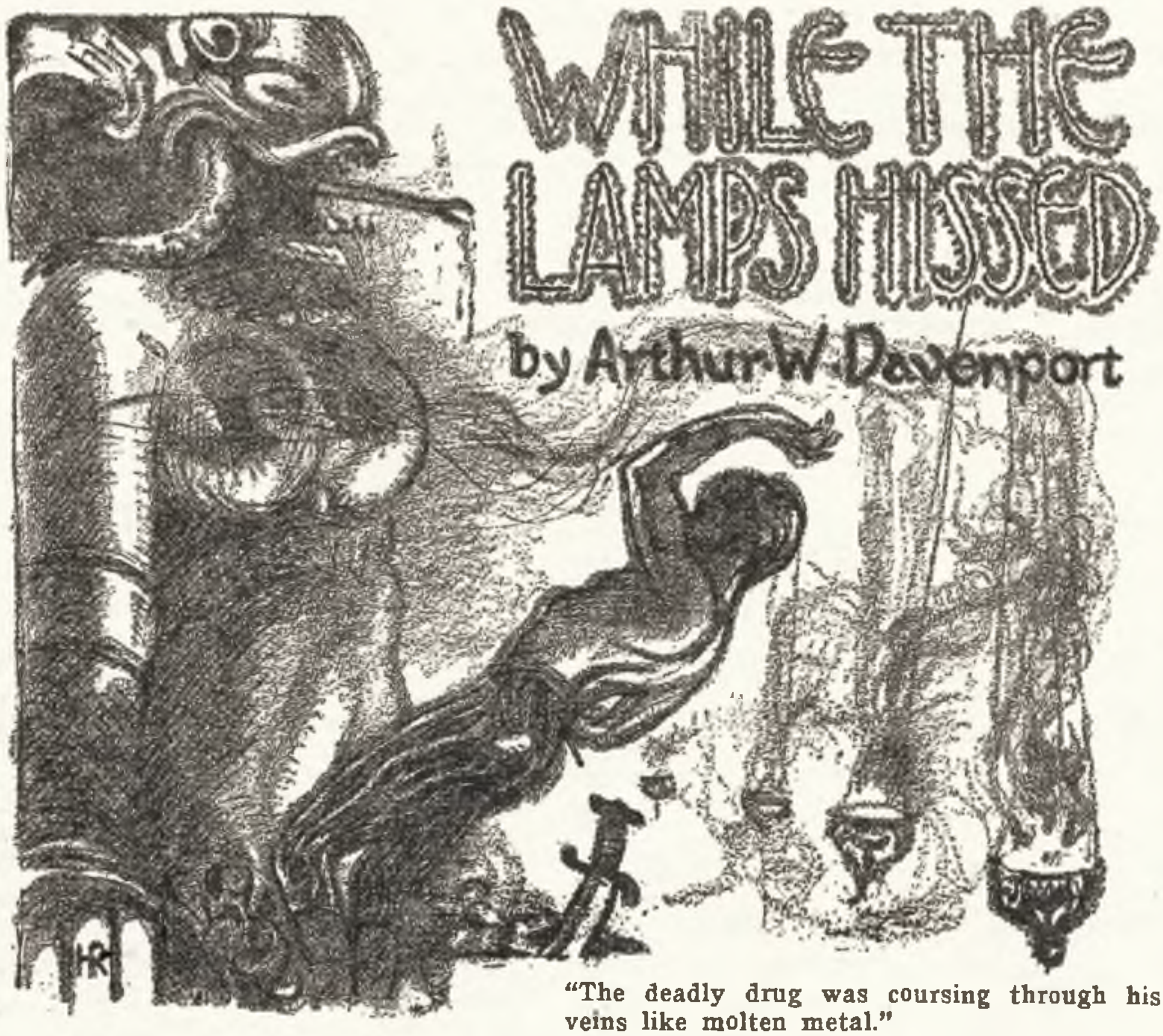
Hammond was not listening. Cyrene, assisted by her uncle, was mounting the steps of the *teocalli* . . . a pale, spent Cyrene. But there was that in her eyes, as he went to meet her, that promised him heaven.

The chain of red beads no longer circled the slim throat; the bond with the dead was broken.

Folk of the Dark

By N. L. BREWER

Hid in the depth of the dark,
Cringing and shrinking from sight,
Gibbering softly—but hark!
Surely you hear them tonight!
Swishing so gently about
Ears of the flesh can not hear,
Heard but by senses of doubt,
Known but by feelings of fear,
Crouching unseen and afraid—
Always afraid to be found,
Pausing for fear they have made
Audible, tangible sound;
Desperate, terror-filled, blind,
Ready to leap from their lair
Panic-struck into the mind
Haplessly finding them there;
Maniac, guttering, stark,
Hideous creatures of fright
Dwell in the black of the dark—
Surely you hear them tonight!



"The deadly drug was coursing through his veins like molten metal."

ON a sweltering night Adallah, the Arabian, made his way to one of the foul dens which are to be found scattered throughout the cities of the East. In such places as these the slaves of the drug vice forget for a time their troubles, the climate and the horrible odors associated with the Orient, to float away amidst the cloudy dreams of opium smoke to a prolonged and lazy stupor. Here congregate the scum of the earth, and each has something of interest to tell the others. They are the news markets of the Oriental underworld, where every criminal seems to know the record of his neighbor and what it is he most wishes to hear.

The quest of news rather than that of hashish had brought Adallah to this place. The greater part of the assemblage were, at the time of his entrance, engaged in gambling and drinking at the many little tables placed about the room. Nodding to those whom he recognized, the Arab made his way to where a rude bar cut off one corner of the room. Behind this a Eurasian woman, garbed in a costume strangely reminiscent of several neighboring countries, smiled welcomingly as she placed a glass of liquor before him.

"Ah, little moon-flower," laughed Adallah, taking a string of pearls from a pouch he wore at his belt, "I found these about the throat of a base-born Englishman's wife and brought them for thee. Accept this

token of my regard, O lotus blossom, for always thy image is in my memory."

He dropped the necklace carelessly upon the rum-stained bar while he gulped down at a draft the contents of the glass.

"My lord is always gracious," she smiled softly, picking them up and clasping them at the back of her neck. "But here comes a mountaineer to quench his thirst."

The fellow, a ragged, dirty-looking individual, approached, and throwing several coins down, demanded immediate attention. It may have been the loudness of his voice or merely chance that caused a second mountaineer to turn his eyes upon the speaker. As the blustering fellow set his glass down, Adallah imagined that he saw his eyes narrow warningly. The approaching peasant stopped short in surprize, then turned his back and resumed his previous occupation.

Adallah continued to watch the man at the bar suspiciously. Presently the fellow turned to him with a friendly air and asked if he would care to indulge in a pipe with him. To this Adallah assented cheerfully, knowing that under the influence of opium the stranger might disclose the information which would satisfy his curiosity.

The Eurasian led them through a little back door into a low-ceiled room, the walls of which were lined with bunks. Privacy might be obtained for the occupants by pulling down a roll of matting which, when hanging from the ceiling to the floor, shut them in like a perfect room. Several dirty mats were cast about the floor, and in one corner a pile of packing-cases, empty opium tins and rubbish rose almost to the cobweb-festooned rafters. A single lamp lighted the gloomy room with its sickening odor of mingled drugs and perspiring Orientals. Several of the bunks contained smokers in various degrees of unconsciousness.

All these things the eyes of Adallah took in at a glance, when his companion took him by the arm, and said, "Let us occupy these two mats upon the floor, O my brother; it will enable us to have a better opportunity to converse until we reach the Nirvana of the opium-smoker. Wilt thou agree?"

"Most assuredly," nodded Adallah. "We shall smoke here, Zara." He addressed the Eurasian by her name for the first time, pointing at the two grimy mats.

As Zara could find only one pipe not in use, she was obliged to search among the lethargic smokers until she found one still in the lips of a Mongolian who had recently slipped off into the land of fantasy. She then opened a tin of opium and loaded the pipes with an ease gained from long practise. Lighting them, she handed one to each man, while a smile played about her carmined lips.

"Soon my lord will be dreaming of me, his slave Zara," she cooed in her caressing voice. Then, saluting Adallah, Zara withdrew to the front room.

The Arab pretended to place the pipe-stem in his mouth, lying back as if obtaining the greatest satisfaction. In the gloom he could distinguish the outline of his strange companion and was glad that it was dark enough to make close observation impossible. It made his pretended smoking easier. They spoke at intervals, Adallah noticing that the mountaineer's voice was becoming dreamy and sometimes incoherent, until:

"I have a strange tale, O my friend," intoned the Arab's companion, attempting to refill his pipe while his head nodded continually upon his breast. "I shall tell it to thee, for I know well that thou art a brave man. Harken: We can become

immensely wealthy. I know where there are diamonds that will buy a kingdom for each of us; and when we have finished our pipes, we shall go forth and seek these riches."

In a broken manner the fellow began to tell of a certain idol of Doorgha in a temple four days' march north from there. He revealed the astonishing fact that the teeth of the idol were made of immense diamonds. The stones had decorated the mouth for hundreds of years without having been stolen. Each one of the gems was worth a fortune. All this the fellow told him, and then suggested that after they had enjoyed their pipes they would go together and procure these diamonds for themselves.

"We shall have very little trouble in obtaining them," he added, "for the people living about there are so superstitious that they have never made an attempt to rob the temple; consequently the stones are left unguarded. But we shall——"

Here his voice trailed off into a drowsy murmur while the pipe slipped from his lips to the floor and he lay perfectly motionless. For a while Adallah conned the comatose mountaineer until he was sure that he was entirely under the effects of the drug. Then he arose softly and made his way from the reeking room and out of the place to the street without the occupants noticing him leave. It was the work of but a short time to obtain the directions necessary to reach the temple of Doorgha and begin preparations.

Nature had equipped Adallah with the desire to pilfer places of worship. He felt the faith of an orthodox Jew while ravishing a mosque, or the fanaticism of a Mussulman at sight of a rich Indian temple. With a conscience of such flexibility he was not deterred by the religious scruples that prevented others from profaning holy things.

Lean, muscular and of average height, Adallah was a typical son of the desert. A gray turban about his head and knee breeches composed his entire costume. His weapons were a naked simitar and an Italian stiletto, for he scorned firearms. They were too noisy.

Thus attired, he appeared four nights later in a little khan situated but a short distance from his place of destination. There he made further inquiries regarding the temple, saying that he was on a pilgrimage to that shrine to fulfil a vow.

"Thou hast come at an excellent time, my son," smiled the old man who acted as host. "It is the time of sacrifice to the great Goddess of Death, and if thou wilt tarry with us for a few days thou shalt see the victim Doorgha sends."

"Doorgha sends a victim?" repeated Adallah half-amusedly.

"*Hou!* It began many years ago when those eaters of carrion, those Arabs, came into our country to spread their false religion by the sword. A band of them made their way up here and destroyed a temple of Doorgha and then fled. When the priests who were left alive returned, they took a vow of vengeance. Every fifty years they slay an Arab upon the altar before Doorgha. The English have made it against the law to abduct people and kill them, so it is difficult to sacrifice the followers of the lying prophet without being found out. However, our great Goddess has always provided a sacrifice for the occasion."

It struck Adallah that it was the irony of fate which had sent him, an Arabian, to despoil this very idol. At the thought a grim smile crossed his wolfish countenance.

SOME hours later Adallah was standing upon a slight eminence overlooking the temple of Doorgha, a black blotch unevenly outlined

against the surrounding landscape, and enveloped in the gray fog which was covering the lowlands. There was no light visible from the ghostly walls. The place lay in deathly silence, as if the spirits of those who had erected its massive walls were the only ones that kept watch and ward over it. The throbbing hum of the insects of the night was all that disturbed the vast solitude.

He advanced so cautiously toward the temple that he made not the slightest sound. He moved like a wraith in the ghastly mist beneath the pale crescent moon, while an apparent miasma of death from the poisonous tarn was wafted to him on the night wind. When at length he halted, it was at a point where the shadows were deepest beneath the wall of the temple, and there he stood listening intently.

He heard only the whir of a beetle as it sped past him; there was nothing to betray the presence of any wakeful Brahmin. It was about a quarter of an hour ago that the temple gong had sounded the beginning of the second watch, and the priests retired from the inner chamber to their respective cells. Yet Adallah felt a premonition of impending evil in this silent scene; every sense was aware of it. It was as the calm before the storm.

Still preserving the utmost caution, he passed along the side of the building, peering this way and that until he came to a small postern, long unused. With the stealth and cunning of a leopard he forced the archaic barrier, to be greeted by the darkness of Erebus from within. His sense of touch alone was his guide.

Noiselessly he journeyed along the passage which now ran level, feeling certain that it was the way which led to the Holy of Holies or inner shrine where for so long had safely dwelt the object of his rapacious quest—the twelve great diamonds. Tonight came the master thief, bolder than the entire band of forty thieves and more subtle than Morgiana into whose snare they fell. It was not the zeal of the hired Afghans which protected the stones—rather it was superstitious awe.

Feeling his way, he ascended a flight of narrow stone steps worn hollow by the soles of countless feet in ages past. Between massive granite walls the way led, turning abruptly to the right, then upward again. Darkness almost tangible enveloped him like a shroud.

Yet the exploit seemed so easily accomplished that it began to lack all excitement. Were it not for the immense value of the gems, the Arab's vanity would not have allowed him to undertake the task. To one who had removed the so-called *Mohur Solimani* (Seal of Solomon) from under the watchful eyes of the Argus-like guardians of the Kaaba, the present task was simplicity itself.

With every sense alert, he opened the door before him a tiny crack that he might peer into the room. The chamber into which he found himself gazing seemed, to his eyes which were accustomed to the dark, to be brilliantly illuminated. But his goal was attained—beyond lay the sanctuary of Doorgha. Through the partly opened door he caught sight of the gorgeous furnishings, though no sign of occupation by human beings.

Emboldened by this evident though expected good fortune, he swung back the door entirely and surveyed the room. No indication of the slightest vigilance being apparent, Adallah crossed the chamber to a large door opposite, believing it to be the usual means of entrance. There he listened to make certain that all was well beyond. The sound of a guard's stertorous breathing came to him while he dropped the cumbersome bolt into place. He did not doubt that he would have been safe had he

trusted to the habitual inertia of this overfed watcher, but he never took unnecessary risks. . . . The guard ceased breathing.

Coming to mid-chamber, Adallah stood gazing at the idol, whose horrible lips formed a frame for the scintillating teeth. Farther back in the cavity the forked tongue of brass reflected balefully the radiance of the precious stones. With the eyes of a connoisseur, the Arab stood admiring the luxurious surroundings. From the carved walls to the richly embroidered curtains behind the figure he let his eyes wander amidst a very orgy of extravagant ornamentation. Later, the golden lamps suspended from the ceiling caught his attention because of the peculiar hissing made by the flame as it burned. And this eery sibilation was the only sound audible within that hot, bright room.

"By Allah!" he whispered, his attention once more returned to the graven image upon the throne; "to despoil yon idol of the infidels is worthy the highest rewards of paradise."

But Adallah did not immediately possess himself of the jewels. He continued to view them from various angles and at a distance. The very sight of the stones sent a thrill of anticipation through his rapacious being. The indulgence in this form of self-torture delighted him. Nor did he feel the need for haste.

The thief even began to calculate the price he would demand in the distant marts of Ispahan or Bagdad, where he would not be recognized. And so he continued to amuse himself. He went so far as to philosophize upon the foolishness of men in storing up great wealth in temples where it benefits no one, while many thousands of people have only the bare necessities of life.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Three times the brazen ringing of the temple gong was heard. Its discordant sound vibrated through the large chamber as it came from the remote parts of the temple. The echoes seemed to die off in little waves in the dusky loftiness of the ceiling.

Adallah stood as if transfixed. The flickering lamps caused the surging shadows to point at him like the mocking fingers of Fate.

He realized that the entire band of priests would soon be astir, and he had not procured so much as one diamond. But an ability to think quickly and clearly had served to extract Adallah from many an apparent cul-de-sac; nor did it fail him now. He knew that the door was bolted, and, being strong, it would prevent their breaking through for at least some time. It would be a little while before they thought of using the postern and could send men around to cut him off. When that did occur to them he hoped to be making his way down the mountain pass. Then, giving vent to an emphatic imprecation, he dashed up the steps of the dais to the feet of the sitting idol. On his way he noticed the altar upon which Doorgha's votaries placed their victims. A hasty glance showed the top of the stone to be covered by an ominous brown stain. Slowly a smile played about the corners of his thin lips. They were looking for an Arab sacrifice; well, he would ravish their idol and then carve the star and crescent in its forehead to show that an Arab had come and held their wretched religion in contempt. The next moment he had mounted into the lap of the statue.

Upon reaching the grinning orifice where lodged the coveted teeth and the dully brazen tongue, Adallah set to work with due haste. After a few moments he forced a setting and dropped the first lustrous gem into the little pouch he wore at his belt.

(Continued on page 138)

A Ghost-Tale of New Orleans

THE GARRET OF MADAME LEMOYNE

By W. K. MASHBURN, Jr.

WHEN Merriweather's idea took definite shape, Annette refused to have anything to do with it. A haunted house was a haunted house, as far as she was concerned. Yet she was really the cause of all that happened. The innocent cause, of course; but she suggested the thing to Merriweather.

Merriweather wanted to scare his wife, just for the sake of upsetting her poise. That wasn't really as cruel as it sounds, because Janice was a calm, blond Juno, whose eternal self-possession would at times have irked a more reasonable man than her husband. He had had some very vague idea when the pair of them first started for New Orleans to spend the carnival season with Walter and Annette Owen. There would be masks, an Old World atmosphere, and an altogether proper stage setting to make the possibility promising.

The Monday morning before the Mardi Gras Day, the quartet rode through the *Vieux Carré*—the "Old Quarter"—in Owen's car, visiting every spot that was likely to interest the Merriweathers. Annette made a perfect guide: she was of the Quarter herself, and she knew its every legend and historic spot as well as she knew the beads of her amber rosary. As all must do who tour the Quarter with competent guides, they came eventually to the "haunted" house.

Like so many of the old buildings of that section, the house had, of late years, seen mostly the seamy side of life. Just now, it was desolate and unoccupied. Somebody had recently bought it—a Sicilian, rumor had it—and there was much talk of raising a fund to preserve the place to its traditions, while the Vieux Carré Historical Society passed the usual resolution of protest against the desecration of an old landmark. That was all it amounted it, and it was not the fault of any of the protestants that the old house escaped the ignominious fate of becoming a spaghetti factory. Annette said, later, that the legend saved it. That may be so, too, but the Sicilian probably abandoned the place to the Historical Society because of the Merriweathers, and nobody associated them with the legend. Nobody, that is, except the Owens.

On this particular morning, there was an old crone, maybe one of the Sicilian's dependents, possibly just an opportunist, taking advantage of the influx of carnival visitors to charge an admittance fee of twenty-five cents to everyone who wanted a peek at Madame Lemoyne's garret. Annette led the way up, and told the story to the Merriweathers, standing there in the attic's legend-haunted gloom.

"Nearly a hundred years ago," she informed them, "this house was occupied by a Madame Lemoyne. There was a Monsieur Lemoyne, too, but he doesn't seem to have amounted to

anything more than Madame's husband, so it is still known as Madame Lemoyne's house.

"This Madame Lemoyne was a Parisian of wealth and excellent family, so that her house became a gathering place for the élite of that day. Everyone agreed that Madame was a most charming woman, a brilliant hostess, and thoroughly worth cultivating. None suspected her of being the human fiend she was, nor dreamed of what her garret—*this* garret!—concealed, until one day her house burned.

"It didn't burn much, because the fire brigade arrived with unusual promptness. The blaze was in the attic, and that led to the discovery of the other things up there. At last Madame's secret was out! The horrified volunteer firemen—some of them blades of her very own circle—discovered seven black slaves in chains, all of them in various stages of mutilation.

"The charming *Parisienne* had maintained a private torture chamber, where she gratified her secret lust for cruelty upon the bodies of shackled and helpless negro slaves. All the details were never given out, but you can imagine them to have been horrible from the fact that one of the pitiful victims, a woman, somehow obtained the means to fire the garret, in the hope of ending, in the flames, her torment at Madame's beautiful white hands."

Annette paused to give her story dramatic effect, and Janice Merriweather made a slight grimace of distaste. Her husband, watching her, laughed at even so slight a ruffling of her calm; and Annette's climax fell rather flat as a result.

"What happened to the old girl herself?" Merriweather then wanted to know.

"Luckily for her, she was away from home when the fire broke out," Annette answered. "Very luckily," she continued, "for a mob soon formed and set about finding her, and Madame barely made her way aboard a French ship that was just then in the act of clearing port. She spent the rest of her life in Paris, and report had it that she became very noted for her piety and charity, and died at a ripe old age."

"So prosper the wicked," sententiously pronounced Merriweather. "But you have yet to tell us why the place is supposed to be haunted."

"Ah!" Annette enlightened. "The slaves. They are said still to haunt this old attic, hoping that Madame may some day come back."

"Hoping that she may come back?" echoed Merriweather, with a show of interest. "Then that means hoping for a chance for revenge?"

Annette nodded. "Surely. There was one horribly mutilated giant of a black, so the story goes, whose tongue had been torn out with pincers, and who refused to leave his torture-chamber after they had taken the chains off him. He made people understand that he wanted to wait for Madame's return; and, as his unshackled hands and arms were unmaimed, and of enormous size and strength, he resisted all efforts to move him so savagely that they left him there until he died, a few days later."

"I don't blame them," volunteered Walter Owen. "I've seen buck niggers working on the wharves with arms as big as my thighs, and knotted with muscles until they looked like the limbs of an oak."

"Well, I don't suppose ghost arms could do much harm, regardless of how tremendously they were thewed," was Janice's practical observation.

"Oh, but they could in this case," Annette quickly corrected. "You see, if they are able to stay on earth at all, spirits seeking vengeance on their murderers have the power to

embody themselves momentarily, under the right circumstances, and on the scene of the crime. That's what the old mammies say, I mean."

Janice laughed a little, indulgently. "I'm almost inclined to suspect that you half believe all that, yourself," she gently scoffed.

Annette retorted, in a flash, "Would *you* come up here, alone, at midnight?"

"Oh, come," interrupted Owen. "None of us believe that part of it, of course. But it would be sort of creepy up here, at that time of night. Right now, it's just stuffy: let's get down to the car, and out into the sunshine."

With that, they went down to the street, but Annette decided, on the way, that she didn't wonder that Janice's calm superiority irritated her husband.

MERRIWEATHER was not content to let the subject drop. Next day he brought it up again. "You *wouldn't* go up alone into that haunted attic at midnight, would you?"

"Why not?" Janice coolly demanded.

"Would you?" insisted her husband.

"Certainly," replied Janice, "if there were any reason for it."

"I *dare* you—tonight!" challenged Merriweather.

Janice laughed, tolerantly. "Did you ever before see such persistence on a foolish subject?" she asked the Owens. Then, with the slightest of shrugs, she answered her husband. "Very well, since you are so set on it. After the ball, tonight."

"Bully for you!" Merriweather applauded. He seemed delighted with her decision.

"Oh!" Annette uneasily objected. "I wouldn't, if I were you."

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know, but I just don't like it. You know, you're going to wear a costume that is just the sort of dress Madame Lemoyne might have worn in her day."

"Meaning——?" suggested Janice.

"Nothing!" decided Annette, rather flatly. "You-all go if you will, but I shall not." If Pontius Pilate had been a Louisiana Creole, he would have disavowed responsibility with just such a shrug of his shoulders as she used.

AT A little after a quarter of midnight, Merriweather sought out Owen in the crowd of revelers at the Mardi Gras ball. Both were in costume, and masked, but each was, of course, acquainted with the other's disguise; so that finding him was no great matter. Owen, in fact, was also searching for Merriweather, and anticipated the latter's question when they met. "The ladies have already gone out to the car," he stated. "It's a couple of blocks down the street, and, as I didn't know how long it would take to find you, I sent them on to save time."

"Good!" approved Merriweather. "So Annette decided to go, after all?"

Owen nodded. "Yes; Janice persuaded her that it was just a harmless lark."

"Good!" Merriweather said again. "Now listen: I'm not going with you. You tell 'em you couldn't find me, and that I told you beforehand that I'd follow in a taxi, if you went off and left me. I want to beat you down there," he went on, in explanation, "and be in the garret when Janice climbs up. I'll scare her out of her calm, for once!"

Owen remonstrated, but Merriweather cut him short. "I know it wouldn't do for Annette—she'd have double hysterics, and so would any normal woman. Not Janice! I may hand her a jolt, but it won't be a very big one."

Merriweather had become detached from the others, earlier in the night, and it was evident to Owen that he had found a bootlegger in the interval, and, more or less, taken a doubtful advantage of his discovery. Owen realized, moreover, that Merriweather's determination to shatter his wife's irritatingly cool self-possession had become something of an obsession with the man, even without the whisky.

"Go ahead," urged Merriweather. "I *am* going in a taxi—I have one waiting. The door to the stairs will be open: I fixed it with that old hag this afternoon."

With that, he was off, and Owen went out to repeat his lame story to the women.

Janice smiled. "I know quite well what he plans," she remarked, "but I think he'll be disappointed."

Owen said nothing as he started the car toward the Old Quarter, but he, as Annette had already done, reached the decision that a woman so eternally poised was a phenomenon to set the nerves of any man on edge.

Arrived at Madame Lemoyne's house, Walter tried the stair door, and found it unlocked, as Merriweather had said it would be.

"Well," he said, consulting his watch, "let's go up; it doesn't lack a full minute of midnight."

"I am going alone," Janice reminded him. "That was the bargain."

Without more ado she slipped past, and climbed lightly and quickly up the first flight of stairs. Walter looked at Annette in some hesitation. "She didn't even take the flashlight," he remarked. "Hadn't we better follow her?"

"Let her go!" Annette had not forgotten her own contribution to Janice's amusement on their previous visit to the house, and so was inclined to be a bit catty. (She was not anxious to climb those stairs, anyway!) She swiftly became contrite, however, and as swiftly reversed her decision. "No, I didn't mean that! Let's go!"

They climbed the first flight of stairs, listening for Janice's footfall above them; but the house was as oppressively silent as a country churchyard. Acting upon some impulse, Annette grasped Walter's coat sleeve as they started up the second and final flight of stairs to the garret.

"Hurry!" she whispered.

At that instant, a clock somewhere commenced to strike the midnight hour. Instinctively, Walter paused upon the stairs, and Annette drew closer to him, while the twelve strokes rang out dolorously upon the still night. For no apparent reason they were holding their breaths when the last stroke died out. The quiet was more noticeable than ever, and it seemed that an electric tension had been added to the air. Then——

"Oh!" moaned Annette, clutching frantically at her husband. "I knew it! Oh-h!"

Heedless of her grasping hands, Owen sprang up the stairway, in answer to the agony-laden screams that had come from the garret—screams that had stopped short with a suddenness that was even more awful.

The impetus of his last upward leap carried Walter into the attic, or else he would have stopped short to fight off the fear, terrible and mastering, that gripped him at the top of the steps. He felt his scalp prickle, and sensed the presence of *something* in the farther darkness of that black and barren garret—something terrible, something huge, and black, and utterly malignant.

Dimly conscious of it, he could hear Annette wailing, upon the stairs below him. Ahead, in the thick, almost tangible darkness, there sounded a mouthy, incoherent babble, like unto the gibbering of a soul lost in the

dismal wastes between worlds. That, and the *something*——

Suddenly Owen realized that he had, in his last headlong upward flight, instinctively snapped the switch of his powerful electric torch —snapped it *off*. Click! it went on again. Did he but imagine that a towering shape, blacker than mere darkness, shrank away and melted under the sudden powerful ray of light? A flood of relief and fresh assurance swept over Walter as the white beam leaped forward.

His relief was short-lived! In the light of the torch, Owen beheld a twisted and oddly terrifying heap upon the dusty boards of the attic. Janice! And bending over her, patting her face with hands that came away darkly stained, crouched a frantically gabbling figure, garbed in a harlequin suit.

"Merriweather!" croaked Owen; and the babbler clutched the figure from the floor to his breast, changing his awful mouthing to a whimpering snarl of defiance.

So ended Merriweather's jest. The law would have had his life, except that the police found him raving mad, when they came and forced his arms from their pitiful embrace. Gravely, those upon whom the responsibility for such things rests constructed a theory that satisfied them and the public. From Owen's testimony (they got nothing from Annette but shudders and sobs), they deduced that Merriweather's obsession to break the perpetual self-control of his wife had become almost monomania; poison whisky, and his rage when he supposedly failed to frighten Janice in the garret, had supplied the final leverage to unbalance his reason. Thus his intended joke became stark tragedy, and Merriweather strangled his wife. In this wise argued the law, and was complacently satisfied when press and public docilely accepted its theory.

As for Walter Owen and Annette his wife, they had their doubts. They kept them, wisely, to themselves, but they had them, none the less. For Owen had seen that huddled heap crumpled upon the floor of Madame Lemoyne's garret—garbed much as Madame might have been!—and had observed that the great marks upon her white neck were more, by nearly double, than Merriweather's small hands could compass. Neither did Walter believe that Merriweather's occasional irritation at his wife's disconcerting lack of feminine "temperament" had become anything like an obsession that finally snapped his reason. Instead, Owen remembered his own almost overpowering fear of the *something* in the attic, that he had only sensed. Suppose Merriweather *saw*—came to grips with—*It!*

One thing more—one detail the coroner, in all propriety, suppressed: *Janice Merriweather's tongue had been torn from her mouth by the roots!*

The GIANT WORLD

"The giant grinned malevolently in the starlight."

CHAPTER 1

THE SUMMONS

I WAS startled. Yet I think that subconsciously I was prepared for it; expecting it. The little cylinder flipped out of its tube and dropped on my desk before me. My name was on it, glowing with tiny luminous letters: *Frank Elgon, Interplanetary Mails, Division 4, Great-New York.* It looked just like any other Departmental message cylinder. But instinctively I knew it was not; and my heart was beating fast as I clicked it open.

Relayed through Code Headquarters. I saw that on the small rolled tape inside. And saw the signature, Dr. Gryce. It should not have been startling, but my fingers were trembling as I unrolled the tape and hooked it into the automatic decoder. And I stood gripping my chair as the line of English letters pricked themselves on the blank white sheet at which I was staring:

"Frank—I can not bear it any longer. We must go—we must find Brett at any cost. Will you stand by us? Come at once. Hurry. DR. GRYCE."

My mind leaped back. I sat at my desk staring blankly, while in the

NOTE—This serial, while complete in itself, is a sequel to *Explorers Into Infinity*, which narrated the previous adventures of Brett and Martt on the distant world. The story appeared in WEIRD TALES for last April, May and June.

office around me all the bustling activity of the accursed Interplanetary Mails faded before the surging visions of my memory. It was four years since that other momentous day when Dr. Gryce had sent for me. And I had gone to him; and listened amazed at his weird, fantastic theories. Our sun, planets, and stars—all the vastness of the star-filled heavens, he had told me then—were but the infinite smallness of a greater world. All this that we call our Celestial Universe was no more than an atom—of the giant world encompassing it.

Fantasy! Yet it had proved sober, tragic fact. Tragic, because Dr. Gryce's older son, Brett, had gone out there to that giant world. Gone, and never returned. Nor been heard from; four years now, while old Dr. Gryce at the end of his life waited despairingly.

I had known always that the time would come when Dr. Gryce would wait no longer. He would send for me—friend of Brett—and friend of his other two children, Martt and Francine. For a year every cylinder that had dropped on my desk had made my heart leap that it might contain this summons which now lay before me.

"I can not bear it any longer. Will you stand by us?" So simple an appeal! But I knew the turgid torrent of heartache—the final desperation of an old man's suffering—which prompted it.

Young Grante at the desk next to mine was sorting his pile of official communications newly arrived by the Venus mail. I turned to him.

"I'm going away," I told him. In spite of myself—an unfortunate mannerism when I am perturbed—my voice sounded gruff, ill-tempered. "There is no time to argue—will you please notify Official 4 that my—my post is vacant."

He raised his eyebrows. "Vacant?"

"Yes. I'm going away." I was on my feet. Outwardly calm, but within me was a seething emotion. Going away! Out there into the immensity of the Unknown, where my friend Brett had gone, not to return. Young Grante could not guess. He was thinking Great-London perhaps—or the Asiatic province. Or perchance, Venus, or Mars.

I laughed harshly. "Don't question me, Grante. Just tell them—my post is vacant."

I left the room with his amazed stare following me. In the corridor, through a window I caught a glimpse of the tenth pedestrian level; its crowd of people moving upon the diverse activities of their tiny lives. Already I felt apart from them. Frank Elgon, Division 4. Presently, to such of them as knew me, I would be no more than a memory. "That young, rather quarrelsome Elgon, who walked out of his office in a temper, and vanished." They would say that, and then forget me.

I laughed again. But the thought brought a pang of regret, and a shudder.

In ten minutes I was within a pneumatic cylinder, speeding underground to the Southern Pennsylvania area, to the home of Dr. Gryce.

II

Martt and Frannie met me at the outer gateway. Their manner held a singular gravity. I had expected them to be excited, of course. But their grave, somber smiles of greeting, their instinctively hushed voices, seemed unnatural. This was no reckless, devil-may-care spirit of high adventure which I had anticipated the twins of Dr. Gryce would display. Sober drama. Their involuntary glances at the white house nestling against the hillside carried a foreboding.

Drama, but it seemed almost to be tragedy. My heart sank. There was something very wrong here with the Gryces; something more imminent than the fact of Brett's absence over four years.

But I said nothing. Dear little Frannie gave me her two hands. They were cold.

Martt said, "Thank you for coming, Frank. Father is—waiting for you." His voice, usually flaunting, mocking at everything with the reckless spirit of youth, chilled me with its queerly broken tone.

We crossed the flowering gardens to the white house standing so peaceful in the afternoon sunlight. Martt led the way. The twins were twenty-one years old now. Alike physically, and in temperament. Both smaller than average height; slim and delicate of mold; blue-eyed, and fair of hair. They were always laughing; carefree—the spirit of irresponsible youth. But not today. I regarded Martt, trudging ahead of me—debonair, jaunty of figure in his tight black silk trousers and loose white shirt, bare-headed, his crisp, curly hair tousled by the wind. But there was a slump to his shoulders, a heaviness to his tread. And little Frannie behind him: girlishly beautiful, with her tossing golden curls, her familiar house costume of gray blouse and widely flaring knee-length trousers. But there was upon her a preternatural solemnity; a maturity of aspect indefinable.

At the doorway Martt turned and fixed me with his somber, blue-eyed gaze. And spoke with the same queer hush to his voice.

"Father is upstairs, Frank. He is —dying. He wants very much to live until you arrive."

Upon the pillows in the darkened room lay Dr. Gryce's head with its shaggy, snow-white hair, the mound of the sheet betraying his pitifully wasted body.

Martt said softly, very gently, "Frank is here, Father. You see he came in time—plenty of time."

But the head, with face to the wall, did not move; no stirring marked the fragile body lying there.

Martt gave a cry; with Frannie he rushed to the bedside. It was all too evident. In a moment Martt stood up, leaned silently against the bedpost, a hand before his eyes as though dazed. And Frannie knelt at the bed and sobbed.

We expect death all our lives, yet the instinct of life within us never ceases to feel a shock, and a revulsion. For a long time these children of Dr. Gryce did not move or speak. Then Frannie leaped to her feet. Her face was tear-stained; but her sobs were suddenly checked, and her eyes were blazing.

"Martt! His last wish—the very last thing he said—was that we go out ourselves and find Brett. He said it—he said Brett might need us—his dying wish. And I'm going, and so are you. We've got to, Martt! And we want Frank with us. Oh, Frank, you'll go with us, won't you? Out there—to join Brett?"

III

The burial was passed. We had not spoken of our enterprise, but it had never left my thoughts. This boy and girl so newly come to maturity—but I was twenty-nine. Upon me would fall the main responsibility.

We sat at last in Dr. Gryce's study —the three of us alone—to discuss our task. With the first poignancy of their shock and sorrow already dulled by time, upon the faces of Martt and Frannie was stamped grimly their simple purpose.

"But, Martt," I said, "Brett's vehicle was very intricate. It traveled in Space—but in Time as well. And grew gigantic in size. Your father's

genius built it. But we have no such genius to build another——"

"You forget," he interrupted. "Think back, Frank. That day you came here. And we showed you the models of the vehicle. There were four of them——"

Then I remembered. Dr. Gryce had shown me four small models. One he had sent back into Time. A flash, like a dissipating puff of vapor it was gone into the Past; still here in Space above the taboret on which it was standing, but vanished with centuries of Time to hide it from my sight.

Another of the models, with Time unchanged, Dr. Gryce had sent into Infinite Smallness. I remembered watching it dwindling; a speck, a pinhead, then invisible even to the microscope.

Two of the models were left. Martt and Frannie, but seventeen years old then, had taken one into the garden. Had started it growing in size. I recalled our frantic efforts to check its growth, lest it demolish the house. This was the one in which Martt and Brett had gone to the giant world and in which Brett had returned alone to that distant part of our universe.

One model had remained. I had never thought of it since. Martt was saying, ". . . and we still have that last model. Father kept it very carefully." Martt's smile was wistful with the memory. "I think he—Father—had a premonition that he would not live to carry out his purpose. . . . The model is here."

He opened a locked steel box. Again I gazed silently at that small cube of milk-white metal—a cube the length of my forearm, with its tiny tower on top, its glasslike balcony, its windows and its doors.

"It's all complete," said Martt. "And I know how to operate it."

Frannie said with a touch of breathlessness, "For a month past, Father has been gathering the necessary instruments. And the supplies—you see he—he really thought he was going to live——"

"We're all ready," Martt added. "We will increase this model to normal size. Load it with our supplies. We can start tomorrow, Frank."

IV

Five million light-years from Earth! Who of finite human mind can conceive such unfathomable distance! Yet, as I crouched on the floor of the vehicle gazing down at the radiance emerging from the black void which was our first sight of the Inner Surface, the distance had seemed no more than gigantic. We were, in size, many million times our Earthly stature. The tiny Earth, from our larger viewpoint, was a little orange spinning above us in the void—a mere one-twentieth light-year away.

Martt, for all his youth, had proved competent. He had made the trip once before with Brett; he handled the vehicle carefully, and with skill. He said now, as we three crouched by the floor window, "We'll soon be down to the atmosphere, Frank. I'm checking our fall—we want no errors——"

We were reversed in Time—holding very nearly at a single instant, so that on the Inner Surface the time now was the same as it had been when we left the Earth.

We argued the point; Martt said, "I think when we land—we should choose the point in Time about four years beyond Brett's landing. So that it will be four years to us—and also to him. Don't you?"

We decided upon that, so that we would reach the Inner Surface and find Brett had been there four years. It seemed to strike a greater normality. Find Brett! Would we find him? I wondered, as I knew Martt and Frannie were wondering. But

in our plans we always took it for granted.

The radiance beneath us grew brighter. And at last we entered the upper strata of atmosphere, falling gently downward. It was a fair, beautiful land, as Brett and Martt had said. A sylvan landscape, with an air of quiet peace upon it. A broad vista of land and water; patches of human habitation — houses, villages; a city.

Martt was at the telescope. "Pretty good, Frank! I've hit it—I see the city—off there, isn't it? And the crescent lake."

He changed our direction slightly. As we dropped, the broad crescent lake lay beneath us. Trees bordered its banks; and to the right was the city of low-roofed, crescent-shaped buildings banked with flowers. And beyond the city a rolling country of gently undulating hills, with a jagged mountain range up near the horizon.

From this height it was a visibly concave surface. And it was gray and colorless, for we were passing abnormally through its Time. Then Martt threw off the Time-switch; we took the normal Time-rate of the realm. And in size we were also normal.

At a height of perhaps a thousand feet Martt held us poised above the city. "They'll see us now," he said. "If—if Brett is down there he'll recognize us. I'll land in the grove where we landed before. We'll give Brett time to get there to meet us."

With the Time-switch off, color and movement had sprung into the scene. The forests were a somber growth of dull, orange-colored vegetation. The water was a shimmering purple; and above us was a purple sky, with faint clouds, and dim stars up there—stars which seemed very small and very close.

The white houses gleamed and glowed in the starlight. Yet it seemed not night; nor day either. A queerly shimmering twilight. Shadowless, as though everything were vaguely phosphorescent.

In the broad city streets there was movement. Vehicles; people. And the people now were gathered in groups, staring up at us.

We landed in the little clearing at the edge of the lake near the city. And now at the last, Frannie gave voice to the fear which was within us all. "Oh Frank, do you think Brett will be here?"

There were human figures in the near-by thickets. I saw them through the windows, but we were too busy with the landing to look closely. The vehicle came to rest. Martt and I flung open the door. The vegetation was thick near by; we stepped from the vehicle onto a soft, mossy sward, and stood in a timid group, with tumultuously beating hearts.

"Martt! Frannie! Frank!" It was his voice! Brett was here! And we saw him step from a thicket. His familiar voice; his familiar figure, but so fantastically garbed that it brought to me a wild desire to laugh, for I was half hysterical with the relief of seeing him.

Frannie cried, "Brett! My brother! You're all right, Brett, aren't you? I'm glad you're all right."

Under stress, how inarticulate are we humans! I said awkwardly, "How are you, Brett? We thought we'd come and see you."

He took Frannie in his arms. And wrung Martt's hand, and mine, while his strange companions stood in the background among the trees, watching us.

"Of course I'm all right," he declared. "And terrifically happy." A shadow crossed his face; his glance went to the vehicle's doorway. "Father didn't come with you?"

Then Martt showed a wisdom far beyond his years. This was no time

to bring sorrow to Brett. Martt said smoothly, "Father is better than he has ever been, Brett. We'll tell you —later."

"Good! That's fine!" Brett's face was radiant. "You're just in time, you three. I'm to be married tonight."

But even then as I wrung his hand again, and congratulated him, I had a premonition that it was not to be.

CHAPTER 2

STOLEN INTO SMALLNESS

"LIFE is pleasant here," said Brett. "Pleasant, and indolent. It does not make for progress, but it is happiness—and I'm beginning to wonder if that is not best, after all."

We were sitting in an arcaded passage on the roof of the home where Brett lived. Crescent archways opened to the roof, where stood banks of vivid flowers, with a vista of the city beyond. The building seemed of baked earth, rough like adobe, and of dull orange color. It was a two-storied, crescent-shaped structure, set upon a wide street-corner near the edge of the city. The home of Leela's father. I had never forgotten Leela—the girl Brett and Martt had rescued from the giant on their first visit here. Brett had fallen in love with her. It was she whom tonight he was to marry. And this was her father's home—Greedo, the old musician.

"I have lived here with them six months," Brett said.

Martt exclaimed, "Six months! Why Brett, you have been gone four years!"

We had miscalculated the Time-change of the vehicle. Our purpose had been to strike this realm of the Inner Surface at a point in Time which to Brett would be four years. But now we found it six months only.

Brett smiled. "I'm glad you didn't postpone your arrival. You've no idea how pleased I am to have you —tonight of all nights."

We had not yet seen Leela, or her father. Brett said that Leela would be up presently to greet us. The city was excited over our coming. A crowd was gathered in the street before the house; Brett had made them a brief speech; Frannie, Martt and I had stood at the parapet and waved to them.

Then Brett had spoken of a younger sister of Leela's. Her name was Zelea—they called her Zee.

Martt sat up at this. "Where was she when we were here before?"

"Away," said Brett. "She was too young to meet a man then. Only now has she come to be sixteen. You'll like her, Martt. I want you to like her."

"I will," said Martt enthusiastically, "if she's anything like Leela."

"You were telling us about the life here," I suggested. "We always called this land the Inner Surface——"

"Yes," he agreed. "It is concave, like the inner shell of some great, hollow globe. Within the space it encloses——" He gestured to where, through the arcade, a segment of purple, star-filled sky was visible. "All that which we of Earth called the Celestial Universe is enclosed by this concave shell. You would think that this must be a gigantic region——" He smiled again. "It is not. Compared to our present enormous size, I imagine the circumference of this Inner Surface is not unduly great. I don't know. These people have not explored very far. They are not wanderers—they are too indolent, too contented, to wander."

He paused to drink from a shallow receptacle which stood before us, and offered Martt and me what appeared to be arrant cylinders to smoke.

"I have learned a little of the language. Proper names are impossible to translate. But the meaning of their word for this land, I call in English, Romantica. The romantic land. It is, I fancy, about five hundred miles square. Beyond it lie forests and mountains. No one here has ever penetrated them. There are wild beasts, birds, insect life—and fish and reptiles in the water. But they are not dangerous—not aggressive. It is not because of them that these people avoid exploration. It is—just indolence."

"I don't wonder," I said. "This is very peaceful here—I have no desire to do anything in particular." From the city streets a drone of activity floated up to us; but it was almost somnolent.

"It's always like this," said Brett. "Almost no change of seasons—the light always the same. There is no disease here—or very little. Food—grains, and what we would call vegetables, grow abundantly in this rich soil. The trees give milk—even the bark and pulp of them are edible. Life is easy. There is nothing to struggle against.

"Through generations it has made the people kindly. There is little crime. No struggle for land, or food or clothing. Crimes involving sex——" He gestured. "Wherever humans exist there will be crimes of that origin. But our women here are very sensible, and when a woman does what is right—well, you know, don't you, that most deeds of violence into which men plunge over women have a woman's wrong actions at the bottom of them? There is little of that here, for the women take care that there shall not be.

"So they call their country Romantica. They are not a scientific people. They do not struggle for advancement. Art has taken the place of science. Painting. Sculpture. Music. They have developed music very far. It has a soul here. It speaks—it sings—it seems a living entity. It is—what music ought to be, but seldom is—the pure voice of love, of romance. . . . I was telling you about our country. Most of its population live in villages, and in individual dwellings strewn about the hills. There are but two large cities. This one—the largest—they call Crescent. Or at least their word for it suggests the shape of the lake. The other city is about fifty miles from here"—he gestured again—"off there where you see the line of mountains. They call it Reaf. It's a quaint city. Built largely over the water—rivers there—hot, subterranean rivers which rush underground—under the mountains. They go—who knows where? No one has ever been down them. The mountains are honeycombed with caves, tunnels, passages leading within, and up. Always up. But into them no one has ever penetrated. Legends tell fabulous tales of a great world up there. The giants, we think——"

When Brett and Martt had first come here, giants had appeared. Dwindling giants—strange, savage beings of half-human aspect. They had appeared—no one knew from where. Growing smaller until they were normal size to this realm. Not many had been seen. Some had kept on dwindling; they had grown so small, when attacked, that they had become invisible. At the thought, I moved my foot involuntarily with a shudder of uneasiness. Here on the floor beside me now, men like beasts might be lurking, so small I could not see them. Yet in a moment they might grow to a stature greater than my own. . . .

Men like beasts! . . . And I remembered that, with size gigantic, they had destroyed the third city of Romantica.

Upon Brett's face lay a cloud of apprehension. "We have never

heard from them since. It is thought —I think myself—that they came from the subterranean rivers, or through the underground passages of the mountains. I conceive this concave surface upon which we're living to be the inner surface of a shell. It may not be very thick—there at Reaf. Above it—beyond it—up or down are mere comparative terms—beyond it must lie some vastly greater outside world. This whole realm is doubtless within an atom of that greater world. It would be a convex surface up there—with a sky and stars beyond. . . .

"We have never seen the giants since that time when Martt and I rescued Leela. Everyone here seems to have forgotten them——" Brett's voice was heavy with apprehension. "These people are so trustful! They forget so quickly! No one worries. Our rulers here—a venerable man and woman long past the age when death is expected—are so gentle, kindly, that they can not imagine harm coming to their people. They have forgotten the Hill City which the giants destroyed. Trampled upon it! Six or eight giants—they must have been several hundred feet tall—stamping, kicking the building! I've been there—I've seen the ruins—strewn for miles—and with buildings, colonnades and terraces mashed into the ground! There were no more than half a thousand people surviving that destruction of the Hill City—and thousands died. But everyone says now, 'The giants are gone. We are safe.' "

Brett's voice had risen to a swift vehemence. "It's been like living on a volcano to me, all these months. There are no weapons here. My own few flash-cylinders—of what use would a tiny flash of lightning be against beings so gigantic? We've got to do something. For if those giants come again——"

A step sounded in the oval doorway near at hand. Leela stood smilingly, deprecatingly before us.

II

Brett said, "Come here, Leela. This is my sister, and my friend, Frank Elgon. And here's Martt."

Leela advanced hesitantly, her face a wave of color as she met our gazes. She was smaller, and even slighter than Frannie, her figure adorned and revealed by its single, simple garment—more like a short, glistening veil than a dress. Her hair was long and dark, caught by a band at her neck, and flowing free beneath. Her arms and legs were bare. At her wrists, gray-blue bands with small tassels; on her feet, queerly high-heeled wooden sandals, with tasseled thongs crossing on her ankles. The sandals clacked as she walked; her step was mincing, with a suggestion of the Orientals of our Earth.

Brett eyed the sandals with a humorous twinkle. "For why are those, Leela?"

Her blush heightened. "In honor of our guests. I thought you would like them."

With a swift gesture, she stooped, untied the thongs and cast the sandals off. Her feet were very white, small and delicately formed, with rounded, polished nails stained pink. She stood untrammeled, lithe and graceful as a faun.

"I am glad to meet Brett's sister —and his friend. And you, Martt— I am glad to see you again." Her voice was soft as a Latin's. She shook hands with Martt and with me, and returned Frannie's affectionate embrace.

As I saw them together—these two girls of different worlds—I was struck with the dissimilarity of them. Pert, vivacious little Frannie, blue-eyed, fair of hair—brown-skinned from the outdoor life she loved. And Leela—smooth, white skin, dark hair

and luminous eyes, a fragile grace to her every moment. None of my words are adequate. There was about her an aura of romance; a strange wild spirit of something for which every man in his soul has a longing; a beauty with a quality ethereal—half human, but half divine.

A twinge of conscience came to me that I—Frank Elgon—could think such thoughts and see such beauty in any girl who was not Frannie.

Leela was saying, "My father would have you come down soon. And Zee is down there—Zee is very much excited, Brett. There is so much to do before tonight——"

Brett's arm was around her. "And you—of course you're not excited, are you, Leela?"

She returned his caress, embarrassed further by his teasing. He added, "We will be down presently."

"Yes," she said; and with a pretty gesture, she left us.

The sandals lay discarded on the floor. Brett gathered them up, regarding them tenderly. "She is so easy to tease, I love to do it. But if you try that with Zee——"

"You shouldn't tease her," said Frannie. "She's a darling. I love her already."

Brett's wedding day! For all his quiet, whimsical teasing of Leela, the love he bore her enveloped him like a shining cloak. Yet his father whom he loved so dearly was dead, and Brett did not know it. I whispered to Martt about it later.

"I think we should not tell him," said Martt. "Not—until we have to."

And we did not. Looking back on it now, how much was to happen to Brett—to Martt, to us all! What fearsome things—danger, desperation, despair—were to be our allotted portion before we even thought again of old Dr. Gryce who was dead!

III

BRETT was to be married that evening—a public festival and ceremony over which the whole city was in an anticipatory fever.

"The festival of lights and music," said Brett. "They hold it at periodic times. It is a wonderful sight. It generally includes a marriage—girls find it romantic. Leela selected it for us. Greedo is in charge of it—Leela and Zee always take part in its music. We must go down—they are waiting for us—there is so much for them to do between now and this evening."

"I'll help," said Frannie. "Come on, Martt—I guess you want to meet Zee, don't you?"

IV

WE FOUND Leela's father to be a grave, black-robed, kind-faced old man of an age indeterminate. Sixty, or eighty, I could not have told. In vigorous health, evidently. His figure was spare, straight, but not tall. His thick, gray-black hair he wore long to the base of the neck.

He greeted us quietly, with an admirable dignity commanding immediate respect.

"You are a musician," I said, after we had been talking for a time. "Brett has told us something about your music here. It must be very beautiful."

He smiled. "Music is a wonderful thing. It ennobles. There is in it a touch of something beyond our poor human understanding. A touch of—what you call Divinity."

"You speak our language very well," I exclaimed.

"A language is not difficult. All minds are similar—that is why music can make so universal an appeal." His voice was earnest, his eyes sparkling. It was the subject most absorbing to him.

I said, "You teach music——"

He raised a deprecating hand. "Yes. But that is nothing. I teach the fundamentals"—he struck his breast—"the rest comes from within. For myself, I am a mere retailer of sound. A peddler of something someone else has made. The composer—he is the real artist. I have hoped that some day Leela will compose. Brett has promised that he will urge her. . . . Just now, she sings." He twinkled at Leela. "I fear she thinks she sings very well. Pouf! It is nothing! She, too, is only a sound-peddler."

With a burst, Zee entered the room. A smaller replica of Leela. Yet how different! She came like a mountain torrent tumbling from the hillside. Her short, dull-red draperies whirled about her elfin figure. Her dark eyes were blazing. Black hair, flying over her shoulders with her tumultuous entrance.

"Father! That is not so!" She stamped one of her bare feet, then rose on strong, supple toes and whirled half around. The muscles stood out beneath the smooth satin skin of her calves. "Leela, why do you let him say such a thing? You sing beautifully." She whirled back. "And what am I, then?"

The old man was wholly unperturbed. "You, Zee? Why, you are a peddler of movement. Very swift, tempestuous movement, generally." He added to me, "She thinks she is an artist. She is not. She is only a dancer."

V

It was what on Earth would have been termed late evening when we started for the festival. Greedo, with his two daughters, had left half an hour before.

We were dressed now in the fashion of the country. Brett had suggested it; Martt had insisted upon it. I remembered with what a jaunty swagger Martt had worn his clothes upon his return to Earth that other time. He was dressed similarly now. A cloth shirt of glaring green, with a high, rolling collar in front, and low in the back; short trousers very wide and flapping at the knee. The trousers were a lighter green, with dark green stripes; his stockings were tan; and his green shoes were long and pointed. Over his shirt was a short tan jacket, wide-shouldered and with puffed sleeves, and bangles dangling from elbows and wrists. And there was a skirt to the jacket, rolling upward at the waist.

My own costume was in the same fashion; and though it was a sober gray, befitting my more mature years, I felt for a time awkward and foolish in it. But when in the crowded city streets I found that no one seemed particularly to remark me, I soon forgot it.

Brett wore a long cloak; I did not see how he was dressed. Frannie also wore a cloak. Just before leaving she tossed it aside, and stood before me, waiting for my admiration, with her characteristic twinkle, and her pert upflung face daring me to disapprove. Even by contrast with Leela and Zee, to my eyes at least Frannie was very pretty. She wore the single draped garment with silver cords crossed at her breasts to shape her figure; and with banded wrists, and tasseled bands above the knees. Her blond curls were tied with flowing tassels. The whole costume, a gray and blue, with a single deep-blue flower in her hair. And thin, flexible sandals on her little feet.

She eyed me. "Do you like me, Frank?"

"I—why, why—Frannie——" I would have told her then that I loved her, as I had very nearly told her myriad times in ten years past.

But who was I to ask the love of any girl? A sorter of planetary messages, poor as a towerman in the lower traffic! "I—why yes, Frannie. Of course I like you. You're—beautiful."

She had a quaint little circular hat, stiff and round, with a dull-red plume and a tassel. We men wore hats of a solidly wooden aspect—low, round crowns and triangular brims. Martt's was sea-green, with tassels all around its brim. But mine and Brett's were sober gray, and unadorned.

We started on foot. The city streets were dim in the luminous twilight. Overhead, the sky with its thin-strewn stars was cloudless. A holiday aspect was everywhere. Crowds of people were in the streets. Young men and girls, gay with laughter. Most of them were cloaked. A vehicle, with runners like a sleigh gliding over the grassy pavement, drawn by a squat, four-legged animal, went by us. It was jammed with girls; one of them leaned out and waved at me. Her slim white arm came down; her hand twitched off my hat, sent it spinning. I caught a glimpse of her face; dark, laughing eyes, a mouth with mocking lips stained red. . . .

The sleigh passed on.

With Brett leading us we turned toward the lake. Most of the crowd seemed to be heading that way. Occasionally we were recognized. Stares of interest at us, the strangers, and cheers for Brett.

He said to me, "They're all very happy, Frank. Like children." I fancied that he sighed—he, for whom this night of all nights should have been his happiest.

In a group, with the swirling merrymakers about us, we made our way to the lake shore. The water was rippled by a gentle night breeze; the stars gleamed on the water surface with tiny silver paths. Boats were here—double canoes with outriders; and a few sailboats, small, single-masted, with triangular and crescent sails.

We found a small canoe; Brett sculled it with a broad-bladed paddle. Other boats were around us. A long canoe with a dozen sweeping paddles shot by us with the racing strokes of its men, and with shouts from its laughing girls. Another, smaller, turned over. Its men swam, and righted it. They climbed aboard, hauling up the girls. The wet draperies clung to them; they came up like dripping, gleeful water-sprites, tossing their black hair. . . . A barge went slowly along, drawn by two canoes. A lighted canopy was over its occupants—a huge, woven garland of flowers. The canopy gleamed with spots of vivid-colored lights.

"The luminous flowers," said Brett. And I saw that the large purple blossoms were gleaming with a purple light—a phosphorescence inherent in them; and red blossoms, like crimson lanterns; and others orange, and green. Music floated upward from the barge, soft and sweet over the water. The tinkle of strings—the voices of girls singing, and men humming with a deeper background of harmony. . . .

A night for love-making. The night romantic. Brett's wedding night—and yet, he had sighed. I knew why, for upon my own heart lay a weight of apprehension, heavier because it was so incongruous. Martt quite evidently did not feel it—he was shouting and laughing constantly with his pleasure. A girl from a neighboring boat tossed him a large, blood-red, glowing blossom. It fell short, went into the water and slowly sank, staining the water with its red light. Martt all but turned us over trying to rescue it.

Frannie, too, seemed gay. I tried to smile; but I felt that it was forced.

The depression upon me would not be shaken off. It grew to seem almost sinister. The very atmosphere of happiness around me seemed to intensify it. These merry-makers—in the midst of life. . . . At such a moment as this, death could choose to strike. . . .

"Look!" shouted Martt. "The lights off there—is that where we're going?"

A patch of gay-colored lights gleamed from over the water ahead. "Yes," said Brett. "An island there, where they hold the festival. It's not far."

It was an irregular circular island, a mile perhaps in extent. The lake waters indented it with a hundred tiny bays, inlets, and narrow, placid waterways. We ascended one of them. The surface of the island was gently undulating, and wooded, with mossy dells—nooks arched with the luminous flowers. Nooks for love-making.

The whole island was strewn thick with the flowers; they grew upon tall, single stems—gay-colored lanterns nodding in the breeze. Beneath them were laughing couples; some hidden, sought and found by groups of marauding girls, to seize the man and laughingly whisk him away. And everywhere was music, soft as an echo. . . .

WE ASCENDED the narrow waterways, came to a lagoon with a glassy surface wherein a thousand spots of the lantern-flowers were mirrored like colored stars. Near the shore here, beyond a dock at which we landed, was a broad enclosed space with an arcade of the lantern-flowers arching over it. Brilliant with their light. Most of the crowd seemed congregated there—a milling throng on the level floor inside, with liquid strains of music mingling with the shouts and laughter.

"We'll go in there," said Brett. "I'll find seats for you—then I must leave, to join Leela and her father. There is to be a musical program. But first—just Greedo, Zee and Leela, and our marriage. Most of the music comes afterward."

Within the arcade the lights blended into a kaleidoscope of color. All the cloaks were discarded now. Costumes vividly splashed as a painter's palette. Heavy perfumes. And that soft, echoing music. I could not tell its source.

At one end of the room was a raised, canopied platform, with doors behind it. Most of the crowd were choosing low seats, like stools ranged in rows. Brett got us settled.

"I'll leave you now—and meet you over there by the right-hand end of the platform, afterward."

He left us. With Frannie between us, Martt and I sat quiet, watching and listening. We had not long to wait. The light around us began to dim; sliding curtains were obscuring the flowers over us. A hush fell upon the crowd. The soft music was stilled. A hush of expectancy.

The arcade was in gloom. The light on the platform intensified. A deep-red glow, with a single spot focused upon a small, raised dais. Into the red glow came Greedo, robed unobtrusively in black. He was carrying a crescent frame of strings. He seated himself, and in the silence swept his hands across the strings. His fingers plucked them like a harp; and then his other hand slid upon them. The staccato notes rippled clear as a mountain rill, soft, muted to seem an echo of music. And blended with them was a low, crying melody—a fragment, then silence.

Leela had appeared. She crossed through the red glow, mounted the dais, and stood in the silver light—Leela, robed to her feet in a misty silver veil through which her figure vaguely was outlined. She stood there drooping—a Naiad veiled in the

fountain mist. . . . Then Greedo's music sounded. And Leela sang.

It was like nothing I had ever heard before. Music, toned strangely, with strange intervals to make it neither major nor minor. Not happiness, nor yet sadness. A wistfulness. A longing. But with the promise of fulfilment.

I listened, breathlessly; and the arcade around me faded. Greedo's figure in the shadow was forgotten. There was only the white figure of Leela; her face, the purity of girlhood, her eyes half closed, her lips parted with the song. Nothing else —save myself. I stood in a void, stretching out my arms to Romance. All that I had ever dreamed, and vaguely longed for without understanding what it meant, was upon me. All that woman could mean to man—the spirit of the ideal never to be attained in mortal flesh—seemed suddenly attained. Romance —that thing elusive—intangible as a thought in the vaguest of dreams. It was mine!

The song ended. Applause rang out. Leela was gone.

Martt breathed beside me, "Frank! Wasn't that—wonderful! It was like——Look, here comes Zee!"

Zee was on the platform—a whirlwind of veils, stained by the red light, white limbs flashing as she whirled. Greedo's music was faster now. Snapping staccato, with a thrum of melody. The lights changed to a mingled riot of color within which Zee was dancing. An elf. A sprite of the woodland, with tossing hair and fluttering arms; and a laughing face. . . . A figure in the fairy-tale of a child. . . .

But only for a moment. Then the dance slowed. Maturity came suddenly. Zee mounted the dais, and the light there was abruptly green. She stood in an attitude of terror, her eyes wide, hands before her, posturing with horror.

It made my heart leap. For an instant I fancied it had been real. But the light turned silver. The horror faded into a passion of love, her white arms extended, her breasts rising and falling beneath the veils, her red lips parted with passionate longing. The abandonment of youth —so young, with newly awakened passion as yet but half understood. Then again she was whirling around the platform, leaping on her bare toes, light as a faun. . . .

Behind me, suddenly a woman screamed! The reality of a long scream of terror! Greedo's music ceased. The lights wavered. Zee was gone. A scream from the audience; then another. A chaos of mingled cries. Clattering of feet. Stools overturned. . . . Someone fell against me. I went down, recovered and climbed upright. The audience was in a panic. I heard Martt shout, "Look, Frank! Look there over the water!"

People were pushing me—surging to escape from the arcade. Shouting. Calling to one another. And the woman behind me was still screaming.

I saw it then. Through the open side of the arcade, out a mile or more over the water, the great giant figure of a man was standing, waist-deep in the lake, his naked torso towering a hundred feet above it. A giant, wading in the lake, his face grotesque, malevolently grinning in the starlight!

VI

The crowd within the arcade was in a wild panic of terror. I was pushed and shoved, knocked down by heedless, rushing figures. Everyone was trying to get outside. In a moment I was swept away. I could not get back to where I was sitting, or even tell where the spot had been. Martt and Frannie I could not see; the place was all a dim chaos of di-

sheveled, panic-stricken figures. A moment before they had been so gay and jaunty! . . .

A girl rushed past me. The veiling had been torn from her shoulders. Her eyes for an instant met mine, as she searched my face hoping to recognize in me the companion from whom she had been separated. Her dark eyes were wide, red-rimmed with fear. Her face, with all the beauty of youth gone from it, was chalk-white.

She turned and rushed away from me. I thought again, "In the midst of life . . . why, this is horrible!" That giant off there—he could wade to the island in a few moments. . . .

I fought my way out of the arcade, out under the trees by the edge of the lagoon. There was more room out there. In the starlight I could see figures rushing aimlessly away, scattering under the lantern-flowers . . . others hurriedly crowding the boats. One boat was overturned. I wondered vaguely if the struggling figures in the water would be drowned.

Back near the wall of the arcade I saw a girl's figure running. It seemed familiar. Was it Frannie? I dashed after her. But people running in between us blocked me. I lost sight of her; saw her momentarily as she seemed to dart around the farther arcade corner. But when I got there, she was not in sight. Was it Frannie? Had she gone this way? Or into that door, back into the rear of the arcade?

I stood in doubt. Then I saw Brett, running past me, out under the lantern-flowers some fifty feet away. His cloak was discarded; he was bareheaded. Brett in his marriage robe! Black and white, with golden tassels gayly dangling from the rolled skirt of his jacket. He was disheveled; as he ran, I saw him tear off the jacket impatiently and toss it away.

"Brett! Oh, Brett!"

He stopped; whirled toward me. "Frank! Where's Frannie—and Martt?"

"I do not know," I said. "I lost them. That giant——"

"The giant is wading the other way now." He pulled me past a thicket, and pointed. I could see the back of the giant's naked shoulders, towering up against the stars. He was going the other way—wading toward the far-distant opposite lake shore. And now against the island's banks, the waves the giant made were beginning to pound.

Brett said: "I don't know where Leela is. I was in there with her—and with Zee. I rushed out when the alarm came—when I went back they were gone." He stood irresolute. "We must find them, Frank. And get back home." He drew a long breath. "It has come, you see, as I feared."

"I thought I saw Frannie," I said. "Running—that way. But I'm not sure. I lost sight of her——"

From behind the pavilion came a scream. The scream of a girl. Familiar. . . . The blood drained from Brett's face. "Leela!"

And then I heard Frannie screaming from there also. We ran. The two girls were standing there clinging to each other. They seemed unharmed. But they were trembling, shuddering, arms gripping one another.

"Leela! What is it?" Brett held her off, regarding her. "You're not hurt, are you? What is it?"

We four seemed alone here beside the arcade. Lantern-flowers were over us; a thicket was near by. Frannie's arms were around me.

"Frank—oh——" She choked; she seemed struggling to tell me something.

I held her close. "You're not hurt, Frannie. Just frightened. What became of Martt?"

Oh, horrible! What gruesome, horrible thing was this! Within my arms I could feel her sensibly shrinking! Her shoulders within my encircling arm, melting . . . palpably dwindling.

Horrible! And there was a great cry from Brett. "Leela! My God, Leela——"

At the horror of it, Brett and I stood dumbly staring; and again the girls clung together. They seemed dizzy; they swayed, almost fell, then steadied themselves.

Visibly smaller now, like beautifully formed little children, clinging together, no taller than my waist.

Dwindling!

Then Frannie pointed to the thicket. Two small human figures stood there—a foot high, no more. A grinning gnomelike man, with black matted hair on his naked chest; and a woman—a woman thick and shapeless. A foot in height. But they were shrinking very fast. And beside them were four small animals with horns—grotesque like a dream mingling dog and horse and moose. The animals, too, were dwindling.

Brett saw them; but neither he nor I made a move. At our feet Frannie and Leela, no higher than our ankles now, were gazing up at us, with tiny upraised arms, pleading.

"Leela! Frannie!" We knelt by them. Then Brett in an agony of terror lifted Leela in his hand. "Leela! Don't — don't get any smaller!"

Then he put her down. She ran, half fell the distance of my foot to reach Frannie. And I heard Frannie's tiny voice calling up to us in gasps, "We're going! He—that man there with the woman—caught us. Forced—down our throats—a drug. We—going——"

Smaller than my finger. Then so small we knelt to see them. They were huddled against the side of a pebble. Then they seemed struggling toward the pebble. Behind it. Under it. Under its curve. . . .

Brett cried, "Don't move, Frank! My God, we might trample on them! Don't move!"

The figures in the thicket had vanished. By the pebble which Brett guarded so carefully I thought I saw Leela and Frannie. Saw a movement, as though an ant were there, hiding under the pebble.

Then—they were not visible. We did not dare look too closely. They were gone! Still there within a foot of our straining eyes—but so immeasurably distant! Lost! Gone! Stolen into smallness!

CHAPTER 3

THE THING IN THE FOG

WITHIN the arcade, when the alarm had sounded, Martt leaped to his feet, dragging Frannie after him. He saw me knocked to the floor, but could not reach me. A press of panic-stricken people was sweeping him away, but he clung to Frannie. Then he saw me regain my feet; saw me looking around. But I did not see him; and though he shouted at me, in the noise and confusion his words were lost.

Frannie gasped, "What is it? What's the matter, Martt? What is it?"

Martt did not know. But he guessed, and his heart went cold with fear. "We must get outside, Frannie. Hold tight! This way—it's nearer! There goes Frank—we'll join him outside."

Martt was forcing a way for them through the crowd. Frannie stumbled. Her hold on him was broken. She fell; and before he could reach her he was knocked backward by a running man. When he regained his feet a swift-moving group was between him and Frannie. He saw two girls stop and help her up; then dis-

card her. Saw her turn, confused, and run into a space where the crowd was thinner. He was being shoved away from her.

"Frannie! Wait! This way!"

But she did not hear him. And then he could no longer see her; there were too many people in between. He struggled in that direction, then he thought he saw me, and turned momentarily the other way. . . .

Martt found himself alone, outside the arcade. The crowd was thinner. Still he was not certain of the cause of all this panic. Then he saw the giant. Stood, and stared with tumultuously beating heart.

A man bumped into him; for an instant he thought that it was Brett. Memory of Brett reminded him that Brett was probably within the arcade, back of the platform-stage. He saw an opening, there in the arcade wall; he thought it was a doorway, leading back of the stage. He started for it, ran headlong into a girl standing there, staring out over the water to where the giant now had faced about and was wading away.

"Martt!"

"You, Zee! Where's Brett? Where are Leela and your father?"

She clung to him, her draperies drooping, her hair tumbling in great dark waves over her white shoulders as she shook her head.

"I do not know. They were in there a moment ago. Frannie came in—she and Leela were at the other door. Martt—that giant——"

"He's going away, Zee. Look! You see him turned about? Don't be frightened. We must find Brett. I don't know where Frank is—I lost him. There he is—isn't that Frank? Oh—Frank!"

They ran toward a man's figure, passing along a distant line of trees. But when they caught up with it, the man was a stranger. Ahead of them, hidden by a thicket, voices were shouting. A rhythmic call. Martt and Zee listened; but Martt could not understand the shouted words.

"What is it, Zee? Can you understand them?"

"They're saying, 'The messenger from Reaf!' Some messenger from Reaf has come with news."

"Come on. Let's go see what it is."

He gripped her hand. They ran swiftly through the woods. They were already several hundred feet from the arcade. The lagoon was on its other side; ahead of them was a patch of woods, dark, for the lantern-flowers did not grow along here. And beyond the woods, the shore of the island where the shouting sounded.

They ran. Soon Zee was ahead, leaping like a young chamois, her veils and hair flying.

"Wait!" he called. "Not so fast!"

She stopped abruptly. And Martt stopped. There was a pounding on the shore; waves rolling up, as though the peaceful lake were torn by a storm.

"What's that, Zee?" But the shouting began again; and without answering, Zee started ahead.

The starlit lake came into view. Like a distant, monstrous shadow, the retreating giant was visible against the stars. On the shore, white waves were rolling up. A boat was here, with its sail flapping. A wave caught it, turned it over.

On the strand a group of people were standing with the man who had come in this boat from Reaf. Zee joined the group. In a moment she returned.

"He says—the messenger says—that giants are in Reaf! The city is emptied—the people have scattered into the country. The road to Crescent is crowded with people coming here."

"Giants! There—as well as here——"

"Yes. They did not attack. There were two giants. They stood in the lake and laughed while the people fled from the city. Hundreds were killed in the rush to get out—hundreds were swept away into the subterranean rivers and the giants stood and laughed. The city is deserted, and the two giants are there now."

Men were helping the messenger right his boat. The group on the shore scattered back over the island, calling, "Giants! Giants are in Reaf!"

The messenger climbed into his boat, headed it out over the now calmer lake.

Martt and Zee momentarily were alone. He stared at her. He was stunned, confused. Giants, everywhere. This thing that had been worrying Brett for so long had come. Death, everywhere.

"Let's get back, Zee. We must find Brett."

It seemed shorter along the shore —a turn of the island near by, into the lagoon, and thus back to the arcade. They started off, running again. It was deserted along here. Zee was leading. Suddenly she stopped in full flight, gripped Martt, drew him behind a huge, pot-bellied tree trunk which stood near the water's edge.

"Zee, what——?"

"There, over there."

"Where? I don't see anything."

She whispered insistently, "Over there—in that open space. Back from the shore."

She was crouching, and he crouched beside her; followed her gesture with his gaze—and saw what she saw.

Tiny moving figures on the ground. Four of them, small dark blobs against the white sand. They were about a hundred feet away from where Martt and Zee were crouching. They had come out of the woods evidently, and were crossing this patch of white sand, heading for the water. Martt blinked and rubbed his eyes, staring at them. They moved in tiny leaps, bounding soundlessly over the sand. Each of them a foot long perhaps. Strange in shape; animal or human, he could not say.

"What are they, Zee?"

But she did not answer. Her little body was shrinking against him; he could feel her shudder.

The figures seemed long and thin, horizontal to the ground, with something sticking upright like a tower from the middle of them. Martt gasped. He had thought them four animals, with humps like upright towers. They were not. He saw them now as running dogs with horns, each with a tiny human figure on its back. And he gasped again. They were growing larger!

They crossed the sand in bounds and momentarily stopped. Already they were fully half normal size. Four horned animals that might have been grotesque dogs, or horses. Saddled; and mounted upon them, a heavy-set, half-naked man; a strange, shapeless woman—and two girls!

Normal size now! No, already they were larger! Growing rapidly larger! Frannie and Leela!

Martt half started to his feet. He opened his mouth to shout impulsively, but Zee drew him back and silenced him. The four animals were taking to the water. Swimming with heads stretched out. Martt could see Frannie and Leela bending forward, each clutching the horn of her mount. In single file the animals swam swiftly out into the starlit lake. They did not seem to be growing any further. Twice normal size perhaps. Soon they were four dark blobs on the shining water. Visually seeming smaller by distance. V-shaped lines of silver phosphorescence streamed out in the water be-

hind them with their swift forward progress.

And presently they were vanished.

MARTT and Zee stood up. They could not explain it. They tried to, but could not. But the main facts were clear. That had been a man and woman giant, and four of their animals. They had captured Frannie and Leela. Had made the girls and the animals change size like themselves. They had all, just now, been very small in size. To escape observation coming across the island to its shore, Martt concluded.

He said, "We must get to Brett—tell him about this. And then—go after them——"

Again they started running along the shore, intending to turn at the lagoon-mouth for the arcade. Martt's thoughts flew swift as his legs. Leela and Frannie captured . . . they must be rescued . . . then all of them would get into the vehicle and go to Earth—get out of this danger. . . .

Zee was saying, "That is Reaf, off that way where they went."

The wading giant had also gone that way. The messenger had said that Reaf was deserted, that giants were there. Evidently Reaf was the place at which these giants first appeared. Evidently it was the point of entrance and departure for them into and out of this realm. Leela and Frannie were being taken to Reaf. . . .

Martt's heart leaped. An idea was forming in his mind. A plan—a mad, reckless plan. But it seemed possible of success. . . . He thought of the vehicle. It would be of no use against these giants. It was too unwieldy. Besides, shut up in it one could not attack. And when they stopped it to disembark, the giants would overwhelm it. Or, if at the moment it was too gigantic for them, then they would escape before the occupants of the vehicle could get out to stop them. . . . And besides, the vehicle was too precious—no chances like that should be taken with it.

Martt told himself that he must get Brett to hide the vehicle. Guard it somehow. . . .

A mad idea, this plan he was pondering. . . . They came to the lagoon-mouth; and here, to crystallize Martt's plan, to make it seem feasible—here lay a small sailboat, deserted by its owner. It lay, half pulled up on the sand, around the bend of the lagoon.

"Zee! Stop! Wait! I want to talk to you."

Zee had been bounding ahead of him. She stopped, waited, faced him. He was breathless.

"That sailboat," he said. "It's one of the fast kind, isn't it?"

"Yes." She regarded it. "Yes. Very fast."

It was no more than a shell. A flat, spoon-shaped affair, with a small cockpit just large enough for two; and it had a very tall, flexible mast, and an overlarge crescent sail. The sail was flapping. Out on the lake the wind had risen. It was blowing directly toward Reaf.

"Zee, listen—could you sail that boat?"

"Oh, yes."

"You could handle it in that wind out there?"

"Yes. Of course."

"And it would go—how fast, Zee?"

"You mean—to Reaf?" She was as excited as he.

"Yes. To Reaf. We could get there. Go after them. Cautiously. We could hide before we got there. I've a plan——"

"How long to Reaf?" She pondered. "Three—what you call hours. We go fast in a wind like that."

"Yes. That's it. Fast. Three hours. Zee, listen. Reaf must be where the giants go to leave for their own world. They're taking Frannie

and Leela there. You see? And if we can get there—get into Reaf"—he gastured—"Zee, if they—those giants are very big, then we to them are small. Tiny. And it's quite dark. It would be dark in the caverns near Reaf—the houses there near the subterranean rivers. We would be so small the giants might not see us."

He drew a long breath. "My plan, Zee, is to get in there, hide, and find a giant from whom we can steal the drugs. With the drugs——"

She was trembling with excitement. No fear now. Reckless as only youth can be. "Oh Martt, if we could get the drugs! Brett said the giants must be using drugs. And make ourselves larger than the giants——"

"Yes. Then I can fight them. Rescue Leela and Frannie. We've got to do it. Bring Leela and Frannie safely back. We'll say, 'Here they are, Brett.' But if we wait, if we stop now it will be too late."

Before Martt's eyes was the vision of himself and Zee returning victoriously with the rescued girls. And with the drugs in his possession. There would be no danger then. The giants, knowing the drugs were stolen, would not dare remain. . . . They would all escape up into their own world. . . .

"Will you do it, Zee? Shall we go?"

"Yes."

Martt thought of his flash-cylinder. "I wish I had it, Zee."

"Where is it?"

"In the vehicle. But we have no time to get it."

"I think it would not be of much use."

"No. I don't think so either. But all I've got is this." He displayed a knife whose blade, as long as his hand, slid back into its handle for a sheath.

"Good," she said. He replaced the knife. They climbed into the boat. Martt shoved it off.

In a moment they were beyond the quiet lagoon, heading out into the starlit lake, with the lights of the island fading behind them.

II

THE wind was strong when they were beyond the island. The sail bellied out in front of them like a great crescent dish; the spoon-shaped boat, barely skimming the surface of the water, rode high on a white wave beneath it. Zee lay on her side, upraised upon an elbow with her hand on the knife-blade rudder that trailed the water behind them. Beside her, hunched with arms wrapping his upraised knees, Martt sat and peered ahead under the sail.

The lake was dim in the starlight; its concavity rose to the horizon. It seemed empty ahead. No boats. The wading giant had vanished; the swimming figures were gone.

As they sailed with the wind, the night seemed windless and calm, save that the lake boiled under them, swiftly passing. Martt was in no mood to talk. Zee, too, was silent, engrossed with her task of guiding the boat.

Occasionally, with a surreptitious, sidelong glance, Martt regarded her intent little face, earnest and solemn. Long, dark lashes, tendrils of dark hair around the slim white column of her throat; her outstretched limbs revealed by the stirring draperies. . . . A lock of her hair flew across his cheek. He touched it, cast it away.

"Zee?"

"Yes, Martt?"

"I was thinking—you dance very beautifully."

She turned to him, and smiled; a whimsical smile, and her eyes were dark woodland dells of fairyland.

"Father does not think so. A peddler of movement—violent, tempestuous movement! Do you think that, Martt?"

"No," he assured her. "Of course I don't." As she turned back to her steering, his fingers furtively caught a hem of her robe and held it.

There was a long silence. Then he said, as though there had been no silence, "Of course I don't. I think you dance beautifully." And he added, "It made me——" His tongue was about to say, "It made me love you," but his beating heart smothered the words. He amended, "It made me think that your father was very wrong to say that. And about Leela, too."

At the mention of Leela he saw a shadow cross Zee's face. He tensed himself; set his jaw grimly. This was no time for thoughts of love. Leela, and his sister Frannie, were captured by giants. There was work, danger for him and for Zee, up ahead in this starlit night. He would need all his wits, all his resourcefulness. . . .

He remembered the one visit he had formerly made to Reaf; tried to recall how the city lay. Tried to plan what he and Zee would do, now when they got there.

He said, "Zee, the rivers at Reaf that plunge into the mountains—no one has been in them very far?"

"No," she said.

"Can you walk along their banks, inside, under the mountains?"

She nodded. "In some places there are narrow ledges beside the water. But how far—no one knows."

"And in other places—near Reaf, I mean—there are tunnels? Passageways?"

"Yes. Back into the caves and beyond."

"I think," he said, "that back through there is the way to the giants' huge outer world. They've come down, and through the ground behind the mountains. Do you suppose they'll take Leela and Frannie up to their own realm? Or keep them in Reaf?"

"I think—we do not know anything about it," she said.

He smiled grimly. "You're right, we don't. Why the giants should come here at all I don't know. But we're going to know more about it before we get through with them, Zee. What I'm hoping is that we might find one of them alone. We've got to get the drugs away from them somehow. We've got to."

Martt remembered once arguing with Brett about the giants. Brett had thought that they used some drug —two drugs—one to shrink proportionately each of their body cells, and the other similarly to increase the size of the cells. Drugs of the kind had already been sought for on Earth. Nitrogen was the basis for growth. And the new element, Parogen, had been found to cause a shrinkage. In Mars they had developed such drugs further—but they were still impractical for human use.

These giants evidently had something of the kind. And it must be radio-active—it must cause a radiation affecting vegetable or animal matter in near proximity to the changing body. The garments of the giants expanded and contracted with their bodies. But Brett had said that a weapon in your hand—particularly one of mineral—would not change size. . . . The thought was to some slight degree, at least, comforting to Martt; the giants would be unarmed.

Zee's voice broke in on his thoughts. "Look, there are the mountains behind Reaf."

Over the lake, ahead of them the distant horizon was a haze of phosphorescence. But to the left a line of shore had become visible; and now

Martt saw up ahead the vague, dark outlines of the mountains. Sharp, jagged peaks, tinged with a green-white.

Another hour. The shore to the left was nearer. Undulating land along the lake. A ribbon of road along the water . . . Martt thought he could see blobs moving along it. Away from Reaf, moving toward Crescent.

"The refugees from Reaf," said Zee. "The messenger said all the roads were crowded."

Another half-hour. Ahead the mountains frowned, rising sheer from the water. The lake was more shallow here; they began passing flat, muddy islands, with river channels flowing between them as in a delta. A blur there, at the foot of the mountains, was Reaf. The silver phosphorescence of the lake was darkening; the water looked muddy, turgid. In a narrow channel between two islands, Martt noticed a quite visible current flowing toward Reaf. It rippled the water as it passed over a bar which Zee skilfully avoided.

There were other islands, with water bubbling up from them, and clouds of steam rising. Zee trailed her hand overboard.

"We are in the warm water now. Feel it, Martt."

The lake water, fed by boiling springs from all this region, was noticeably warmer. And every moment the current toward Reaf was becoming stronger. Martt knew that all this part of the lake converged to the mouths of the subterranean rivers at Reaf; converged and plunged under the ground.

The city of Reaf was now in sight. It spread sidewise over an area of a mile or two. The houses were perched on stilts, like flat, awkward, long-legged birds squatting in the water.

During all this time Martt and Zee had been watching closely for any sign of giants. There were none in sight—nothing that seemed alive over this turgid water, the disconsolate group of houses, the sheer cliffs with the sullen mountains above them. Two yawning black openings showed where the rivers entered. . . .

A deserted city, its inhabitants fled. Some had been drowned, the messenger said. There would be no floating bodies; the current would have sucked them all into those yawning black mouths. . . . A deserted city. But somewhere in there among the houses, giants might be lurking. . . .

Martt said abruptly, "We'd better get the sail down. They can see it too easily." They were still some two miles from the outskirts of the city. But no more than half a mile from the nearer shore. It swung past them to the left; perpendicular black cliffs rising from the water with a narrow rocky strip along the bottom against which the water sucked.

Zee helped Martt lower the sail. There were poles aboard; the lake here was no more than five feet deep. They could pole the boat ashore. Walk unobserved toward the nearer river-mouth. Into the city, to hide among its buildings.

With a thrill of apprehension Martt realized that they might already have been seen. But he thought it unlikely. From the hot water, vapor was rising in a fog. It hung like a white shroud over Reaf. Once in it, surrounded by the fog, they would be comparatively safe.

"Zee, can you swim?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "But Martt, if you get in the water, be very careful of the rivers."

Silently they poled the boat to shore. Drew it up from the current, left it on a shelving rock ledge. The strip here was some ten feet wide; the hot, black lake in front, sluggish-

ly surging toward Reaf; and above them the smooth cliff-face.

The wind had turned—a swirling current turned by the mountains. The fog from Reaf came rolling down upon them. It grew dark; the stars were obscured. In the humid steam they could see no more than twenty feet.

"Good," said Martt. "This is what we want." He spoke in a half-whisper; stoutly, but his heart was beating fast. He drew his knife and opened its blade. "Come on, Zee. And listen, you keep close to me. Whatever happens, we must keep together. And if you see anything—or hear anything—don't speak. Just touch my arm."

They started, creeping silently along the rocks in the fog. It seemed miles. The water was hot beside them. The fog, like a gray curtain, opened reluctantly before their advance. Presently the ghostly outlines of houses were visible, a group of them clinging forlornly together near the shore. Wooden platforms like balconies connected them. A bridge came over and down to the rocks.

Then other buildings. A large one of two stories, backed against the cliff-face. Martt and Zee went under it, groping in the blackness among its piling. The close, heavy air smelt of fish.

They came out to find that the rocky shore had ended. A narrow incline walk led out and up over the water to another group of ghostly buildings. They were some thirty feet away, standing on stilts some ten feet high. In the gray darkness of the fog their shadowy outlines were barely visible.

Martt stopped. "Zee," he whispered, "how far are we from the nearest river-mouth?"

"Not far," she said. "Listen."

In the silence he heard the rush of water. As he stood there, suddenly this whole adventure seemed impractical. There were no giants here. They had all gone on, up into largeness unfathomable, taking Leela and Frannie with them. How could he follow? Even if he dared plunge under the mountains, he could never reach that outer realm. It was gigantic—compared to his present size it might be a million miles away.

Or, if there were giants still lurking here in Reaf, of what use to seek them out and be killed by them?

For an instant Martt hopelessly considered turning back. But he never reached the decision; Zee's fingers gripped his arm—cold, shuddering fingers. He stared, as he saw her staring, and within him his blood seemed to stop its flow.

Something was coming down the narrow incline bridge at the foot of which Martt and Zee were standing frozen, transfixed with horror. Something . . . in all the dark murk of fog Martt could not make it out. An animal? It seemed oblong, the size of a large dog. He could see its moving legs—eight or ten legs, moving as it walked. He felt Zee stir beside him; he withstood his impulse to run. That would make too much noise; the thing would bound after them—catch them. . . .

There was a rotting post beside Zee. She and Martt crouched there and watched with a horrified fascination the thing as it came padding down the incline. It was vaguely green-white; it seemed luminous. As it approached, Martt saw it was a sleek body, moving lithe like a panther. A green-white thing. And then he saw that it was headless. A blunt end, with a gaping, dripping mouth and a shining green eye on a protruding stalk. It stopped, turned the eye to look upward and back.

Martt's breath was stopped. In the silence he seemed to hear his own tumultuously beating heart, and

Zee's. The thing was coming on again. Now Martt could hear sounds from it. A whining; a babbling. And from the houses, up there at the end of the incline, came another sound. A great, heavy breathing. A giant was up there asleep! This thing—like nothing of Zee's world—belonged to the giants! Martt's heart, for all his horror, leaped with exultation. A giant, asleep! A giant smaller in size now, if he were up in those houses. He would have the drugs; they could steal the drugs from him while he slept.

The thing on the incline was quite close. It glowed with its own light, greenly phosphorescent, like the ghost of something in a dream, leprous with its missing head.

Another moment. It was passing close beside Martt. A luminous liquid dripping from the gaping slit of its mouth. Its eye on the stalk peered ahead. Its voice was clearly audible. A whine; and babbling sounds like words.

Revulsion, even more than fear, swept Martt. This thing was muttering words! Animal, or human—it was talking, babbling to itself. Strange words of an unknown tongue—but human words. Babbling them as though with reason unhinged. Gruesome! This leprous thing—leprous of body; and leprous of mind!

It passed within an arm's length of Martt as he crouched. And suddenly, without conscious thought, he struck at it with his naked knife. Horrible! The knife sank, but the thing was scarce ponderable! Martt's hand with the knife went down and through the luminous green body, with a feeling of warmth and a wet stickiness, but no more.

The force of the blow, unresisted, threw Martt off his balance. He fell forward, but still clutched the knife. The thing, with a sharp, horrible cry of pain, lurched backward. Then stood with its eye quivering, poised for its attack.

The pursuit of the giants up into their own world, up into largeness unfathomable, will be described in the stirring chapters of this story in next month's WEIRD TALES.

IN AMUNDSEN'S TENT

BY JOHN MARTIN LEAHY

"Sutherland flung himself at me with such violence that I was sent over into the snow."

"Inside the tent, in a little bag, I left a letter, addressed to H. M. the King, giving information of what he [*sic*] had accomplished. . . . Besides this letter, I wrote a short epistle to Captain Scott, who, I assumed, would be the first to find the tent."

Captain Amundsen: *The South Pole.*

"We have just arrived at this tent, 2 miles from our camp, therefore about 1½ miles from the pole. In the tent we find a record of five Norwegians having been here, as follows:

Roald Amundsen
Olav Olavson Bjaaland
Hilmer Hanssen
Sverre H. Hassel
Oscar Wisting

16 Dec. 1911.

* * * * *

"Left a note to say I had visited the tent with companions."

Captain Scott: His Last Journal.

"TRAVELERS," says Richard A. Proctor, "are sometimes said to tell marvelous stories; but it is a noteworthy fact that, in nine cases out of ten, the marvelous stories of travelers have been confirmed."

Certainly no traveler ever set down a more marvelous story than that of Robert Drumgold. This record I am at last giving to the world, with my humble apologies to the spirit of the hapless explorer for withholding it so long. But the truth is that Eastman, Dahlstrom and I thought it the work of a mind deranged; little wonder, forsooth, if his mind had given way, what with the fearful sufferings which he had gone through and the horror of that fate which was closing in upon him.

What was it, that *thing* (if thing it was) which came to him, the sole survivor of the party which had reached the Southern Pole, thrust itself into the tent and, issuing, left but the severed head of Drumgold there?

Our explanation at the time, and until recently, was that Drumgold had been set upon by his dogs and devoured. Why, though, the flesh had not been stripped from the head was to us an utter mystery. But that was only one of many things that were utter mysteries.

But now we know—or feel certain—that this explanation was as far from the truth as that desolate, ice-mantled spot where he met his end is from the smiling, flower-spangled regions of the tropics.

Yes, we thought that the mind of poor Robert Drumgold had given way, that the horror in Amundsen's tent and that thing which came to Drumgold there in his own—we thought all was madness only. Hence our suppression of this part of the Drumgold manuscript. We feared that the publication of so extraordinary a record might cast a cloud of doubt upon the real achievements of the Sutherland expedition.

But of late our ideas and beliefs have undergone a change that is nothing less than a metamorphosis. This metamorphosis, it is scarcely necessary to say, was due to the startling discoveries made in the region of the Southern Pole by the late Captain Stanley Livingstone, as confirmed and extended by the expedition conducted by Darwin Frontenac. Captain Livingstone, we now learn, kept his real discovery, what with the doubts and derision which met him on his return to the world, a secret from every living soul but two—Darwin Frontenac and Bond McQuestion. It is but now, on the return of Frontenac, that we learn how truly wonderful and amazing were those discoveries made by the ill-starred captain. And yet, despite the success of the Frontenac expedition, it must be admitted that the mystery down there in the Antarctic is enhanced rather than dissipated. Darwin Frontenac and his companions saw much; but we know that there are things and beings down there that they did not see. The Antarctic—or, rather, part of it—has thus suddenly become the most interesting and certainly the most fearful place upon this interesting and fearful globe of ours.

So another marvelous story told—or, rather, only partly told—by a traveler has been confirmed. And here are Eastman and I preparing to go once more to the Antarctic to confirm, as we hope, another story—one eery and fearful as any ever conceived by any romanticist.

And to think that it was ourselves, Eastman, Dahlstrom and I, who made the discovery! Yes, it was we who entered the tent, found there the head of Robert Drumgold and the pages whereon he had scrawled his story of mystery and horror. To think that we stood there, in the very spot where *it* had been, and thought the story but as the baseless fabric of some madman's vision!

How vividly it all rises before me again—the white expanse, glaring, blinding in the untempered light of the Antarctic sun; the dogs straining in the harness, the cases on the sleds long and black like coffins; our sudden halt as Eastman fetched up in his tracks, pointed and said, "Hello! What's that?"

A half-mile or so off to the left, some object broke the blinding white of the plain.

"*Nunatak,* I suppose," was my answer.

"Looks to me like a cairn or a tent," Dahlstrom said.

"How on earth," I queried, "could a tent have got down here in 87° 30′ south? We are far from the route of either Amundsen or Scott."

"H'm," said Eastman, shoving his amber-colored glasses up onto his forehead that he might get a better look, "I wonder. Jupiter Ammon, Nels," he added, glancing at Dahlstrom, "I believe that you are right."

"It certainly," Dahlstrom nodded, "looks like a cairn or a tent to me. I don't think it's a *nunatak.*"

"Well," said I, "it would not be difficult to put it to the proof."

"And that, my hearties," exclaimed Eastman, "is just what we'll do! We'll soon see what it is —whether it is a cairn, a tent, or only a *nunatak.*"

The next moment we were in motion, heading straight for that mysterious object there in the midst of the eternal desolation of snow and ice.

"Look there!" Eastman, who was leading the way, suddenly shouted. "See that? It *is* a tent!"

A few moments, and I saw that it was indeed so. But who had pitched it there? What were we to find within it?

I could never describe those thoughts and feelings which were ours as we approached that spot. The snow lay piled about the tent to a depth of four feet or more. Near by a splintered ski protruded from the surface—and that was all.

And the stillness! The air, at the moment, was without the slightest movement. No sound but those made by our movements, and those of the dogs, and our own breathing, broke that awful silence of death.

"Poor devils!" said Eastman at last. "One thing, they certainly pitched their tent well."

The tent was supported by a single pole, set in the middle. To this pole three guy-lines were fastened, one of them as taut as the day its stake had been driven into the surface. But this was not all, a half-dozen lines, or more, were attached to the sides of the tent. There it stood, and had stood for we knew not how long, bidding defiance to the fierce winds of that terrible region.

Dahlstrom and I got each a spade and began to remove the snow. The entrance we found unfastened but completely blocked by a couple of provision-cases (empty) and a piece of canvas.

"How on earth," I exclaimed, "did those things get into that position?"

"The wind," said Dahlstrom. "And, if the entrance had not been blocked, there wouldn't have been any tent here now; the wind would have split and destroyed it long ago."

"H'm," mused Eastman. "The wind did it, Nels—blocked the place like that? I wonder."

The next moment we had cleared the entrance. I thrust my head through the opening. Strangely enough, very little snow had drifted in. The tent was of a dark green color, a circumstance which rendered the light within somewhat weird and ghastly—or perhaps my imagination contributed not a little to that effect.

"What do you see, Bill?" asked Eastman. "What's inside?"

My answer was a cry, and the next instant I had sprung back from the entrance.

"What is it, Bill?" Eastman exclaimed. "Great heaven, what is it, man?"

"A head!" I told him.

"A head?"

"A human head!"

He and Dahlstrom stooped and peered in.

"What is the meaning of this?" Eastman cried. "A severed human head!"

Dahlstrom dashed a mittened hand across his eyes.

"Are we dreaming?" he exclaimed.

" 'Tis no dream, Nels," returned our leader. "I wish to heaven it was. A head! A human head!"

"Is there nothing more?" I asked.

"Nothing. No body, not even a stripped bone—only that severed head. Could the dogs——?"

"Yes?" queried Dahlstrom.

"Could the dogs have done this?"

"Dogs!" Dahlstrom said. "This is not the work of dogs."

We entered and stood looking down upon that grisly remnant of mortality.

"It wasn't dogs," said Dahlstrom.

"Not dogs?" Eastman queried. "What other explanation is there? Except this—cannibalism."

Cannibalism! A shudder went through my heart. I may as well say at once, however, that our discovery of a good supply of pemmican and biscuit on the sled, at that moment completely hidden by the snow, was to show us that that fearful explanation was not the true one. The dogs! That was it, that was the explanation—even though what the victim himself had set down told us a very different story. Yes, the explorer had been set upon by his dogs and devoured. But there were things that militated against that theory. Why had the animals left that head—in the frozen eyes (they were blue eyes) and upon the frozen features of which was a look of horror that sends a shudder through my very soul even now? Why, the head did not have even the mark of a single fang, though it appeared to have been *chewed* from the trunk. Dahlstrom, however, was of the opinion that it had been *hacked* off.

And there, in the man's story, in the story of Robert Drumgold, we found another mystery—a mystery as insoluble (if it was true) as the presence here of his severed head. There the story was, scrawled in lead-pencil across the pages of his journal. But what were we to make of a record—the concluding pages of it, that is—so strange and so dreadful?

But enough of this, of what we thought and of what we wondered. The journal itself lies before me, and I now proceed to set down the story of Robert Drumgold in his own words. Not a word, not a comma shall be deleted, inserted or changed.

Let it begin with his entry for January the 3rd, at the end of which day the little party was only fifteen miles (geographical) from the Pole.

Here it is:

JAN. 3.—Lat. of our camp 89° 45′ 10″. Only fifteen miles more, and the Pole is ours—unless Amundsen or Scott has beaten us to it, or both. But it will be ours just the same, even though the glory of discovery is found to be another's. What shall we find there?

All are in fine spirits. Even the dogs seem to know that this is the consummation of some great achievement. And a thing that is a mystery to us is the interest they have shown this day in the region before us. Did we halt, there they were gazing and gazing straight south and sometimes sniffing and sniffing. What does it mean?

Yes, in fine spirits all—dogs as well as we three men. Everything is auspicious. The weather for the last three days has been simply glorious. Not once, in this time, has the temperature been below minus 5. As I write this, the thermometer shows one degree above. The blue of the sky is like that of which painters dream, and, in that blue, tower cloud-formations, violet-tinged in the shadows, that are beautiful beyond all description. If it were possible to forget the fact that nothing stands between ourselves and a horrible death save the meager supply of food on the sleds, one could think he was in some fairyland—a glorious fairyland of white and blue and violet.

A fairyland? Why has that thought so often occurred to me? Why have I so often likened this desolate, terrible region to fairyland? Terrible? Yes, to human beings it is terrible—frightful beyond all words. But, though so unutterably terrible to men, it may not be so in reality. After all, are all things,

even of this earth of ours, to say nothing of the universe, made for man—this being (a godlike spirit in the body of a quasi-ape) who, set in the midst of wonders, leers and slavers in madness and hate and wallows in the muck of a thousand lusts? May there not be other beings—yes, even on this very earth of ours—more wonderful—yes, and more terrible too—than he?

Heaven knows, more than once, in this desolation of snow and ice, have I seemed to feel their presence in the air about us—nameless entities, disembodied, *watching* things.

Little wonder, forsooth, that I have again and again thought of these strange words of one of America's greatest scientists, Alexander Winchell:

"Nor is incorporated rational existence conditioned on warm blood, nor on any temperature which does not change the forms of matter of which the organism may be composed. There may be intelligences corporealized after some concept not involving the processes of ingestion, assimilation and reproduction. Such bodies would not require daily food and warmth. They might be lost in the abysses of the ocean, or laid up on a stormy cliff through the tempests of an arctic winter, or plunged in a volcano for a hundred years, and yet retain consciousness and thought."

All this Winchell tells us is conceivable, and he adds:

"*Bodies are merely the local fitting of intelligence to particular modifications of universal matter and force.*"

And these entities, nameless things whose presence I seem to feel at times—are they benignant beings or things more fearful than even the madness of the human brain ever has fashioned?

But, then, I must stop this. If Sutherland or Travers were to read what I have set down here, he, *they* would think that I was losing my senses or would declare me already insane. And yet, as there is a heaven above us, it seems that I do actually believe that this frightful place knows the presence of beings other than ourselves and our dogs—things which we can not see but which are watching us.

Enough of this.

Only fifteen miles from the Pole. Now for a sleep and on to our goal in the morning. Morning! There is no morning here, but day unending. The sun now rides as high at midnight as he does at midday. Of course, there is a change in his altitude, but it is so slight as to be imperceptible without an instrument.

But the Pole! Tomorrow the Pole! What will we find there? Only an unbroken expanse of white, or——?

JAN. 4.—The mystery and horror of this day—oh, how could I ever set that down? Sometimes, so fearful were those hours through which we have just passed, I even find myself wondering if it wasn't all only a dream. A dream! I would to heaven that it had been but a dream! As for the end—there, there, I must keep such thoughts out of my head.

Got under way at an early hour. Weather more wondrous than ever. Sky an azure that would have sent a painter into ecstasies. Cloud-formations indescribably beautiful and grand. The going, however, was pretty difficult. The place a great plain stretching away with a monotonous uniformity of surface as far as the eye could reach. A plain never trod by human foot before? At length, when our dead reckoning showed that we were drawing near to the Pole, we had the answer to that. Then it was that the keen eyes of Travers detected some object rising above the blinding white of the snow.

On the instant Sutherland had thrust his amber glasses up onto his forehead and had his binoculars to his eyes.

"Cairn!" he exclaimed, and his voice sounded hollow and very strange. "A cairn or a—*tent*. Boys, they have beaten us to the Pole!"

He handed the glasses to Travers and leaned, as though a sudden weariness had settled upon him, against the provision-cases on his sled.

"Forestalled!" said he. "Forestalled!"

I felt very sorry for our brave leader in those, his moments of terrible disappointment, but for the life of me I did not know what to say. And so I said nothing.

At that moment a cloud concealed the sun, and the place where we stood was suddenly involved in a gloom that was deep and awful. So sudden and pronounced, indeed, was the change that we gazed about us with curious and wondering looks. Far off to the right and to the left, the plain blazed white and blinding. Soon, however, the last gleam of sunshine had vanished from off it. I raised my look up to the heavens. Here and there edges of cloud were touched as though with the light of wrathful golden fire. Even then, however, that light was fading. A few minutes, and the last angry gleam of the sun had vanished. The gloom seemed to deepen about us every moment. A curious haze was concealing the blue expanse of the sky overhead. There was not the slightest movement in the gloomy and weird atmosphere. The silence was heavy, awful, the silence of the abode of utter desolation and of death.

"What on earth are we in for now?" said Travers.

Sutherland moved from his sled and stood gazing about into the eery gloom.

"Queer change, this!" said he. "It would have delighted the heart of Doré."

"It means a blizzard, most likely," I observed. "Hadn't we better make camp before it strikes us? No telling what a blizzard may be like in this awful spot."

"Blizzard?" said Sutherland. "I don't think it means a blizzard, Bob. No telling, though. Mighty queer change, certainly. And how different the place looks now, in this strange gloom! It is surely weird and terrible—that is, it certainly *looks* weird and terrible."

He turned his look to Travers.

"Well, Bill," he asked, "what did you make of it?"

He waved a hand in the direction of that mysterious object the sight of which had so suddenly brought us to a halt. I say in the direction of the object, for the thing itself was no longer to be seen.

"I believe it is a tent," Travers told him.

"Well," said our leader, "we can soon find out what it is—cairn or tent, for one or the other it must certainly be."

The next instant the heavy, awful silence was broken by the sharp crack of his whip.

"Mush on, you poor brutes!" he cried. "On we go to see what is over there. Here we are at the South Pole. Let us see who has beaten us to it."

But the dogs didn't want to go on, which did not surprize me at all, because, for some time now, they had been showing signs of some strange, inexplicable uneasiness. What had got into the creatures, anyway? For a time we puzzled over it; then we *knew*, though the explanation was still an utter mystery to us. They were *afraid*. Afraid? An inadequate word, indeed. It was fear, stark, terrible, that had entered the poor brutes. But whence had come this inexplicable fear? That also we soon knew. The thing they feared, whatever it was, was in that very direction in which we were headed!

A cairn, a tent? What did this thing mean?

"What on earth is the matter with the critters?" exclaimed Travers. "Can it be that——?"

"It's for us to find out what it means," said Sutherland.

Again we got in motion. The place was still involved in that strange, weird gloom. The silence was still that awful silence of desolation and of death.

Slowly but steadily we moved forward, urging on the reluctant, fearful animals with our whips.

At last Sutherland, who was leading, cried out that he saw it. He halted, peering forward into the gloom, and we urged our teams up alongside his.

"It must be a tent," he said.

And a tent we found it to be—a small one supported by a single bamboo and well guyed in all directions. Made of drab-colored gabardine. To the top of the tent-pole another had been lashed. From this, motionless in the still air, hung the remains of a small Norwegian flag and, underneath it, a pennant with the word "Fram" upon it. Amundsen's tent!

What should we find inside it? And what was the meaning of that—*the strange way it bulged out on one side?*

The entrance was securely laced. The tent, it was certain, had been here for a year, all through the long Antarctic night; and yet, to our astonishment, but little snow was piled up about it, and most of this was drift. The explanation of this must, I suppose, be that, before the air currents have reached the Pole, almost all the snow has been deposited from them.

For some minutes we just stood there, and many, and some of them dreadful enough, were the thoughts that came and went. Through the long Antarctic night! What strange things this tent could tell us had it been vouchsafed the power of words! But strange things it might tell us, nevertheless. For what was that inside, making the tent bulge out in so unaccountable a manner? I moved forward to feel of it there with my mittened hand, but, for some reason that I can not explain, I of a sudden drew back. At that instant one of the dogs whined—the sound so strange and the terror of the animal so unmistakable that I shuddered and felt a chill pass through my heart. Others of the dogs began to whine in that mysterious manner, and all shrank back cowering from the tent.

"What does it mean?" said Travers, his voice sunk almost to a whisper. "Look at them. It is as though they are imploring us to—*keep away.*"

"To keep away," echoed Sutherland, his look leaving the dogs and fixing itself once more on the tent.

"Their senses," said Travers, "are keener than ours. They already know what we can't know until we see it."

"See it!" Sutherland exclaimed. "I wonder. Boys, what are we going to see when we look into that tent? Poor fellows! They reached the Pole. But did they ever leave it? Are we going to find them in there dead?"

"Dead?" said Travers with a sudden start. "The dogs would never act that way if 'twas only a corpse inside. And, besides, if that theory was true, wouldn't the sleds be here to tell the story? Yet look around. The level uniformity of the place shows that no sled lies buried here."

"That is true," said our leader. "What *can* it mean? What *could* make the tent bulge out like that? Well, here is the mystery before us, and all we have to do is unlace the entrance and look inside to solve it."

He stepped to the entrance, followed by Travers and me, and began to unlace it. At that instant an icy current of air struck the place and the pennant above our heads flapped with a dull and ominous sound. One of the dogs, too, thrust his muzzle skyward, and a deep and long-drawn howl, sad, terrible as that of a

lost soul, arose. And whilst the mournful, savage sound yet filled the air, a strange thing happened:

Through a sudden rent in that gloomy curtain of cloud, the sun sent a golden, awful light down upon the spot where we stood. It was but a shaft of light, only three or four hundred feet wide, though miles in length, and there we stood in the very middle of it, the plain on each side involved in that weird gloom, now denser and more eery than ever in contrast to that sword of golden fire which thus so suddenly had been flung down across the snow.

"Queer place this!" said Travers. "Just like a beam lying across a stage in a theater."

Travers' simile was a most apposite one, more so than he perhaps ever dreamed himself. That place *was* a stage, our light the wrathful fire of the Antarctic sun, ourselves the actors in a scene stranger than any ever beheld in the mimic world.

For some moments, so strange was it all, we stood there looking about us in wonder and perhaps each one of us in not a little secret awe.

"Queer place, all right!" said Sutherland. "But——"

He laughed a hollow, sardonic laugh. Up above, the pennant flapped and flapped again, the sound of it hollow and ghostly. Again rose the long-drawn, mournful, fiercely sad howl of the wolf-dog.

"But," added our leader, "we don't want to be imagining things, you know."

"Of course not," said Travers.

"Of course not," I echoed.

A little space, and the entrance was open and Sutherland had thrust head and shoulders through it.

I don't know how long it was that he stood there like that. Perhaps it was only a few seconds, but to Travers and me it seemed rather long.

"What is it?" Travers exclaimed at last. "What do you see?"

The answer was a scream—oh, the horror of that sound I can never forget!—and Sutherland came staggering back and, I believe, would have fallen had we not sprung and caught him.

"What is it?" cried Travers. "In God's name, Sutherland, what did you see?"

Sutherland beat the side of his head with his hand, and his look was wild and horrible.

"What is it?" I exclaimed. "*What* did you see in there?"

"I can't tell you—I can't! Oh, oh, I wish that I had never seen it! Don't look! Boys, don't look into that tent—unless you are prepared to welcome madness, or worse."

"What gibberish is this?" Travers demanded, gazing at our leader in utter astonishment. "Come, come, man! Buck up. Get a grip on yourself. Let's have an end to this nonsense. Why should the sight of a dead man, or dead men, affect you in this mad fashion?"

"*Dead* men?"

Sutherland laughed, the sound wild, maniacal.

"Dead men? If 'twas only that! Is this the South Pole? Is this the earth, or are we in a nightmare on some other planet?"

"For heaven's sake," cried Travers, "come out of it! What's got into you? Don't let your nerves go like this."

"A dead man?" queried our leader, peering into the face of Travers. "You think I saw a dead man? I wish it was only a dead man. Thank God, you two didn't look!"

On the instant Travers had turned.

"Well," said he, "I *am going* to look!"

But Sutherland cried out, screamed, sprang after him and tried to drag him back.

"It would mean horror and perhaps madness!" cried Sutherland. "Look at me. Do you want to be like me?"

"No!" Travers returned. "But I am going to see what is in that tent."

He struggled to break free, but Sutherland clung to him in a frenzy of madness.

"Help me, Bob!" Sutherland cried. "Hold him back, or we'll all go insane."

But I did not help him to hold Travers back, for, of course, 'twas my belief that Sutherland himself was insane. Nor did Sutherland hold Travers. With a sudden wrench, Travers was free. The next instant he had thrust head and shoulders through the entrance of the tent.

Sutherland groaned and watched him with eyes full of unutterable horror.

I moved toward the entrance, but Sutherland flung himself at me with such violence that I was sent over into the snow. I sprang to my feet full of anger and amazement.

"What the hell," I cried, "is the matter with you, anyway? Have you gone crazy?"

The answer was a groan, horrible beyond all words of man, but that sound did not come from Sutherland. I turned. Travers was staggering away from the entrance, a hand pressed over his face, sounds that I could never describe breaking from deep in his throat. Sutherland, as the man came staggering up to him, thrust forth an arm and touched Travers lightly on the shoulder. The effect was instantaneous and frightful. Travers sprang aside as though a serpent had struck at him, screamed and screamed yet again.

"There, there!" said Sutherland gently. "I told you not to do it. I tried to make you understand, but—but you thought that I was mad."

"It can't belong to this earth!" moaned Travers.

"No," said Sutherland. "That horror was never born on this planet of ours. And the inhabitants of earth, though they do not know it, can thank God Almighty for that."

"But it is *here!*" Travers exclaimed. "How did it come to this awful place? And where did it come from?"

"Well," consoled Sutherland, "it is dead—it must be dead."

"Dead? How do we know that it is dead? And don't forget this: it didn't come here alone!"

Sutherland started. At that moment the sunlight vanished, and everything was once more involved in gloom.

"What do you mean?" Sutherland asked. "Not alone? How do you know that it did not come alone?"

"Why, it is there *inside* the tent; but the entrance was laced—from the *outside!*"

"Fool, fool that I am!" cried Sutherland a little fiercely. "Why didn't I think of that? Not alone! Of course it was not alone!"

He gazed about into the gloom, and I knew the nameless fear and horror that chilled him to the very heart, for they chilled me to my own.

Of a sudden arose again that mournful, savage howl of the wolf-dog. We three men started as though 'twas the voice of some ghoul from hell's most dreadful corner.

"Shut up, you brute!" gritted Travers. "Shut up, or I'll brain you!"

Whether it was Travers' threat or not, I do not know; but that howl sank, ceased almost on the instant. Again the silence of desolation and of death lay upon the spot. But above the tent the pennant stirred and rustled, the sound of it, I thought, like the slithering of some repulsive serpent.

"What did you see in there?" I asked them.

"Bob—Bob," said Sutherland, "don't ask us that."

"The thing itself," said I, turning, "can't be any worse than this mystery and nightmare of imagination."

But the two of them threw themselves before me and barred my way. "No!" said Sutherland firmly. "You must not look into that tent, Bob. You must not see that—that—I don't know what to call it. Trust us; believe us, Bob! 'Tis for your sake that we say that you must not do it. We, Travers and I, can never be the same men again—the brains, the *souls* of us can never be what they were before we saw *that!*"

"Very well," I acquiesced. "I can't help saying, though, that the whole thing seems to me like the dream of a madman."

"That," said Sutherland, "is a small matter indeed. Insane? Believe that it is the dream of a madman. Believe that we are insane. Believe that you are insane yourself. Believe anything that you like. Only *don't look!*"

"Very well," I told them. "I won't look. I give in. You two have made a coward of me."

"A coward?" said Sutherland. "Don't talk nonsense, Bob. There are some things that a man should never know; there are some things that a man should never see; that horror there in Amundsen's tent is —*both!*"

"But you said that it is dead."

Travers groaned. Sutherland laughed a little wildly.

"Trust us," said the latter; "believe us, Bob. 'Tis for your sake, not for our own. For that is too late now. We have seen it, and you have not."

For some minutes we stood there by that tent, in that weird gloom, then turned to leave the cursed spot. I said that undoubtedly Amundsen had left some records inside, that possibly Scott too had reached the Pole, and visited the tent, and that we ought to secure any such mementos. Sutherland and Travers nodded, but each declared that he would not put his head through that entrance again for all the wealth of Ormus and of Ind—or words to that effect. We must, they said, get away from the awful place—get back to the world of men with our fearful message.

"You won't tell me what you saw," I said, "and yet you want to get back so that you can tell it to the world."

"We aren't going to tell the world what we *saw*," answered Sutherland. "In the first place, we couldn't, and, in the second place, if we could, not a living soul would believe us. But we can *warn* people, for that thing in there did not come alone. Where is the other one—or the others?"

"Dead, too, let us hope!" I exclaimed.

"Amen!" said Sutherland. "But maybe, as Bill says, it isn't dead. Probably——"

Sutherland paused, and a wild, indescribable look came into his eyes.

"Maybe it—*can't die!*"

"Probably," said I nonchalantly, yet with secret disgust and with poignant sorrow.

What was the use? What good would it do to try to reason with a couple of madmen? Yes, we must get away from this spot, or they would have me insane, too. And the long road back? Could we ever make it now? And what *had* they seen? What unimaginable horror was there behind that thin wall of gabardine? Well, whatever it was, it was real. Of that I could not entertain the slightest doubt. Real? Real enough to wreck, virtually instantaneously, the strong brains of two strong men. But —but were my poor companions really mad, after all?

"Or maybe," Sutherland was saying, "the other one, or the others, went back to Venus or Mars or Sirius or Algol, or hell itself, or wherever they came from, to get more of their kind. If that is so, heaven have pity on poor humanity! And, if it or they are still here on this earth, then

sooner or later—it may be a dozen years, it may be a century—but sooner or later the world will know it, know it to its wo and to its horror. For they, if living, or if gone for others, will come again."

"I was thinking——" began Travers, his eyes fixed on the tent.

"Yes?" Sutherland queried.

"That," Travers told him, "it might be a good plan to empty the rifle into that thing. Maybe it isn't dead; maybe it can't die—maybe it only *changes*. Probably it is just hibernating, so to speak."

"If so," I laughed, "it will probably hibernate till doomsday."

But neither one of my companions laughed.

"Or," said Travers, "it may be a demon, a ghost *materialized*. I can't say incarnated."

"A ghost materialized!" I exclaimed. "Well, may not every man or woman be just that? Heaven knows, many a one acts like a demon or a fiend incarnate."

"They may be," nodded Sutherland. "But that hypothesis doesn't help us any here."

"I may help things some," said Travers, starting toward his sled.

A moment or two, and he had got out the rifle.

"I thought," said he, "that nothing could ever take me back to that entrance. But the hope that I may——"

Sutherland groaned.

"It isn't earthly, Bill," he said hoarsely. "It's a nightmare. I think we had better go now."

Travers was going—straight toward the tent.

"Come back, Bill!" groaned Sutherland. "Come back! Let us go while we can."

But Travers did not come back. Slowly he moved forward, rifle thrust out before him, finger on the trigger. He reached the tent, hesitated a moment, then thrust the rifle-barrel through. As fast as he could work trigger and lever, he emptied the weapon into the tent—into that horror inside it.

He whirled and came back as though in fear the tent was about to spew forth behind him all the legions of foulest hell.

What was that? The blood seemed to freeze in my veins and heart as there arose from out the tent a sound—a sound low and throbbing—a sound that no man ever had heard on this earth—one that I hope no man will ever hear again.

A panic, a madness seized upon us, upon men and dogs alike, and away we fled from that cursed place.

The sound ceased. But again we heard it. It was more fearful, more unearthly, soul-maddening, hellish than before.

"Look!" cried Sutherland. "Oh, my God, *look at that!*"

The tent was barely visible now. A moment or two, and the curtain of gloom would conceal it. At first I could not imagine what had made Southerland cry out like that. Then I saw it, in that very moment before the gloom hid it from view. The tent was *moving!* It swayed, jerked like some shapeless monster in the throes of death, like some nameless thing seen in the horror of nightmare or limned on the brain of utter madness itself.

And that is what happened there; that is what we saw. I have set it down at some length and to the best of my ability under the truly awful circumstances in which I am placed. In these hastily scrawled pages is recorded an experience that, I believe, is not surpassed by the wildest to be found in the pages of the most imaginative romanticist. Whether the record is destined ever to reach the world, ever to be scanned by the eye of another—only the future can answer that.

I will try to hope for the best. I can not blink the fact, however, that things are pretty bad for us. It is not only this sinister, nameless mystery from which we are fleeing—though heaven knows that is horrible enough—but it is the *minds* of my companions. And, added to that, is the fear for my own. But there, I must get myself in hand. After all, as Sutherland said, I didn't see it. I must not give way. We must somehow get our story to the world, though we may have for our reward only the mockery of the world's unbelief, its scoffing—the world, against which is now moving, gathering, a menace more dreadful than any that ever moved in the fevered brain of any prophet of wo and blood and disaster.

We are a dozen miles or so from the Pole now. In that mad dash away from that tent of horror, lost our bearings and for a time, I fear, went panicky. The strange, eery gloom denser than ever. Then came a fall of fine snow-crystals, which rendered things worse than ever. Just when about to give up in despair, chanced upon one of our beacons. This gave us our bearings, and we pressed on to this spot.

Travers has just thrust his head into the tent to tell us that he is sure he saw something moving off in the gloom. Something moving! This must be looked into.

[If Robert Drumgold could only have left as full a record of those days which followed as he had of that fearful 4th of January! No man can ever know what the three explorers went through in their struggle to escape that doom from which there was no escape—a doom the mystery and horror of which perhaps surpass in gruesomeness what the most dreadful Gothic imagination ever conceived in its utterest abandonment to delirium and madness.]

JAN. 5.—Travers *had* seen something, for we, the three of us, saw it again today. Was it that horror, that thing not of this earth, which they saw in Amundsen's tent? We don't know what it is. All we know is that it is something that *moves.* God have pity on us all—and on every man and woman and child on this earth of ours if this thing is what we fear!

6th.—Made 25 mi. today—20 yesterday. Did not see it today. *But heard it!* Seemed near—once, in fact, as though right over our heads. But that must have been imagination. Effect on dogs most terrible. Poor brutes! It is as horrible to them as it is to us. Sometimes I think even more. Why is it following us?

7th.—Two of dogs gone this morning. One or another of us on guard all "night." Nothing seen, not a sound heard, yet the animals have vanished. Did they desert us? We say that is what happened, but each man of us knows that none of us believes it. Made 18 mi. Fear that Travers *is* going mad.

8th.—Travers gone! He took the watch last night at 12, relieving Sutherland. That was the last seen of Travers—the last that we shall ever see. No tracks—not a sign in the snow. Travers, poor Travers, gone! Who will be the next?

Jan. 9.—Saw it again! Why does it let us see it like this—sometimes? Is it that horror in Amundsen's tent? Sutherland declares that it is not—that it is something even more hellish. But then S. is mad now—mad—mad—mad. If I wasn't sane, I could think that it all was only imagination. *But I saw it!*

Jan. 11.—Think it is the 11th but not sure. I can no longer be sure of anything—save that I am alone and that it is watching me. Don't know how I know, for I can not see it. But I do know—it is watching me. It is always watching. And sometime it will come and get me—as it got

Travers and Sutherland and half of the dogs.

Yes, today must be the 11th. For it was yesterday—surely it was only yesterday—that it took Sutherland. I didn't see it take him, for a fog had come up, and Sutherland—he would go on in the fog—was so slow in following that the vapor hid him from view. At last when he didn't come, I went back. But S. was gone—man, dogs, sled, everything was gone. Poor Sutherland! But then he was mad. Probably that was why it took him. Has it spared me because I am yet sane? S. had the rifle. Always he clung to that rifle—as though a bullet could save him from what we saw! My only weapon is an ax. But what good is an ax?

Jan. 13.—Maybe it is the 14th. I don't know. What does it matter? Saw it *three* times today. Each time it was closer. Dogs still whining about tent. There—that horrible, hellish sound again. Dogs still now. That sound again. But I dare not look out. The ax.

Hours later. Can't write any more.

Silence. Voices—I seem to hear voices. But that sound again.

Coming nearer. At entrance now —now——

The Riders of Babylon

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

The riders of Babylon clatter forth
Like the hawk-winged scourgers of Azrael
To the meadow-lands of the South and North
And the strong-walled cities of Israel.
They harry the men of the caravans,
They bring rare plunder across the sands
To deck the throne of the great god Baal.
But Babylon's king is a broken shell
And Babylon's queen is a sprite from hell;
And men shall say, "Here Babylon fell,"
Ere Time has forgot the tale.

The riders of Babylon come and go
From Gaza's halls to the shores of Tyre;
They shake the world from the lands of snow
To the deserts, red in the sunset's fire;
Their horses swim in a sea of gore
And the tribes of the earth bow down before;
They have chained the seas where the Cretans sail.
But Babylon's sun shall set in blood;
Her towers shall sink in a crimson flood;
And men shall say, "Here Babylon stood,"
Ere Time has forgot the tale.

"His rage-convulsed face hung gargoyle-like in the air."

THE picture on the wall? Yes, gentlemen—that is Suelivor. And the strange ornament hanging above it? Ah—that ornament has a strange history! I first saw Suelivor in Japan, a number of years ago. It was evening, and I stood idly absorbing the beauty of a full-blooming cherry tree. The tong-tong of a temple gong was in my ears, the blaze of the sunset sky was in my eyes. Aimless philosophic hypotheses were entertaining my thoughts. My heart was hushed by the atmosphere surrounding me, in tune with the fantastic and weirdly romantic. It was a fitting moment in which to come into contact with Suelivor.

I heard footsteps behind me, but I did not turn. I was uninterested in human personalities just then, and I continued gazing dreamily at the cherry tree. I say I *heard* footsteps. Rather should I say I was conscious of them. They were so queerly light, so unlike a normal footfall that I felt an inner start when, in the next instant, their odd character communicated itself to my absorbed consciousness. Still, I did not turn. But I went unaccountably tense, listening, sensing that queer footfall. The steps paused behind

me, and I was conscious of someone's curious gaze boring into my back.

I knew from the weight of those strange footsteps that the intruder into my solitude was a man, but I ignored his pause and stare as I had ignored his approach. And though he received from me no invitation either of word or look, he abruptly advanced a pace or two until he stood beside me. Sharply conscious that I was in the presence of something alien, something as fantastic as my surroundings, I held myself tensed, waiting. Presently he spoke. I answered vaguely, in kind. His remark to me had been vague.

There ensued a persistent silence between us. Seeing that he was as stubbornly noncommittal as I, after a long moment I turned my head and scrutinized him deliberately. I was glad he was an Occidental. I was tired to death of the sight of slant-eyed miniature males. But there my pleasure in his presence ended. I did not like him. There was something sinister in him which repelled and chilled; something more sensed than caught by the eye.

He was broad and high, set up like a well-balanced ship. His soft hat raked the evening sky like a full-bellied sail. His eyes were as clear, deep and green-brown as the water of the open sea at early twilight. His mouth was firm and straight, without a curve. A queer mouth it was; sensuous, cruel, at once hard and tender, above a squared, determined jaw. I knew then that I should place him instantly if I ever saw him again, though it be ten thousand miles away in the crush of a moving restless crowd. And I did.

I first saw *her* in the State of Georgia. She was walking slowly along a flat country road on the outskirts of a town. A light rain had fallen but a few hours before, and as the dusk deepened, a cool damp veil spread over the bayous and fields of young cotton. The fireflies had begun their nocturnal peregrinations, sailing over china trees and water oaks like vagrant sparks emitted from some unseen chimney. I had paused by a wide, fertile field, impressed by the weird beauty of the evening.

She approached along the way I had come, and having reached a position in the road directly opposite me, she paused also and stood looking into the cotton field where the fireflies were circling thickly. I glanced at her appraisingly from the corner of my eye. She blended so concordantly with the scene before her. She was a weirdly beautiful woman.

Her uncovered hair was black. Her face was without a vestige of color save for the heavily reddened lips. Her posture, the unconscious regal poise of her head, the grace of her movements, all gave eloquent evidence of an atmosphere and an environment of culture. She stood there with the grace of a tall and slender young tree on a hill crest at sunset. For a moment she gazed at the fireflies, then passed on. And I saw that her eyes (for she turned them full on me as she went by) were so black that one could not distinguish pupil from iris, and that they were blank with an odd emptiness, deep with an unspeakable pain. I knew then that I should recognize her again instantly, also through any space of time, in any place or circumstance. And I did.

I saw them together long afterward, at the parting of the ways. The slim young tree had been stripped of its leaves and branches, so that it poised on the hill crest a stark signpost of grief, poignant example of what life can do to a human being when the dreams go to smash. And the well-balanced ship had lost its rudder, to go sailing ruthlessly, doggedly on, terrible example of

what may happen to a firmly built vessel when the cargo has been looted from the hold, the sails unfurled to a high wind, and there is no hand to guide it from the rocks.

I ENTERED the café because I was chilled to the bone, and the warmth of the glittering interior was irresistibly inviting. And because the proprietor was a friend of mine, after a fashion. And because I liked the service, the cuisine and the music. I had been wandering aimlessly about the streets for an hour, breasting the gusty blasts and cold fog of San Francisco. I was ready to rest. I went down the stairs slowly, wishing that something would happen. I think I was lonely.

I took a seat at my customary table and leaned back in my chair, looking idly about. I felt curiously empty. Not in the stomach, but in the heart. The waiter approached with his customary greeting. I gave him a light order. He grinned, bowed obsequiously and stalked with a deal of majesty to the rear of the café.

My thoughts went flowing aimlessly on. I had found nothing of sufficient interest to halt them or turn them into another direction. I focused my gaze, finally, on the raised stage, slightly to my right. It was, for the moment, bare. Hanging across the stock background drop were the dull gray curtains which habitually remained closed during the entertainers' intermissions. But as my order was set down before me, the gray curtains parted and slid to each side of the stage, disclosing not the garishly painted scene I was accustomed to viewing, but another curtain that delighted my senses. It was one solid wall of shimmering cloth of gold. The orchestra began a subdued throbbing of mellow chords. I sat up, at that, keenly instinct with pleasure and surprize. I knew the chords.

Then from behind the gold curtains came another sound, a sound I shall always remember, shall always hear, as I heard it then. It was a whistle. High and clear, but never shrill. It was round and full, a liquid sound, a golden sound, like nothing else I have ever heard. There came to me the strange fancy that the gleaming sound added luster to the curtains through which it emanated. Sense-enthralled by the indescribable beauty of its vibration, I held my breath as I listened. Wailing and calling, it slid smoothly over the exquisite melody of Schubert's *Serenade,* like an unbelievably pure-toned ocarina. A hush had settled over the café, and it obtained until the threnodic tones had sobbed to the perfect close, ending on one long, round and shining note.

A storm of applause eddied to a mighty crescendo and shook the room. I waited, breathless. The applause persisted, demanding. The gold curtains swayed and parted to allow a woman to pass through them. She advanced only a step or two, and halted to stand motionless, facing us.

Her hair formed a sharply defined black triangle, framing her colorless face in startling contrast against the shimmering background. From breast to feet she was swathed in a single fold of jade-green silk. The silk was rendered stiff and heavy by a great black dragon embroidered down the front of it; cunningly embroidered, so that the reptile's head rested on her heart, its claws clasped her shoulders, and its sinuous tail wound around her feet and trailed on the floor. In her weird beauty and fantastic robing she looked like some old Chinese wood carving come to life.

But I, perversely, after the first astounded glance, saw her not at all. I saw only a cloud of fireflies in a

damp field of young cotton, and black eyes blank with emptiness, deep with pain.

She pursed her heavily reddened lips ever so slightly. The muted orchestral chords throbbed again, other chords now, and the unearthly whistle rose again in the lilt of Rubinstein's *Melody in F*. As the last note died away the gray curtains closed over her, like gray waters covering some bright thing from the farthest reaches of light. And though the applause rose thunderously again, she did not return.

I sat in a spell as the applause died away and the hum of disjointed conversation once more claimed the atmosphere. Every nerve in my body was vibrating tumultuously to the call of that golden whistle. I sat like a man in a dream, staring at the senseless gray curtains, oblivious of my untouched luncheon, when a voice said suddenly, almost in my ear:

"I say—did you ever hear anything like that in your life? We come a long way to meet again. From Japan to San Francisco."

I turned abruptly, like a man stung, feeling an actual physical pain in all my nerves as his harsh voice broke the exquisite vibration of the harmony that held me.

I turned to see him standing there beside me, his sensual cruel mouth compressed into a vibrant line, his green-brown eyes burning with unleashed fire. And the forbidding atmosphere of the man, which I had felt so keenly upon our first chance meeting in Japan, was unexpectedly clear and unmistakable.

The brig was a pirate ship! The skull and crossbones flew from the masthead. Uncontrollably I shivered, before I could get a grip on my aversion to his presence. I greeted him rather curtly, with an unwelcome sense of uncanny premonition inhibiting any cordiality courtesy might have demanded. He ignored my bruskness. In fact, I knew that he was oblivious of it. He wasn't thinking of me at all. Save as how he might make use of me, perhaps. He seated himself across from me without waiting for an invitation to join me. No doubt he divined that none would be forthcoming.

"You know her?" he asked, gesturing toward the stage.

I shook my head, shaken with an utterly senseless rage that this sinister being should even have looked upon her. I said that I did not know her, but I certainly intended to. He looked at me queerly, as though he had heard the warning in my words, and said coolly, "I'll introduce you after a while."

Impudent, that! Yet, when I asked abruptly if he knew her, he also shook his head and answered with something of amused surprize: "No, never saw her before. But I know Jeremy Falleaux." I nodded understanding. Falleaux owned the café.

I TURNED to my neglected luncheon, wishing that he would take himself off. But he obviously had no such intention. Grudgingly I suggested an order for him. He declined anything to eat, remarking that he was not hungry. That was a lie. But he sat there watching me with his disconcerting, burning eyes, sharing my bottle readily enough, totally unconscious of what excellent liquor was going down his throat, absent-mindedly asking all manner of queer questions. Personal questions. He volunteered no information, and finally I spoke my thought rather impatiently:

"Well, that all may be interesting to you perhaps. Where I've been, what I've done, am doing or intend to do. But what of yourself? You're essentially of the sea, I should say.

What's your ship? And where do you go from here?"

"The sea?" He smiled, and I almost stared. I had not seen his smile before. It was cruel, sinister, evil, in accord with his cold exterior. He went on smoothly: "The sea! Good Lord, no! Whatever made you think that? I've crossed it enough, sailed it enough—but I'm not *of* it. I'm only—only an explorer."

I set aside my glass and looked him up and down. The lie was so apparent, so uncalled for. He might just as well have said, "I don't care to tell you." I let it pass. If he wasn't of the sea no man ever was. As cold, as immutable, as implacable, as cruel, harsh and devastating as the sea. I didn't intend letting him get totally away with evasion, though. I followed the line he threw out.

"Yes? What do you explore?"

"The universe," he said evenly, smiling again at my start of surprize. "Through the unfathomable law of vibration. It's a bit difficult for me to estimate time by Earth laws, I've been covering so much space. But I'd say I've been here about twenty years. Prior to that I spent a hundred years or so on Jupiter. I arrived there from Betelgeuse."

I gripped myself to control a shiver. Not for a moment was I insane enough to think him mad. I had known from the first time I saw him that he was not an ordinary human personality. He read the expression on my face.

"Thanks," he said dryly. "Anyone else would have immediately judged me a lunatic. I knew you wouldn't. Otherwise I shouldn't have ventured to answer you truthfully. I travel by the law of vibration, as I told you. There are different vibratory systems. I follow the vibration of tone, melody. I don't know how old I am, nor how long I've been going on, on, exploring—hunting for something. Needless to say, I haven't found it yet. At least, I'm not sure I have."

His eyes turned covertly to the curtained stage. I wanted to choke him to death where he sat. But I knew no human fingers of flesh could ever throttle the life from that columnar neck. Suddenly he went on speaking, deliberately forcing a change in my current of thought.

"Do you know a great deal about the theory of vibration, Dr. Johns?" I shook my head, staring at him. How the devil did he know who I was? He grinned impudently, as though he could see into my brain, and answered my mental query. "Oh, everyone knows you, Doctor. But we were discussing vibration. Or rather, *I* was talking about it. You indicate that you are not intimately conversant with the theory. Surely you are aware of the steps science has made in that direction on your planet Earth! Surely you know that the right vibration properly projected will put out a candle's light. And what man doesn't know that the perfect vibratory tone, sustained over a bridge, will cause that mighty structure to vibrate in answer, and sway? I assure you, were that tone sustained long enough it would cause the bridge to continue swaying in an ever wider arc until it toppled down. Think of it! A powerful massive thing of steel girders and riveted plates, razed by the thin tone of a violin string! And these are only the elemental stages, the A B C's of the great law of vibration."

"I suppose you'd say all our science is in the elementary stages," I cut in sarcastically.

"It certainly is," he agreed, with a slight smile. "I admit, though, that you've had some workers who accomplished quite a bit. Some of them reached the fringes of the real

laws themselves. You had a philosopher and psychologist who went after vibration pretty heavily. Yet, he didn't get so far, considering what there is to know. Vibration! Why, you live, work and have your being by vibration! The planets are held in space and the sun feeds the universe with fire—by vibration. And by that same law of vibration the planets could be blown to oblivion and the sun put out forever!"

"You seem to know a lot about it," I said, considering his statements slightly vehement, to say the least.

"Yes, I do—and I'm not exaggerating," he retorted shortly. "I'm not even scratching the surface of the subject. Your psychologist, he rather scratched the surface. He tried to get down to concrete facts. His physical theory was drawn from certain speculations as to the nervous action."

"You're speaking of Hartley?" I interrupted.

"Surely." He nodded, and his green-brown eyes played over me curiously. "The theory is that before sensation exists, the mind is a blank. By growth from simple sensations those states of consciousness which appear most remote from sensation come into being. Hartley held that sensation is the result of vibration of the most minute particles of the medullary substance of the nerves. To account for which he postulated a subtle elastic ether. Starting from a detailed account of the senses, or, I should say, from the phenomena of the senses, he tried to show how all the emotions might be explained by the law of vibration."

"*Tried* to show?" I queried, pointedly.

"Well, he didn't prove so much, concerning what there is to prove. It's a pity he didn't live longer, a pity for the Earth. I venture to say he could have accomplished enough to turn a new leaf in history if he had been granted an extended period of time. However, he's working on, where he is. It doesn't matter a great deal."

"Well, he wasn't so far off, was he?" I leaned over the table toward him, fascinated in spite of my aversion to him, interested intensely as I always have been by any learned technical discussion of theory or hypothesis—or fact.

"Oh, he was right, of course," he answered vehemently. "*All* right—but he didn't go far enough. All voluntary action is the result of a firm connection between motion and sensation, and on the physical side between an idea and motor vibration. Pleasure is merely the result of moderate vibrations, pain the result of vibrations so violent as to break the continuity of the nerves. Even Hartley sounded that deep. But the law of vibration is illimitable. Why, man alive, your body's atoms are held together by vibration. By sounding the right tone or tones I could blow you into a million atoms that it would take ten million years to reassemble."

"And by the same token, a man sounding the right tones could blow *you* into atoms," I retorted, a trifle vindictively. I was astonished at his sudden pallor, the instant flash of terror in his green-brown eyes. He caught himself, and his color returned, his eyes went stone-hard and ice-cold, as he answered:

"Quite true. But no one ever will. My vibration is beyond the determining and comprehension of any Earth man. I've been over at least a thousand planets in the last million years or so, and I shall keep going till I find the thing I seek. But that is neither here nor there. I could blow this whole globe to atoms were I so minded. I am not so minded. It would take too long to find the right vibration. I have

something more important to do. More important to me, at least. To find the thing for which I search. I shall draw it to me by that same law of vibration—when I find it. You are finished with your luncheon?" he broke into his own discourse abruptly, observing me. "Let's get on."

Although I was eager to be rid of him, I was perversely just as eager to keep track of him, now that I had obtained a glimpse into what manner of thing he was. I threw off my feeling of repulsion as best I might, rose from the table and followed him out. At the entrance of the café he asked me to wait for him, and turned to disappear up the three steps leading into Jeremy Falleaux's private office. I waited impatiently, stung with depressing premonition of evil, yet grimly determined to see it through so long as he was within *her* vicinity.

Shortly he returned to say that she would receive us in her dressing-room. I nodded, finding nothing to reply, and we went around to a side door back of the stage. We entered the door, traversed a long, narrow hall and came to another door. Hers. It was closed, and he rapped lightly. At her answering "Come in" he threw open the door and motioned me to precede him.

She reclined on a long, green couch, facing us, propped on one elbow against a great black cushion. The ebon dragon twisted around her like some prehistoric monster in the throes of unendurable agony, as she rose to a sitting posture. My eyes plunged to her face hungrily. The black eyes were still empty, but the pain was gone. There was instead a peculiar quality of receptivity, as though she waited breathless for some monumental thing to happen.

She glanced at us, and spoke to him: "Mr. Falleaux said you wished to see me?"

"Yes." He stood immobile, looking at her, devouring her with his blazing eyes. "Allow me to present my good friend, Dr. Emile Johns. Madame Falleaux, Doctor."

Madame Falleaux! Jeremy's wife? And—"his good friend." His insolent presumptuousness was almost admirable. He certainly knew who I was, all right.

The black dragon waved a protesting claw as she leaned forward and extended her hand. I stepped to the couch and took her fingers. They were quite cold. Nerves, I said to myself.

"Ah, Doctor! One is delighted!" Her words were manifestly sincere. And then, I saw her eyes. "There is only one Emile Johns! I need not ask if you are he. Perhaps I too may some day dare claim your friendship. It is well to have a great surgeon on one's list. *Non?*" I shook my head, smiling at her. "*Mais oui!*" she insisted, adding softly, "They sometimes sever the soul from the body without great inconvenience to either." I knew what she meant. I said no.

As for him, he stood there with his hands folded together behind him, looking hard at her with never a word. She obeyed his gaze, finally, saying, with a queer inflection in her throaty tone: "And you, *M'sieu?*"

"I?" I caught the driving power of that strange, sinister being in the one word. I had an uncomfortable sense of wishing I had killed him before he came into her presence. He'd hurt that woman. She knew it, too. Such hurts a surgeon might give his soul to heal, finding himself pitifully helpless, his skill utterly impotent when it was most needed. He proceeded with glib, swift speech. "I'm an explorer. My name—Henteli Suelivor. It—it's a wonderful thing you have in your throat."

She smiled. It was a wide smile that showed her exquisitely set teeth, but failed to touch her somber eyes. Already she was fighting him. I did not like that smile.

"You think so?" she answered him, almost insolently. "Some do. I do not know whether or not I care that you should have that opinion. Won't you be seated? And you, Doctor?"

Suelivor dropped his powerful frame lightly into a chair by the door. Deliberately I seated myself by her on the couch. I took one of her long, white hands in mine, and studied it a moment before I spoke. Jove! It was *cold.* Like a hand of one chilled—by fear. I wanted to let her know I would be standing by.

"The fireflies still play in the cotton fields of Georgia," I said. I did not raise my eyes, but I felt her gaze upon me. Her voice broke out with spontaneous delight that was patently unassumed.

"Oh ho! So it is you! I thought your face was familiar. Well indeed! After all these years. No—not so many. Only five. And you remembered!"

"And *you* remembered!" I retorted, gently laying the white hand on its mate. "That's the surprizing thing. I couldn't forget. No man could."

"You met her five years ago?" Suelivor abruptly cut into the conversation. "You didn't tell me that!"

"No." I wondered if he could read my thoughts now. "No. I didn't tell you. Why should I? Besides, there was nothing formal in the meeting. It was a thing of chance. I had no idea she would recall it."

"Dr. Johns," she interrupted smoothly, "it is always the privilege to meet men of professional eminence. Me, I am lucky. Very lucky this night. A world-renowned surgeon and a—an explorer." Her eyes darted at Suelivor, piercing, probing. "*Voilà!*" She rose to her feet, spreading her white hands in a deprecating gesture. "I fear I tire of this room. If you would be kind enough to wait outside till I have shed my dragon? *Non?* I shall then be pleased to entertain you in my home for this evening."

Wordlessly we got up and quitted the room to comply with her request. Silence lay between Suelivor and me as we waited outside her door. I tried to ignore him, but I felt his eyes on me in the shaded light, mocking, dissecting. In an incredibly short space of time she joined us, wrapped in a long velvet cloak as black and shadowy as her hair. Not a word was said till we were seated in the long, black car awaiting her at the curb.

"You know," she volunteered, as the car swung away to the hill facing the bay, "I'm an explorer, too. I've been seeking something for ten years. Me—I haven't found it yet." I sat still, hushed, startled. Almost Suelivor's exact words!

"Just what are you hunting?" he asked levelly.

"Oh, M'sieu Suelivor! That was so terribly obvious. But really, I wasn't baiting. I shan't tell you, you know. If you discover it for yourself, that is your business. If you can't—that is my business. My—my search, it answers for my being in the café tonight. I dare that Jeremy to let me whistle there for a week. He nearly had the apoplectic fit. But he finally gave in. That Jeremy, he knows Felice Falleaux. His brother who died a year ago was my husband."

Ah—*not* Jeremy's wife! I closed set teeth on a sigh of relief. Merely his brother's widow. Suelivor did not answer, and she did not speak again until we had reached her

house. While we discarded our wraps in the wide hall she gestured to the great, magnificently appointed rooms.

"Be it ever so humble there's no place like home," she said mockingly, and rang for a servant. She ordered something light to eat, and left us to ourselves temporarily.

Suelivor walked up to a huge bronze copy of Rodin's *Thinker* and stood staring at it in a peculiar attitude of waiting. I wanted him to know that I was fully sensible of the duel between us. I said to his back: "Just what are you exploring, Suelivor? If you didn't find it on a thousand other planets, how do you hope to find it here? What the devil are you trying to find?" He stiffened for a shocked second.

"Myself." His tone was as hard at lignum-vitæ.

"Why?" I probed. He stood perfectly still, but he didn't answer. He hadn't time. She came in the door at that moment. But then, he hadn't intended to anyway.

"You're not a thinker," she said at him, quite without sarcasm. "Come over here and sit down, and eat good cheese and drink good beer with two other explorers."

I shot her a surprized glance, and she smiled slightly. I don't think he ever deceived her for one moment, from the very first. But she was a fighter. She was ready to put up a battle for the thing she wanted, and she thought he had it. She merely didn't know *what* he was.

He turned to face her with a relieved sigh, and that queer, cruel smile of his. Things had been getting too tense in him for comfort. Somehow, in that instant, I felt an unexplainable sense of pity for him. He was going to be hurt, too. And she knew that, also—*while he did not.*

She had donned a loose robe, a black, unshining thing. A long chain of carved jade was twisted through her black hair, and one great, five-petaled jade flower lay on her breast. The severity of her gowns would have sentenced another woman to downright ugliness, but for her they were the epitome of art.

Suelivor seated himself by the little table whereon the servant had laid out cheese sandwiches and beer. He plunged headlong into an aimless conversation, and again refused to eat. I never saw him eat. I am certain he never did eat. But how the man could drink!

She countered easily as he talked, ignoring his insatiable consumption of beer. I knew that he was fencing, warding off any intent of hers to probe his purpose or thought, and that she was doing precisely the same thing. Dumb, I listened silently, watching, sensing every slightest change in the charged atmosphere. He was not for her, that unholy fiend. He was something out of space, cold, sinister, devouring and inimical. She was gloriously of the Earth, warm, pulsing with the hot blood of life, fit only for the heights of love and ecstasy. He—even his blood was cold! She was not for him! In a mad chaos of grim determination I listened to them talk.

Desultory talk it was, about nothing and everything over which you would least expect those two to wage conversation. They did not dare express their thoughts. Neither did they succeed in concealing them any too well. Yet, I did not feel at all *de trop.* I knew too well they both wanted me there.

Finally that unfelicitous evening wore away, and we two men rose to take our leave. She said to us: "Well, gentlemen, I am nearly always home. This evening finished the engagement at the café."

Suelivor looked keenly into her face. "You desire that we call again?"

"I do." She smiled—at *me*.

"Do you like music?" he asked irrelevantly.

"I do. Very much indeed."

"You wish us to come together?" Suelivor pressed, indelicately. "Or —singly."

"Oh, it does not matter, so that you come." And though her smile was for me, her words were for him. I knew it quite well. So did he.

He answered, "We will do so—singly."

I ignored his rudeness, looking levelly into her eyes. There I saw the thing I wanted to know. "Yes," I said.

I WENT the next night. She received me with a cool gladness that delighted me and chilled me. There was not any thought behind it, thought for me. Her thought was with Suelivor.

"He comes later, this evening," she said, as I followed her into the room. "You would do something for me, and not ask the embarrassing question?" Her black eyes held mine intently, and I winced at that breathless hush in them. How frantically she was waiting—waiting. For *what?* I hadn't the least idea. I was a fool—but I hadn't.

"Of course," I returned quietly.

"Then—here. See, it is the closet of which no one knows. The story-book secret passage." She stepped to a great mural, depicting a cathedral with a mighty door under a rose window. She plunged some lever on the window and the door slid back to show a small room, perhaps eight by ten, beautifully appointed, containing a comfortable couch and a big easy chair. A table between the two was heaped with books and magazines. "There—I ask you to sit and wait every night when he comes. See—from this side the door opens, so." She beckoned me into the secret room and I followed.

From the wall depended a heavy silk cord. She gave it a slight jerk and the door slid into place. She jerked it again and the door opened. I nodded and looked at her inquiringly.

"See—the wall—it is sound-proof. No one can hear you even if you should shoot a gun in here. Nor can you hear anything said or done in the next room. But I will know you are here. I shall feel safe. Some day —I may need to have the friend close."

I did not think of anything to say. Anything I could have replied would have been so obvious to her. The knocker on the outside door rang, and her face set into oddly expressionless lines as she turned to me.

"There—M'sieu Suelivor. I go. You wait here. There is much to read. You will not be lonesome?"

I shook my head. I was dumb that night. She went out and left me alone in that room, closing the secret door after her. She was right. The room was sound-proof—*to all sounds of ordinary vibration*. I dropped into the big chair and picked up a book. I couldn't read. I sat there thinking unwholesome thoughts regarding the thing called Suelivor.

I must have been sitting there half an hour when I heard a sound in that sound-proof room. It came from the room where they were. Music. He had asked her if she liked music. But if that was music, then I am God, Christ and the Devil all rolled into one! I shrank back in my chair, listening to it. Its indescribable vibration cut through the sound-proof wall as easily as though that solid partition of matter were thin fog. I shivered at the power of that high, wailing sound. I had no idea of what manner of instrument made it. There is nothing on this Earth to which to liken it.

It was not of this Earth. It was, like him, out of space. Something

implacable, sinister, yet at the same time fascinating, luring, compelling. Were one touched by that vibration, he would break down the wall of China to follow it. But, strangely, it touched nothing in me. I heard it, I felt it playing over me like electric ice—but it did not touch me. I thought I knew why, instantly. He was seeking the thing that had driven his unhuman being through countless years and over measureless miles—but apparently nothing of it was in me. Frantically I crouched there and prayed that it was not in her.

I don't know for what an eternity I endured that wild music—well, I have to *call* it that, at least. We have no other word. That's what he called it. I held myself in a stoical numbness, inviolate to that torture. Then suddenly the sound ceased. There was silence. And I was back in the solid, reassuring atmosphere of the world we know, breathless as though I had been hurled through space and left utterly shaken by the rapidity of my transit.

The silence endured for another eternity. Then suddenly the door slid back and she appeared to face me. I sprang to my feet, toward her. Her face was bewildered, but it held no fear.

"That so strange man is gone," she announced casually. "He played for me. Such music I never heard. He did not talk much. He has so little talk. But he play. *Mon Dieu,* how he play!"

"What did he play?" I asked, striving to attain the same casual attitude she assumed. I knew she did not feel it. Something impelled me not to tell her I had heard that strange wild music through the sound-proof wall. She frowned, shrugged lightly, and smiled as she motioned me to enter the other room.

"A whistle. Strange conceit, M'sieu Doctor. A golden whistle. He tell me that is what I have in my throat." She laughed aloud as she manipulated the door back into place. "A long pole of shining gold, it is. Like a flute. He—he play the weird music. I feel it inside of me. But it says nothing. You and I—let us talk, *M'sieu.*"

I sat there and talked with her for better than an hour. We talked of sane, commonplace things. We avoided further mention of Suelivor. But neither of us was thinking of anything else. Yet how vastly different were our thoughts! I looked at her, and thought of him. Sacrilege! Blasphemy! But I couldn't help it. I had to find some way of protecting her. He would come again, many times. He would play for her again that unholy wild music. And not always might she say truly that it said nothing! I was cold to the heart when I bade her good-night and walked out.

That impossible situation went on for three weeks. Every night he came, and sat and played that wild, insistent music on that golden whistle. And slowly but surely that persistent vibration began to speak to Felice. But he was not so wise as he thought. It began to speak, but it did not say the thing he wanted it to say. It was to me it called, and I began to fear. Gradually I began to have a feeling of being drawn from my body toward him as he played there beyond that sound-proof wall. The night my senses swam and I was unconscious when she opened the door, I knew something must be done, and quickly. He was feeling some response to that vile music of his, and he thought it came from her.

It was then I thought of Ahmbodie, and cursed my stupidity for not thinking of him before. Ahmbodie was a mystic with wildly unbelievable powers, living across the bay in Oakland. He did not display his powers for the satisfaction of public curios-

ity. He was wealthy, independent to the point of rudeness, and lived a secluded, studious life in which he pursued his investigations into other worlds. To his friends he talked, and for his friends he employed every ounce of his capacities when he found those friends in trouble or distress. I was his friend. I went to Ahmbodie.

He received me with a polished courtesy and a warming welcome that froze into shocked dismay when he got a good look at my face. I knew I had changed. It was as though I had shrunken away, not by any such means as merely growing emaciated. Shrunken, as though numberless electrons of those composing my flesh had been by some hideous means extracted from my body.

"What has happened to you?" Ahmbodie demanded tersely, forcing me into a chair and bending to stare into my face. "I know! That damnable music from space! I have heard it. I am in tune."

"You have heard it—clear over here?" I sat up in my chair, staring at him incredulously. "Through the noise of traffic—clear across the bay—above the blare of the ferry-boats?"

"I am in tune," he repeated, fixing me with his fathomless black eyes. "Where is it? Who plays? Who brings that ungodly sound into a sane world? I suspect! Who?"

"A man named Suelivor," I answered wearily. "He——"

"Suelivor!" Ahmbodie interrupted sharply, and his dark face paled as he gripped my arm. "I thought it must be he. I have been watching him, sounding him for fifteen years. Sailing the sea, always on the sea. Last month I lost trace of him. And he is there! Only across the bay. Tell me what he does there, quickly."

Concisely and swiftly I gave him an account of the last three weeks. His face darkened with an exalted anger, the anger of a god blasphemed, and when I finished my recital he exclaimed loudly:

"You must get for me that golden whistle! You must bring it to me. We must drive him from this Earth. We have no housing space for such as he! Go, Emile! You shall not say it can not be done! It must be done! You shall bring me that whistle!"

"I'll get it, somehow," I said grimly, thinking of Felice as I got to my feet. "But for God's sake, Ahm, what is it he seeks? What is it he goes from planet to planet trying to find?" Ahmbodie paled again slightly at my vehement cry, but he answered without hesitation.

"His soul."

"His *soul!*" I gasped, shrinking from the import of those two words.

"Exactly," Ahmbodie corroborated. "His soul. He hasn't any. Don't you understand, Emile? He is one of the soulless ones. One of those born in the outer darkness, denizens of space, knowing no laws and no God, spawn of the devil. He exists, feeds, drives on and devours by the terrible law of vibration. Few of them have the intelligence he has acquired through centuries of study and restless search. He knows no sensation but emptiness and pain. That wild music brings him the only relief he can find when it touches some soul even remotely in tune and draws something toward him. If he could draw another soul from another body into his, he would become mortal, know mortal joys and feel mortal delights. That is what he seeks. Another's soul to warm his cold blood. He has sought it in woman—knowing women's souls are finer, easier to bring in tune. He has found what he sought in you. And we must act quickly or that fine etherous thing will leave you and answer his call."

"It has begun to leave me already?" I cried, shaken.

"The atoms are loosed and quivering around you, ready to follow that vibration that has shaken them," Ahmbodie confirmed, eyeing me steadily. "You must get me that golden whistle."

"What will you do with it?" I demanded. "He can make another."

"Ah—but it will take him a thousand years!" Ahmbodie smiled. "That vibration he produces is the result of centuries of tireless effort. Such as he knows no failure, no discouragement and no fatigue. But I —I have been working like mad to find his vibration, been working for fifteen years. Ever since I first located his unholy presence on the Earth. At night I leave my body in sleep, and go to him, standing over him. I never know where he is, but vibration takes me to him. And I have come near enough his vibration that six or seven hours over that evil whistle will change the course of his ways. Bring it!"

I LEFT Ahmbodie and hurried back to Felice. She had been for several evenings kindly concerned over my altered appearance. I had evaded any excuse for it, save that I was weary from overwork. Now I told her candidly that the music which had left her untouched, so far as reaching the thing he sought, had pierced to me through the soundproof wall, had racked me and shaken my nerves. I dared not even intimate what vital part of me was menaced. Nerves! I had to speak to her in sane terms of this everyday world. She had no least idea of the thing Suelivor was. I told her I wanted her to get the whistle for me that I might take it home and examine it. She agreed with a lack of protest that surprized me. But it developed that she was curious to touch and examine the thing herself.

That evening she persuaded him to leave off playing and talk to her. He complied ungraciously, she told me afterward, and I knew why. He was avid for the possession of the soul that had begun to answer him—impatient at the least delay. But, thinking that soul lay in her, he cannily considered it wisest not to pique her. She begged to keep the whistle till he came again. Secure in his knowledge of its invincibility to any puny meddling of hers, he finally capitulated, yielding to her pleading. And that night when she opened the door to me after he was gone, she laid in my hands that ungodly golden whistle. I thanked her with wild gratitude, and left her in almost indecent haste. I went straight to Ahmbodie.

He received the golden, flutelike thing with quivering eagerness, almost snatching it from my hands, turning it over and over in his fingers and gazing at me intently with his piercing black eyes. He handed it to me suddenly.

"Blow it," he commanded.

I shivered, but there was something so significant in his tone that I put it to my lips and expended my breath through it. It emitted no least sound. I gaped, but Ahmbodie gave me a meaning smile.

"You see? No one but Suelivor can play that devilish thing. You are prompt. When does he return to see Madame Felice again?"

"Tomorrow night." I stared at the whistle as I returned it to Ahmbodie. "I'll come for that thing along about 5 o'clock."

"Good!" Ahmbodie's eyes gleamed. "That gives me at least sixteen hours to work. I shall see no sleep this night. Come for it tomorrow, late afternoon. And I promise you, my friend, when it again comes into your hands you shall play it. But never let him touch it again! Now be off, and let me get to my task."

"But you will work yourself ill, into a frenzy!" I protested.

"What a human thing to say!" Ahmbodie smiled reprovingly. "Aye, I shall no doubt work in a very terrible frenzy, for hours that will bear a strain of which you can not even conceive. But—there is a human soul at stake! I have lived to protect and benefit human souls, Emile. And if I can bring to bear all my exhaustive research, all my tireless effort, all my capacity, understanding and power to save one human soul this night, to drive from the environs of the Earth so menacing a thing as that spirit of the outer darkness, then no moment of my life has been in vain. What though I *give* my life in that last stupendous culmination of achievement—sacrifice my little breath in the merciless driving of my utmost capacities? Man alive, where is your sense of values? If I succeed, a human soul has been saved from Satan's spawn to the God who gave it!"

"But that—that whistle," I groped. "How can any mighty power lie in that fragment of polished metal?"

"My dear Emile!" Ahmbodie spoke slowly, striving to impress me with what he was saying, smiling at me patiently. "The potencies of the law of vibration are beyond conception. There is no sounding the wonders that may be accomplished by a fine understanding, an expert and delicate wielding of that law by a master hand; and there is no grasping the hideous cataclysm that may be wreaked by that same law if it be manipulated by a malignant being who has attained understanding of it. I work with it beneficently, for the betterment of mankind and the glory of God. Suelivor juggles it with malevolent ruthlessness of the havoc he produces, caring only to achieve his selfish desires. Emile—there rises tonight a battle royal between the powers of light and the emissary of darkness, construction against destruction! Go, and leave me to my labor. Go praying that God is all-powerful still!"

And I—I bowed my head and walked out of his door with my hat in my hands, praying that his gallant life might not be forfeit.

THERE was little sleep for me that night. I rolled and tossed restlessly in my bed, following Ahmbodie in spirit through his frenzied hours of striving. I rose with the dawn, and paced my room for hours more, unable to eat or contain myself in anything like tranquillity, wondering how valiant Ahmbodie was faring, hoping desperately that his power was equal to the great emergency. When I could endure my room no longer I went out and paced the streets. I lived in a fever of agonizing suspense until it was time to take the ferry-boat across the bay.

It was with a sense of unutterable relief that I looked into Ahmbodie's face when he himself opened his door to me. I stepped in eagerly, grasped his arms and gazed into his eyes.

The result of those long, terrible hours of straining application was written on every feature. His face was haggard, worn and furrowed with lines of weariness. His eyes were sunk into his head. His whole body drooped with utter exhaustion. But there was in the sunken eyes an exultant gleam of triumph. He had come to the supreme struggle of his mystical, weird activities. He had given something vital of himself in that task. Something had gone out of him—something *vibrant*. But I knew instinctively that it would renew itself. And I felt inarticulately that his exaltation over the fact that he had not failed, that he had accomplished whatever obscure thing he intended, was high reward for all it had cost him. But what was the thing he sought to do?

Ahmbodie read my puzzled thought and spoke quietly: "When you play it to Suelivor, you will know. I do not wish to tell you. I am not too certain myself. I set a high goal. I may have fallen short. But I at least accomplished something. Without doubt I refined that vibration to such an extent that it will drive him a million miles hence. I am eager to know just how great a thing I have achieved. I shall wait in impatience for your report. Here."

He slipped his hand into the pocket of his heavy velvet lounging-robe as I dropped my own hands to my sides. He extended toward me the object of his long interval of endeavor. I looked into his face, thinking of the night, as I felt that whistle again in my hands. It was in no whit changed in looks, but Ahmbodie placed it in my fingers with a solemn warning.

"Blow it not until you stand in his presence. But if you would save your soul from a fiend, blow it then! And blow it until he is gone from the surface of this Earth! He will writhe in torture, he will call to his comrades for help, but nothing can save him from banishment if you hurl that vibration at him till he is gone! I have come near enough sounding him for that. And I may in sixteen short hours have done the thing it would take him a thousand years to do. . You see, my friend, I have a soul. Go, now. Go, to save yourself and others from the pestilence of his presence. And when it is over, come back and tell me how you fared."

He waved aside my efforts at expressing my gratitude, and I hurried down to take the ferry across the bay. I felt as though I carried in my pocket enough dynamite to blast the Earth. I knew no peace till I stood in the big room beside Felice, and told her that I wished to keep the whistle, to take it with me into that soundproof room. She stared, puzzled, but she assented finally out of trust in, and concern for me. When we heard Suelivor knock at the door I hastily entered the secret room, and she went to admit him.

I GAVE them time to get into that room and be seated and enter in conversation. Then I pulled the silk cord that operated the door and took the golden whistle from my pocket. Noiselessly the door slid back, and I saw them. He sat with his back toward me, and she stood facing him.

"Where is the whistle?" he was asking.

"Oh, I shall get it for you presently," she answered, watching him, some unfathomable emotion burning in her black eyes. "Always you play, never you talk. It is that I want you to talk to me, to tell me of these great country that you so much explore."

He sprang to his feet and took a step toward her. She moved back, instinctively, paling.

"I shall not tell you!" His voice was harsh, and he leaned toward her menacingly. "Have you forgotten the things I have told you already? You know what I seek! And you can give it to me, and you will not!"

"Very dramatic and romantic!" Felice drew herself up proudly, and her black eyes smoldered. Her voice barely escaped a sneer. "You know nothing about me after all! Go on, *M'sieu,* and explore! You'll never find the thing you seek. Because you are going away from it every mile you travel! As for me—oh, me—*je suis—la femme—a huis clos! Comprennez vous?"** She didn't mean the thing he really sought; she didn't know. Yet how merciless a truth she spoke.

"No!" Suelivor's voice rose in a bitter cry. "Neither do you. You *think* you do. But you don't understand at all. You don't know any-

* Loosely translated: "I am the woman who walks alone. Do you understand?"

thing about me. And I only know I'm in hell!"

Almost there was something human in that cry. Swiftly I lifted the whistle to my lips. Felice's black eyes caught sight of me, attracted by the motion of my hand, and leaped to my face. I stared back at her. I decided the rest of my existence in that look. And even as I drew my breath to blow that unholy whistle, Suelivor saw her gaze and wheeled to face me. He saw the whistle at my mouth, and he screamed, a hideous, terrible sound like nothing human. I never saw such hideous pain on any man's face as flashed into his then. I never want to see it again. Frantically I hurled my breath into that dumb tube of gold.

There rose from it a melody so sweet, so delicate, so holy and heaven-born that I shook in the flood of peace that descended to fill to throbbing ecstasy that great room. Felice's black eyes widened, and her face went still in a kind of awe. Suelivor writhed and twisted, and his scream went out in a diminishing moan that died in a futile whimper. Felice turned her gaze to him, but I blew steadily on. I knew nothing of manipulating the keys of that instrument, I could only blow into it. And I knew the unearthly achievement of Ahmbodie as that unutterably sweet melody rose ever more clearly and claimed the air.

But Suelivor! He twisted and squirmed like a man under torture, striving to spring toward me. He could not move from there. That holy melody held him bound to that spot. Then wild things began to happen. He began to glow and burst into atoms by fragments. That was the most ungodly sight ever witnessed by any man. First his feet went, glowing as though a fire were lit in the flesh, bursting into minute particles that shimmered like pulverized glass shot through with prismatic light. The particles quivered for an instant, gyrating as though in the path of a whirlwind, then disappeared like sparks extinguished in a cold blast. Next his legs went, his thighs, the lower part of his trunk.

It was Felice who screamed then. She sprang back with her hands held out before her as though she would shield her eyes from some unbearable horror. But I played steadily on, grimly, inexorably, knowing that the God of Justice stood at my elbow and would not let me cease.

I played. And even though my hand was unshaken as it held that avenging tube of gold, the soul I was fighting to save shook at the awful power of that thin, sweet vibration. A delicate, dulcet sound so mighty in its cosmic force that it disintegrated and drove apart the atoms that thing in the shape of a man had accrued and welded together: drove them back shattered and blown to the five black winds of the outer darkness from which they had come. With a pæan of gratitude flooring me for the stupendous achievement of Ahmbodie, I played.

SUELIVOR'S trunk was gone, his arms. Only his distorted, rage-convulsed face hung gargoyle-like in the air, like some fantastically lighted, grotesque lantern. Then it, too, shattered in a thousand gleaming atoms, glowed for a moment a malignant red, and went out. And I knew what Ahmbodie had done, what he had hoped he had done. He had found Suelivor's exact vibration in those years he had worked, and prayed for this to come to pass when I played the whistle he had transformed—played it in the presence of that unspeakable being from the outer darkness.

And yet for a moment I played on, feeling the music of the spheres about my head, loth to hear that holy melody die away. Felice stood staring at the spot where Suelivor

had been, soothed by that melody in spite of her shock, quieted to something resembling coherency. Then I dropped my hand and slipped the whistle into my pocket. There was silence. Silence profound, not of the Earth.

"Oh, Emile!" Felice broke the hush with a cry, not looking at me, still staring at the oddly luminous void in the air where Suelivor had stood. "*Mon Dieu!* What have you done? What is this? Am I mad? Do my eyes see? What was he? Emile—Emile! *Mon coeur—tout est flétri—pour toujours!*"*

"No!" I denied. "Such hurts a surgeon might give his soul to heal! No—not forever. Time—you know time. And Henteli Suelivor was nothing human. Don't ask me what he was!"

I dragged myself to the window-ledge and dropped wearily to a seat, but she remained standing, motionless, her face dead-white, her eyes still averted from me.

"Time! Time!" she mocked. "The great doctor speaks of time! But what of *love?* Do you not know that it is love I have been seeking, Emile? Do you not know love? *Have* you not known it?" And now she turned toward me, with a swift, angry little gesture of rebellion, her eyes flaming. "Me—I thought to know it, Emile. And now he is gone. When I saw you there in Georgia I was searching for it. Always I have searched. It has been a gorgeous hunt. Big game, eh, Emile?"

Her bitter smile cut me. Hysterics and tears I should have been able to hold in control. But there were no tears, no frantic cries. She did not even seem to consider the fact that I was responsible for his going. Neither as man nor surgeon did I like that smile. No. Even now, even after what she had witnessed, she had no least idea of what manner of thing had been Suelivor. She did not contemplate that. She was racked, crushed with her false sense of loss. But how to persuade her that it *was* false?

"Emile!" I started at the repressed vehemence in her voice. "I tell you. *Oui.* I tell you all. Only, my friend—I need you now. Don't go away from me. Don't ever go away from me!"

"I won't." That was a promise. She knew I was incapable of breaking it, too. She looked at me sharply, as a man dying of thirst might stare at a water-flask—which he feared was empty.

"*Merci,* Emile! See, I have lived for love, Emile. Lived to find it. Oh, not this light, light thing so many call love. But that thing which goes so deep we can not find its roots: that thing which goes so high we can not find its topmost branches: that thing which is so wide it possesses us utterly, makes of us both the king and the slave. You know such love, Emile? He—Henteli Suelivor, he could have given it! But he would not! There was something missing, Emile. Such a mind he had! Brains enough to run a world. Such a huge thing he was, powerful, like a fighter. One loves big men, Emile!"

I smiled to myself, wryly. Suelivor had been two inches shorter and ten pounds lighter than I! And I was no imbecile. Was I not acknowledged the greatest surgeon of the world? Love! Love from that cold, bloodless being? God—what I could have given her! I clamped my teeth grimly. Her voice went on, pinched with pain.

"And the fire he had. It was enough for ten men. But he turned it all to his furious music. He—you know he said he was an explorer. You know what he explored? The realms of harmony! You know for what he sought? A cool companion to play with him that so violent

* "My heart is scarred forever."

music! *Sacré!* What did I care for his wild music! I wanted him!"

I put my two hands together and held on to myself. So *that* was what he had told her! Anything, any flimsy excuse to retain access to her presence till he had drawn the soul from her body and left her cold and still in death. But it was not *her* soul he had touched with his satanic vibration. He had not reached her *soul* at all. Had he irrevocably claimed her *heart?* The heart he did not want. The heart I would have given my life to make my own! I sat in dumb silence. I did not yet dare trust my tongue.

"Love!" She laughed, a laugh that made me wince. "Love was not for him, Emile. You knew that, didn't you? I did not. I thought he had it. He shook me so. When he came into this room he brought light with him. The very air was alight with glory and desire. I felt as though a sharp electric glow were playing over me. When he spoke, a thousand little bells went ringing in my heart. And he knew it, Emile! He knew I loved him, and he traded on that love to come here and play his wild music. What—what did he hope to gain? Oh, I don't understand—but I hate him! Do you hear? I hate him!"

I hated only the pain in her face; the pain that choked me to silence and rendered me furious at my own impotency. Neither surgeon's brains nor surgeon's knives—but what of a surgeon's love? If in the zenith of her shock and misery her violent nature swung to hate him, if that heart wheeled on the rebound—was there hope for me?

Her voice sank to a weary, patient resignation: "I am glad that I will never see him again, Emile. Such a wild, terrible thing—such a horrible way to go. Me—I do not understand what you did to that whistle. I do not understand how it could blast him and touch us not at all. But I care not how he went—I am glad he is gone. I hate him, I tell you! Love! I laugh! All my life I wait, I live, I hope for love. It come—like a blinding star in a black cave—and it go, leaving only hate. I live for love—and I get this! I laugh at him. At me. At love. He didn't know what the word meant. No man does!"

"Some do!" I bit in, hard-gripped. "*Some do!*"

"I wonder!" She stared at the vehemence of my cry, her eyes wide upon me. "If he could not know—how could any man know?"

"Don't!" I cried, almost at the limit of my endurance. "He was not human. He was evil—evil that can not exist in struggle against the vibration of a holy melody. Even you may have followed false gods!"

"False gods! What do you mean, Emile?" She leaned toward me where she stood, and I saw that more and more her mind, her thought, her being was turning to me. "Oh—Emile!" Suddenly all the fury died out of her. Her shoulders drooped. She spread her hands toward me in a gesture of appeal. "Emile—did you ever know what it means to love anyone so much that if that one touch you you hurt with happiness? Did you ever love anyone so much that wanting them made you faint-hearted and weak-kneed? Did you ever love anyone so much that that one was like a scorching fever in your veins, that when that one was absent your life was gone, that you would sell your soul and body to the devil just to have that one to hold and love till love was satisfied—forever? Oh, Emile—did you?"

"Yes!" I cried out, under torture. "Good God, yes! That's how I love you!"

"*Emile!*" The hands that had been clasped across her breast dropped limply. Her black eyes

stared wider, wider, and she leaned nearer me in stunned silence. And after a little she whispered tensely, "Oh—my friend, not so! My Emile —not so!"

"It is so! It *is* so!" I gripped the edge of the window-seat and stared back into her eyes. Was it possible he had not claimed her heart at all? Merely shaken it with his unearthly vibration, confused her and turned her senses? I rushed on. "False gods, Felice! You have been following false gods. That was not love! That was only the glittering mirage of an archfiend in human trappings. This is love—here. Here! You have been so blinded by the nearness of a sputtering star of hell that you could not see the great sun itself just beyond!"

"Emile!" She stepped close to me, and I went down on the knees that refused to bear me up, burying my face in her gown and clasping her with my arms. She was very still and I knew that she felt me shaking—shaking.

"Have you been that blind?" I raised my face. "So blind that you did not know? From the first time I saw you down there by the cotton field in Georgia my own dream has been of finding you again and making you mine forever!"

"Have I found it?" She leaned down and placed her hands on my shoulders with a grip that astonished me by its intensity. A high light broke into the empty depths of her black eyes. "Emile—have I found it? Here—waiting patiently under my own roof while I was misled by—false gods?"

Emotion flooded me, dizzying with promise. I knew then that the heart had not gone astray after all. Shaken, dazzled by a mirage, but mine. Mine all the while—even now coming home to me. Her hands drew at me, but I had hard work getting to my feet. My silly knees had no will to bear me up. I succeeded by great effort, and she held me off, staring at me.

My blood leaped exultantly. No longer were the black eyes empty. They were glowing with a blinding light. She stared at me as a man dying of thirst might stare at an empty water-flask, suddenly, miraculously brimming with clear, cool water. I stood motionless, searching her eyes for the thing I must see. And suddenly it was there. Home! The dazzled, wounded, bewildered heart had come home.

"Oh, Emile! Have I found it?" And her arms went around my neck in surrender.

I broke, then. I'd held in too long. I think I kissed her. I can't be sure. I only know my arms went around her, possessing her utterly. This was Earth! Cool, sane, warm, beloved Earth. Green Earth, pulsant with spring, swept clean of the last vestige of that sinister denizen from the outer darkness. And in the flood of mad desire that overwhelmed me, shaking me to the depths, there ran the steady current of an unfailing, abiding love. She knew very well she had found it!

SOMETIMES even yet I pause in my happiness to think of Suelivor. And almost I pity him. I keep that picture to remind me how near we are to unseen, unhallowed things. I wonder if somewhere he has reassembled by the aid of his kind the atoms that were his body, and gone on to yet another planet, seeking. I see him standing broad and high on the deck of a ship, his longing insatiate, consuming, his cruel mouth drawn into a bitter line, his green-brown eyes searching the empty sea as he flies recklessly into the weather. Or is he shattered forever?

The whistle? Ah, yes, there it hangs. To remind me that Light must ever triumph over Darkness.

No one will ever play it again. Ahmbodie has seen to that. That holy melody is not yet for this Earth. But —there is another whistle. Hush—listen, do you hear it? My wife, gentlemen. Is there another sound like that anywhere? So round—so golden! You will pardon me, *non?* Every night she whistles me from my office to the garden. I go.

The Chant of the Grave-Digger

By ROBERT S. CARR

I'm the one who gets you all,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Lean ones, fat ones, short or tall,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Rich and poor I lay you deep
Where the grave-worms writhe and creep
In the cold earth's oozy seep,
Ho! I swing my shovel!

Coffin-lids are bright and new,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Mausoleums mighty few,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Hear the wet clods tumble down,
Preacher, thief or circus clown,
Tattered rags or ermine gown,
Ho! I swing my shovel!

Far away from mortal woes,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Maggots nibble at your toes,
Ho! I swing my shovel!
Born to die—a monstrous jest!—
Sordid four-score years at best,
Then you're rotting with the rest.
Ho! I swing my shovel!

Here Are the Concluding Chapters of

The Time-Raider

By EDMOND HAMILTON

The Story Thus Far

WHILE exploring the ruins of Angkor, Professor Cannell is captured by the Time-Raider, a creature from fifteen thousand years in the future, which sweeps back through time for its victims to build up an army of warriors with which the Kanlars can overwhelm the parent city of Kom. Wheeler and Lantin build a time-car and pursue the Raider into the future to rescue Cannell, but are captured by the Kanlars and held prisoners with the teeming hordes of warriors in the city of the pit. With the aid of four friends (an English warrior, a Roman legionary, a French musketeer and an Aztec cacique) Wheeler and Lantin escape and flee to the city of Kom in the time-car to get help with which to rescue Cannell. The supreme council of Kom decides to strike at the Kanlars.

CHAPTER 17

THE BATTLE—AND AFTER

SIX days after that momentous meeting of the council, a mighty fleet of air-boats rose and circled above the city. The character of the invisible force-shield above the city had been altered to allow the passage of any air-boat through it, and now no less than five hundred of the air-boats hovered over Kom. In design they were much like the ones I had vaguely glimpsed in the city of cylinders, long and flat and narrow, pointed at either end and with a low wall around their sides for the protection of their occupants.

The people of Kom had worked wonders in those six days, thus to construct half a thousand of the flying cars, and to equip them with a time-wave apparatus like our own. Every car was thus equipped, the apparatus on each being a direct copy of that in our own car. Lantin and I still clung to our own car, however, which had been overhauled for us by the scientists of Kom after our crash, and which was unhurt by the collision. And most of our time, during that period, had been engaged in directing the manufacture of the time-traveling apparatus, and teaching a selected few the operation of it. These few, in turn, taught many others, and by the time we were ready for our start, there was at least one man on each air-boat who understood the time-wave mechanism.

The plans of our expedition were simple enough. We were to drop down on the city of cylinders, destroy it utterly, and annihilate both the Kanlars and the Raider, if possible. I think that in reality none of the members of our expedition had any real desire to meet the Raider, but I knew that in spite of the fear they had of him, they would obey the orders of Kethra without faltering.

I knew but little of the weapons which the scientists of Kom had furnished to the occupants of the air-boats. Kethra had spoken to us of a sound-ray, an intense beam of sound-vibrations which, directed on some object, could be changed in frequency until it matched that object's frequency of vibration, which would result in the destruction of the thing so focused on. It was the principle of two tuning-forks, which will cause each other to vibrate across a great distance, if of the same period of vibration. I had heard mention of other weapons, also, designed to combat the Raider, but had seen none of these.

This story began in WEIRD TALES for October

Now, as the great fleet hovered and circled above the white city of Kom, with our own time-car poised above the fleet, a single large air-boat drove up through the mass of the others and hung beside us. It was the car of Kethra, a long, black one, and near its pointed prow stood the white-robed leader himself.

He bent, spoke an order into a mouthpiece, and then his car slanted up and northward, with swiftly increasing speed, while the great fleet below did likewise, his order being communicated by a form of radio to every air-boat. Still hanging beside the car of Kethra, our own time-car raced along, since we were to guide the fleet toward the city of cylinders.

By the time Kom had disappeared behind us, the fleet was flying almost two miles high, in wedge-shaped formation, with our time-car and the air-boat of Kethra at the wedge's apex.

It was late morning when we flashed high over the colossal metal wall that held back the ice-flood. It soon vanished behind us, and we were again flashing north across the ice-fields.

The sun's rays slanting down almost vertically on the ice far below set up a dazzling glare that was almost blinding. Looking back, I saw an air-boat behind and below us crash into the one ahead of it, and both plunged down to destruction on the ice. Some half-dozen cars spiraled down toward the wreckage, but the main body of the fleet swept on, unheeding of such accidents.

All of that day the fleet raced on, while, in the time-car, Lantin slowed our pace to keep beside them. Sunset came, an arctic sunset, with a crimson globe of fire falling down behind the boundless steppes of ice, suffusing the sky with a glare like blood. Abruptly Lantin uttered a low exclamation, seized binoculars and gazed north through the window beside him.

I sprang to his side, and when he handed me the glasses I saw, far ahead, a little cluster of black dots that stood out jet-black against the crimson sunset. But already Kethra too had seen them, and a score of cars leaped forward from the main body of the fleet, in pursuit, our own time-car among them.

We flashed up toward them, and they grew in size, resolved themselves into air-boats much like those around us. As we neared them, they turned and fled north. Two of them, much swifter than the others, were out of sight almost in a second, safely beyond our pursuit, but the others, seven in number, saw that escape was impossible, so they turned to fight.

For a moment, the fight was on their side, for they turned quite unexpectedly and raced straight toward us, in a solid mass. Lantin's hands flashed over the controls and our car slanted up above the onrushing seven with the speed of lightning, but as it did so a blue flash leapt from the foremost of them and barely missed us.

The air-boats behind us were not so fortunate, for as the streaks of blue light from the enemy touched them, four plunged down to the ice, in flames. The seven attackers, unscathed thus far, passed under them in a swooping dip, turned, and came racing back for another blow.

But now the surprize of our forces was gone, and they struck back. A sudden sound smote our ears, even in the time-car, a low thrumming sound that rose in pitch higher and higher. I could see the men on our air-boats pointing blunt-nosed metal objects toward the oncoming cars of the enemy, and abruptly the significance of it struck me, and I understood that they were using the sound-ray Kethra had mentioned.

The seven air-boats rushed on to-

ward our own, and I had a flashing glimpse of their decks, crowded with armored guards and with a few of the brilliant-robed Kanlars directing them. Blue flashes leapt again from the seven, and two more of the air-boats of Kom cometed down in bursts of fire, but now, as the seven dipped again under the air-boats of the Khluns, the thrumming, high-pitched sound increased sharply in intensity, and I saw five of the seven Kanlar cars literally break up into small pieces and fall, tumbling down toward the ice-fields below them in a shower of men and small pieces of metal. It was the power of sound, which causes a steam-whistle to shake a house to its foundations, a thousand times amplified by the apparatus devised by the men of Kom.

The remaining two air-boats of the Kanlars attempted to flee, but in a moment they too broke up and fell, as the men of Kom altered the vibration-frequency of their apparatus to affect the two remaining cars.

Behind us, now, the great main fleet of our air-boats was coming up, and there was a short halt in midair. Kethra's air-boat swept up beside us, and I opened the door in the top of our time-car, and stood up to hear him.

"Those were scouts," he cried to us, "a patrol of the Kanlars' air-boats. And two got away! They'll warn the Kanlars of our coming."

"But what do you intend to do?" I asked. "You'll not give up the attack?"

"No!" he shouted. "We'll go on, and meet them if they come out. But there will be no surprize now."

"But what of our friends?" I asked. "We were to rescue them from the pit."

"We'll send an air-boat for them," he said. "It can speed up to the city of cylinders, and since the Kanlars will come down to meet us now, it can sink down into the shaft you spoke of without interference, and get your friends. I will need you with me, to guide us to the city of Kanlars, in case their fleet doesn't come out to meet us."

And so we swiftly decided. At an order from Kethra, an air-boat slanted up toward us and hung beside us. We gave the pilot of it, and his two assistants, precise information that would enable them to reach the temple and get down to the pit, where they could rescue our comrades from the roof-top where they would be awaiting us. The pilot was instructed to race up toward the city of cylinders in a wide circle, to avoid meeting any of the Kanlars' air-boats, and when the city was deserted by guards and Kanlars, as we were confident it would be, he could easily penetrate to the temple and the pit. He promised to carry out our instructions faithfully, and sped away into the gathering dusk toward the northwest.

Night was falling now, and with an order from Kethra, the fleet again began to move, speeding toward the north, but going warily now, with a fringe of swift scouts flying above and far ahead, and with Kethra's car and our own soaring at the point of the fleet's triangular formation.

On we sped, into the darkness, showing no lights and progressing entirely by compass. Midnight came and passed, while we raced north over the limitless ice-fields, and it began to seem that the Kanlars had no stomach for fighting, now that we had come to attack them. I relieved Lantin at the controls of our car, an hour after midnight, and while he caught a little sleep on the car's floor, we soared smoothly on.

The soundless, mighty fleet of air-boats moving steadily along behind me, the monotonous, endless ice below, and the hour after hour that passed without any attack mate-

rializing, all of these smoothed down the fears in my mind and lulled me into a temporary lassitude. Half drowsing at the controls of the car, I kept beside the air-boat of Kethra, speeding on into the thick darkness. A glance at a dial told me that we were within a hundred miles of the ice-field's end, and the thought pulled me up somehow from the sudden weariness that had gripped me. Then, a half-mile ahead of me, there was a blinding glare of azure light, a crash that came loudly to my ears even from that distance, and then silence.

Through the mighty fleet behind me pulsed a sudden murmuring sound, a whisper of excitement, of expectancy. Lantin, aroused by the crash, jumped up and was at my side.

"One of the scouts," I cried to him; "the Kanlars are attacking them, and one was destroyed."

Even as I spoke, two more blue flashes jetted out of the darkness ahead, and two air-boats that were racing back to us went down in flames. And then, rushing toward us out of the darkness, came the Kanlar fleet.

In the very van of our own fleet, I had a twisted, misty vision of myriad dark shapes that rushed toward us; then, instinctively, I slanted our time-car up and sped up above the battle. We were weaponless, for the sound-rays could not have been used through the walls of our closed car, and so to remain in the very center of the conflict was to invite purposeless destruction.

For a moment, the world was filled with crashing sounds, as the two oncoming fleets met, their air-boats crashing here and there into air-boats of the opposing fleet. Then the battle resolved itself with sudden decision into myriad individual combats.

Stretching far away into the night, all around us, lay the two fleets, inextricably mixed and mingled with each other, and incapable of acting in two single units. Flashes of blue lightning burned from the air-boats of the Kanlars, and car after car of the Khluns was going down to death on the ice two miles below. By the light of the flashes, and the ensuing flames, the scene below us was ghastly, the air-boats, filled with brazen-armored guards and bright-robed Kanlars, or with the white-clad Khluns, grappling there in midair, plunging down to destruction, or swooping giddily upon one another. There was a chorus of humming sounds that rose even above the roar of the battle, and here and there the air-boats of the Kanlars were disintegrating and falling, spilling forth their occupants in midair. It was well that the Khluns had constructed their own air-boats of a material immune to their own sound-rays, since mixed as the battle was, many of their cars would have been downed by their own allies' weapons.

The battle had met and joined in less than a minute, while we hung above it. So far the fighting had been even, but now a thing occurred that tipped the scale in the Kanlars' favor.

Without warning, every air-boat of the Khluns suddenly glowed with misty light. Shouts of surprize and rage came up to us. The cars of the Kanlars were as dark as ever, and now, swooping out of the darkness upon the shining air-boats of the men of Kom, they sent them reeling down in flames by the dozens.

"Look!" cried Lantin, pointing up through the window in the car's top.

Far above, high over even our own car, were some twenty round, glowing circles of light, a light that was identical with the misty light that glowed from the cars of the Khluns.

"The Kanlars!" Lantin shouted. "There are air-boats up there, with apparatus that makes the Khluns'

cars shine, while their own remain dark! They must be destroyed, or it is all over with our forces!''

I looked around for Kethra, but he was lost to view in the battle that raged below. Nor was there any of our allies' cars around us, so I turned our own time-car and sent it racing up toward those glowing circles above.

Straight toward them we sped, with the power opened wide, and I braced myself for the shock. Our car struck the first glowing circle with a staggering shock, and ripped through the air-boat above it as if it were paper. We slanted on up, and looking down, I saw the car we had struck reeling down toward the battle below, broken and afire. I turned our car, hovered like a poised hawk for a second, and then flashed down again on the line of air-boats.

A dozen flashes of blue flame burned up toward me, but the tremendous swiftness of our car carried us out of line before they reached us. Flashing down on a long slant, I pointed the car's steel prow toward the center of the line of cars, and this time we plowed across two of them in our resistless, ramming swoop.

As we sped away into the darkness, I heard other crashes behind me, and when I again turned the car, it was to see the last of the Kanlar air-boats carrying those glowing circles go tumbling down to destruction. For below us the Khluns had seen and guessed the meaning of our attack, and had sped up to finish off those who had escaped us. And with the destruction of that score of hovering Kanlar cars, the strange glowing light that emanated from each of the Khlun cars ceased. What that light was, we never knew. Undoubtedly the Kanlars had devised some method of causing our own air-boats to become light-emitting, while theirs remained dark. Possibly a ray like the fluorescent ''black light'' of the World War, from which they had guarded their own cars by special means. Whatever the nature of it, the light was a deadly weapon in such a night battle, causing the Khluns' air-boats to stand out as shining marks for the blue flashes, while the cars of the Kanlars hovered invisibly about them in the darkness. But now, with the disappearance of that light, the battle tipped in favor of the men of Kom. Their deadly sound-rays filled the air with thrumming, and in groups, in masses, the air-boats of the enemy disintegrated, broke up, poured down to earth in a mixed shower of men and metal. Finally but a scant thirty cars remained of the Kanlar fleet, while around them circled almost two hundred of the Khlun air-boats, striking at them with the deadly sound-ray.

As we hovered above the battle, a single air-boat drove up toward us, and I saw that in it was Kethra. He stopped his car beside our own, and I opened the door of our car, while Lantin leaned out and shouted to him.

''You've won!'' cried Lantin, pointing down to the night below us, where the thrumming of sound-rays and jetting flashes of blue showed the dwindling conflict.

''We've won,'' he replied, ''but where is the Raider?''

''Lurking in the temple,'' replied Lantin, ''and it is there we must go now, to rescue our friends and destroy the Raider.''

''We'll do that,'' replied Kethra, ''but first——'' Abruptly he stopped speaking, and seemed to be listening tensely. I, too, was listening, and over the crash of air-boats and the humming sound-rays a sound came to my ears that beat in them like the drums of doom.

A little whisper of wind, a whisper that grew swiftly louder, that shrieked, that roared, that bellowed. Up from beneath came a gust of wind

of such force that our car heeled around under it, and with it came a piercing whistling to our ears, an eery chorus of wind-shrieks that changed to a thundering gale. Then, a hundred feet below us, there flashed into being—the Raider!

A MOMENT he hung below us, a thing of whirling mists, the three orbs of green glowing radiantly through the darkness. Then he had dropped down onto the battle, expanded, extended his own misty form until it held within it the score of air-boats in which were the survivors of the Kanlars' forces.

A second it continued thus, its vaporous form enveloping the remaining cars of the Kanlars, and then, out from the green, radiant triangle of orbs there burst flash on flash of green light, aimed at the surrounding cars of the Khluns. The cars touched by that green light vanished, simply disappeared from view, leaving a little cloud of radiant sparks which dimmed and vanished likewise.

There was a great shout from behind us, and down toward the Raider, from the car of Kethra, there dropped a thing like a black, enveloping net, queerly tenuous-seeming in the one glimpse of it I had. It was like a net of black force, dropping down on the Raider, but before it reached its objective, the Raider and the cars it held within it had abruptly vanished.

"The Raider!" cried Kethra. "He's gone on into time, with the surviving Kanlars! Follow, follow, follow!"

From the scores of air-boats below us came a savage yell, and there was a second's pause, a second's silence, and then our car was struck by a gale that nearly overturned it, and we hung alone in space. Kethra and his air-boats had followed the Raider on into time, with the time-wave apparatus we had showed them how to use. I knew, too, that at that moment half the air-boats were speeding into the past and half into the future, in search of the Raider, for that had been our plan in case we had need to pursue the Raider into time.

"Shut the car-door!" I cried to Lantin. "We'll follow, too."

"Wait!" he shouted, his head out of the circular door, peering away to the north.

The gray light of dawn was welling up in the east, and by it I saw, away to the north, a black speck that rushed down toward us. It raced on, and now I saw that it was a Khlun air-boat. It sped on toward us, and now I recognized it as the one we had dispatched to rescue our four friends from the pit.

The car sped on toward us, and I saw that on it were the pilot and his two aids, but not our friends. Even before the pilot shouted to us a premonition of disaster filled me.

"The pit!" cried the pilot, bringing his car up beside us.

"What of the pit?" I shouted. "What of our friends?"

"They're safe, for the time," he answered, "but the hordes are coming out of the pit!"

"What?" I yelled.

"They're coming out," he repeated. "I went straight to the Kanlar city, as you had instructed, and found that the Kanlar fleet had sped south to meet you. The city was in confusion, with all of the Kanlars and the guards gone with the fleet, and only the slaves and the women still there. I took my car straight into the temple, and found the shaft open that leads down to the pit. I went down that shaft, and picked your four friends up from the roof you designated, and they told me that after all the guards on the stair had left, with the fleet, the hordes in the pit began battering at the gate of the stair. I saw them doing that, hover-

ing above them in the darkness. They are mad, thirsty for loot and blood and battle. They cry among themselves that they will seize the flying-platforms on top of the temple and go south to loot Kom."

I gasped. The merciless hordes of the pit, sweeping down on unprotected Kom! I knew that there were men in the pit capable of operating the flying-platforms, if they reached them. They would sweep down upon the city beyond the ice in an avalanche of death and destruction. And Kethra and all his men were somewhere in time, pursuing and battling the Raider!

"Where did you leave our friends?" cried Lantin.

"At the pit's edge, in the temple," answered the other, and we exchanged swift glances, the same thought coming to us at the same time.

"They asked to be left there," added the pilot.

Lantin spoke swiftly to him. "Go after Kethra!" he told him. "You have the time-wave apparatus on your air-boat?" And when the other nodded, he said, "Then go on into time and bring back Kethra and his forces! If the hordes get to the temple's top and seize the flying-platforms, it is the end for all at Kom!"

The pilot hesitated. "And you?"

"Wheeler and I are for the temple," Lantin told him; "with our friends, we'll try to hold the hordes in the pit until you come back with Kethra and his forces. Go, man!"

The pilot cried assent, clicked a switch, and his car had disappeared, speeding into time after Kethra and his men. And now, under my control, our own car sped north toward the city of cylinders.

I THINK that of all our trips in the car, we attained our highest speed then. Rocketing low above the ground, the landscape beneath us, the endless billows of ice, seemed to pass beneath us in a white blur. We shot across the sky like a comet, and in a few minutes the green land of the Kanlars' country replaced the ice, and then there hove into view the gleaming white city of cylinders.

I swept down toward the great cylinder that was the temple, and brought the car to earth in the shelter of a little clump of trees outside the great building. We sprang out, raced up the ramp, and down the tunneled entrance into the temple's interior.

The metal floor was not in place, and before us yawned the abyss that was the shaft leading down to the pit. Away across the temple, standing on the ring of black flooring that was the shaft's rim, was a group of men, seemingly tiny, toylike figures there in the empty temple's immensity. We ran around the black rim toward them.

It was Denham and his three companions, and they ran forward to meet us, gripped our hands warmly.

"Where are your forces?" asked Denham. "Where are the people of Kom? The hordes are getting ready to come up from the pit, man! Listen," he commanded, and I walked to the shaft's edge and looked down.

From far below, muffled by the great distance, yet coming with force to my ears, there rose a dim roar, the savage shout of thousands of mad warriors. And above that dull roaring there was the clangor of metal smiting on metal.

"They're beating down the gate," Denham said, "and in a few minutes they'll be pouring up that stair. But where is the aid you were to bring?"

In a few words I explained the battle we had taken part in, and the pursuit of the Raider into time by Kethra and his men. "We must hold them in the pit, somehow," I told them, "until Kethra and his forces come back. If those hordes once get to the temple's roof and

seize the flying-platforms, it means hideous death for all at Kom!"

"Couldn't you close the metal floor of the temple?" suggested Lantin. "Swing it back in place and close the shaft?"

"But how?" asked Denham. "We've searched but can't find the secret of the floor, or how it is moved."

"But the collapsible stair!" I put in; "you can fold that back! Lantin and I did, the night we escaped!"

"Look!" ordered Denham, pointing toward the spot where the little folding stair had been. I looked, and despair rushed over me. For the stair had been removed, and instead of it, steps had been cut into the side of the shaft itself, leading from the spiral stairway in the shaft to the ring of black flooring on which we stood.

"The guards must have cut those steps after you escaped," said Denham, "probably because they would not allow anyone to play on them again the trick you did. We heard of your exploit, in the pit."

Up from the shaft was coming now an increasing clamor, and the battering on the gate far below had increased in fierceness.

"But how, then, are we to hold them in the pit?" I asked, despairingly. "A messenger has gone into time after Kethra and his forces, and if we could only check these hordes until he comes——"

Abruptly the Aztec spoke, calmly, gravely. "We are five," he said, "five strong swords. And the stair is narrow."

There was a moment of silence, for the idea he broached was stunning in its audacity. Then D'Alord laughed in sheer delight. "Good!" he cried. "Why, 'twill be easy! Ixtil is right. We are five blades here, and the stair is narrow. We'll show them sword-play, eh?"

A sudden reckless excitement burned through me like fire. "Good enough!" I cried. The Roman broke in on us. "Down the stair, then, at once! We'll meet them at the very bottom, if possible, and then when they do force us back up, it will give us a long enough delay for the aid you speak of to get here."

We ran toward the steps cut in the shaft, but Denham halted us by an exclamation. "Look!" he cried, pointing some distance along the wall of the temple. "There are suits of the guards' armor, hanging up. We'll need them, before we are through today!"

We saw the wisdom of his suggestion, and hastily acted on it, donning suits of the brazen armor and helmets to match. The Roman alone, who was already attired very similarly, did not join us.

And now we rushed toward the steps in the shaft's side, and down them to the beginning of the spiral stair. Down the stair we ran, recklessly throwing ourselves around the curves of that airy, high-flung pathway. Looking down, I saw that the light in the pit was growing, as the dawn began to flame in the world above, and I glimpsed vaguely through the rising mists a great horde that eddied and swirled about the bottom of the stairway. Up to our ears, stronger and stronger, came the clanging of heavy metal objects striking the barred gate, while there rose at the same time a savage roar from the pit's bloodthirsty hordes.

We raced on, down and down until I was near to dropping with exhaustion. And still the Roman sternly spurred us forward, with the cheering assurance that the farther down we went, the farther up the hordes would need to press us back. Finally we reached the fourth curve of the spiral stair above the ground, a height of perhaps two thousand feet above the pit's floor. And there the Roman halted us.

"We'll make our stand here," he said. The clangor and the roaring below were deafening, now, and for a few minutes we lay upon the steps exhausted, then rose to our feet, one by one. Fabrius stood a step below the rest of us, his heavy shortsword in his hand, calmly looking down toward the pit. I drew my own rapier, my heart thumping wildly, but I strove to appear as calm as the Roman. Denham, with elaborate unmindfulness of the roaring mobs below, drew forth a snuff-box containing a few grains of the brown powder, and offered us each in turn a pinch, which we refused, then daintily took some himself.

"Ha, Ixtil," cried D'Alord, slapping the Aztec on the back gleefully, "this should be a better fight even than those in the pit, eh?" The chieftain smiled darkly, shifting his saw-toothed sword from hand to hand, but made no other answer, and the Frenchman turned to me.

"What of him?" he demanded, pointing to Lantin. "He has no sword."

I turned in dismay, for I had forgotten my friend, almost. "You'd best go back up to the temple's top," I told him. "Wait for the coming of Kethra, and guide him down to us. You can be no good here, you know, so don't risk yourself."

The others seconded my suggestion, warmly urging Lantin to return to the temple's top and await the aid from Kethra, but he refused. "I have this," he said, showing us an automatic which he had snatched up when we sprang from the time-car. Finally we compromised by placing him on the stair some distance behind and above us, where he could use the few but precious shots in his weapon when it was most necessary to do so.

Now we turned from him, for with a sudden mighty clang the great gate below went down. There was a tremendous shout, a savage roar of triumph, and then the tramping of thousands of feet as the hordes in the pit flooded toward the overturned gate and raced up the stair.

Looking down, we saw them ascending toward us, coming in such close-packed order that many were crowded from the low-walled stair and dashed down to death below. But still they came on, a bellowing, blood-thirsty mob, until they were winding around the stair just across the spiral from us.

Denham drew his sword, now, and we stepped down so that we stood in a single line across the stair, the Roman at the center, with D'Alord and Ixtil on his left side and Denham and me on the other.

And now the hordes surged around the bend of the stair, racing up toward us. A sudden cry went up from them as they glimpsed us, and momentarily the human wave sucked back, and the close-packed mob halted. A moment there was silence, while they stared up at us. I stole a glance at my companions. The face of Fabrius was stern but unperturbed, and he gripped his sword firmly, eyeing the mob below with eagle gaze. D'Alord's face was darkly flushed, his eyes gleaming. Ixtil leaned forward in a tense, tigerish crouch, while Denham, beside me, lounged negligently, leaning on his rapier and regarding the crowd below us with a mocking, contemptuous smile.

Only a moment that silence lasted, while the hordes gazed up at us. Then, as they saw that we were but five, a beastlike roar went up and they raced up toward us, vying for the honor of slaying us.

Up, up they came, a sea of ragged figures, a storm of flashing weapons. A catlike Egyptian and a giant Chinaman were first of that mob, with behind them the massed weight of the hordes in the pit, pushing up

from far below, to win up to the flying-platforms that would carry them to the loot of Kom.

As though in a dream, I saw the fierce faces coming up toward us, and then there was a clash of steel on steel that brought me to my senses. D'Alord and Fabrius had each leapt forward a step and with two strokes that were like darting flashes of lightning had struck down the Egyptian and the Chinaman. Over their bodies came the others, and for an instant the air seemed thick with darting sword-blades, at which I whirled and thrust and parried.

A brutal-faced man in medieval chain-armor was my nearest opponent, and as I realized the fact, he swung up his heavy sword for a crashing stroke. But while he raised the cumbrous weapon, I darted out my rapier and he fell with a spreading red stain at his throat. A white-robed, sallow man thrust at me with a long spear, over his body, but the sword of the Roman flashed down and cut the head from the spear, then flashed again and the man went down. A dozen blades glinted off my armor and helmet, and I thrust out savagely and blindly, felt the blade pierce through flesh and blood, once, twice. And now, shaken by our first fierce resistance, the mob fell back a little, while we stood panting, surveying the scene of that first clash.

At our feet lay a dozen or more men, dead or dying. As yet none of us had been wounded, with the exception of D'Alord, who was bleeding from a cut on the back of his wrist. The narrowness of the stairway had been our salvation, since only a few men at a time could come at us, and these were hampered by the press of those behind them.

But I saw that the battle had only begun. The mob was again surging up toward us, more fiercely than before. I glanced back up the stair, but there was no sign of Kethra's forces. Then I turned my attention back to the oncoming hordes, for already our blades were clashing with theirs.

A succession of savage faces appeared before me, confused and changing, and I thrust until my wrist was tired to numbness. I heard, even above the clash of blades and shouts of our opponents, the voice of D'Alord, who was mocking his opponents in rapid French, disparaging their skill and crying out when he beat down their guard. And, soaring high over all the other sounds of the battle, rose a weird, piercing cry, the battle-cry of the Aztec.

"Alalala!" he shouted. "Alalala! Alalala!"

The stairs at our feet became slippery with blood, choked with bodies, and we gave back a few steps. This gave us further advantage, for we stood on firm, dry footing, while those who came at us slipped and fell on the smooth metal of the steps below us, smeared as it was with the life-blood of their fellows. Yet they came on, ever on, forced us around and around the spiral, up, up, ever up the stair.

We were forced up until we had entered the shaft and the wall on our right gave us added support. In the semi-darkness of the shaft, too, it was harder for those coming at us to see us, while they were more plainly visible to us against the light of the pit below.

A ragged, squint-eyed little man crept under the legs of those battling us, and jabbed at me with a javelin. In the confusion of battle we had shifted in position until I was now next to the low wall that kept us from the abyss. Now, as the javelin stabbed up at me, I stooped swiftly beside the low barrier, and with a flashing stroke across his neck, finished my squint-eyed opponent. But as I started to rise again, a great figure loomed above me, a giant black

who swung up above his head a heavy, horn-hafted ax. He was standing on the low wall itself, balancing himself for a crashing downstroke of the ax, which I could not resist.

He uttered a fierce cry, whirled the ax about over his head, and swung it down toward me, but as his arm started that downward motion there was a sharp crack from the stair above, and he toppled down into the abyss. In the very nick of time, Lantin's shot had saved me.

But on came the hordes, pushing us up and up by sheer weight of numbers, until it seemed madness that five men should thus stand against thousands. Around and around the up-spiraling stair they forced us, so that sometimes we fought on one side of the shaft and sometimes on another. Now and then, sated with fighting, they would draw back for a few moments, and this gave us precious intervals of rest, but always they came on again, always they pushed us up. Man after man of them hurtled down to death in the pit, for as the hordes came on they threw their own dead and dying over the rail into the abyss, so that the stair might be unencumbered.

We were very near to the temple-floor by now, and I was bleeding from a dozen flesh-wounds, nor were the rest of us in better case. Ixtil had a great cut in one cheek, and Fabrius had been wounded in the leg by a thrown spear. D'Alord, too, was a bloody figure, and had ceased to jeer at his adversaries, fighting now in grim silence. Alone among us, Denham remained virtually unscathed, and he fought on unchanged. His slender, needlelike rapier flashed here and there with wonderful speed and precision, always stabbing at the exact right spot, with the exact force needed. And he still smiled scornfully as his blade dealt death.

A half-dozen times Lantin's pistol had saved one of us from death, barking out a grim message when we were pressed too close. But now we were becoming ever more weary, were being pressed ever more swiftly up by fresh opponents, with the weight of the hordes behind them. All down the great spiral, clear to the floor of the pit, the stair was crowded with the hordes, pressing us ever upward, their own weight and numbers hampering with deadly effect those who were nearest us, and who were pushed forward with no chance for choosing their thrusts.

At last we reached the stair's end, and stood on the black ring of flooring around the abyss. When we could no longer hold them from emerging onto that flooring, we suddenly turned and ran toward the other spiral stair which circled the interior of the cylindrical temple, winding from balcony to balcony up to the building's roof.

And there our fight began anew, for when the hordes emerged into the temple they did not stream outside into the city, as I had hoped, but continued to press us up toward the roof, where were the flying-platforms that would carry them to the rich loot of mighty Kom. They could have had freedom, but it was not enough. They were thirsty for the riches awaiting them at Kom. So not a man of them left the temple, all combining to force us up the narrow stair that spiraled up the temple's interior, a replica of the one in the shaft, though much smaller, and the only road to the building's roof.

They were pressing us closely, now, and we could hardly keep to our feet. Then, a hundred feet from the ceiling of the great building, a shout of triumph went up from the hordes, for D'Alord went down, stunned by a blow on the head from a great mace. Fabrius rushed forward to drag him back, and was himself struck down

by a blow from the same club. It seemed that our fight was over, then and there, when there came a sharp rattle of shots from behind and some six or seven of our opponents went down, felled by the last shots of Lantin's pistol.

Involuntarily the mob fell back for a few steps, and we seized the opportunity to drag D'Alord and the Roman to their feet. Fabrius was unhurt and D'Alord had only been stunned, quickly reviving. And now, as the mob below hung for a moment hesitant, not knowing how many more shots Lantin had at his disposal, two men sprang out of their number and faced us.

One was a lithe, brown-skinned Malay, who waved a gleaming kris aloft and called to the rest to resume the attack. But the other it was who held my gaze, a blond giant with long, waving hair, who shouted fiercely and waved a battle-ax aloft, calling to his companions to follow him to the attack.

It was Cannell!

Cannell, for whom we had come across the centuries! Cannell, whom we had seen seized by the Raider and taken, whom we had searched for in vain in the city of the pit. There was a great, half-healed wound on his temple, and his eyes were alight with blood-lust, so that I could see that he knew us not.

I was brushed aside, and someone sped by me from above. It was Lantin, and before we could stop him he had passed us and had raced down the intervening steps toward Cannell, his face alight at seeing the friend we had come through time to rescue.

"Cannell!" he cried, rushing toward him with hands outstretched. We looked in that instant to see him slain, but no blow was struck, the mob seeming paralyzed by astonishment. I saw Lantin reach out to Cannell, saw the blood-lust leave him; his eyes cleared as he looked at Lantin, the past coming back to him over his time in the bloody pit.

He dropped his ax and took a step toward Lantin, his face alight with recognition. Then we uttered a helpless groan, for the Malay, who stood at the low rail behind Lantin, had recovered from his surprize and now swept up his curved blade over Lantin's head.

I shouted, and started down toward Lantin, but knew myself too late to ward off that blow. Cannell looked, saw the upflung, menacing blade, and uttered a great shout. He had no weapon in his hand, but with one great bound he leapt up toward the Malay, gripped him in his arms, and then the two swayed, toppled, fell, hurtled down into the abyss, twisting and turning, locked in a death-grip, down through the temple's interior, down into the darkness of the vast shaft below, down to the pit-floor far beneath.

I was down to Lantin now, grasped him and dragged him back, and before the massed hordes recovered from their astonishment, he was behind us. They turned now, saw, and howled their rage, racing up toward our waiting swords.

A torrent of raging swords, they pushed us up until we stood at the stair's end. Behind us was a high, vaulted room, and at its other side the stair continued, leading still up. We turned, ran across that room, the triumphant horde behind us, and when we reached the stair at the room's other side, turned again and faced them.

Up through a half-dozen such rooms they forced us, through dim, great halls with patterns of fire on their walls, with unguessed, looming mysteries lurking in their shadows, vaguely glimpsed by me as we ran through them. The lair of the Raider, those dim halls, I knew. And, at last, the narrow stair from one of them emerged onto the roof itself,

and we stood at the point where that stair opened onto the great, flat roof, barring the way of the hordes in our final stand.

Behind us, on the great expanse of the roof, were low-walled, oval platforms of metal, great of size, stacked one upon another. Enough flying-platforms, I knew, to carry all the hordes below us down to the loot of Kom. And the foremost of our opponents saw them also, and yelled with savage triumph.

If we had fought fiercely before, we battled like supermen now, in a last spurt of energy. Our swords clicked and flashed like swift shuttles, weaving strands of death from enemy to enemy, as we used all the mad strength of despair to hold back the hordes for a last moment.

"*Mordieu!*" shouted D'Alord. "This is the end, comrades!"

I turned to answer him, then halted. From above, from the sun-flooded air of early morning, had sounded a long, rising shriek of wind, a piercing whistle of a rising gale. A fierce burst of wind struck us, and cold, ice-cold, flooded through my heart. There was a thundering of wind-sounds above, another buffeting gust of cold air, and then appeared abruptly, a hundred feet above us, the Raider!

"God!" muttered Lantin, behind me. The blades of our enemies and ourselves had ceased to clash, and with a common impulse we gazed up. The Raider's swirling mists contracted suddenly, his three orbs of green changed to purple, and he drifted gently, tauntingly, down toward us.

A HOWL of triumph went up from the hordes on the stair. Away down and around the spiraling stairway it went, down all their packed masses, down into the shaft to the pit itself, all taking up and passing on that savage, exultant shout.

For we had lost. Kethra had lost. The Raider had somehow eluded him, in time, and had come back to destroy us and to loose his hordes on the flying-platforms, to send them down to Kom in a rain of death, while Kethra vainly searched time for the Raider. We had lost.

Slowly, slowly, the Raider came down toward us, while the hordes below us watched with delighted expectancy. Spinning, twisting, it sank down until it hung a scant twenty feet above us, and we waited, helpless, for the destroying flashes from the central orbs.

Suddenly D'Alord stepped forward, and uttering a yell of defiance, he picked a sword from the floor, whirled it around his head and sent it hurtling spear-wise up toward the Raider.

It fell back, missed by yards. And now the gray, shapeless mass of the Raider spun and laced with inconceivable rapidity, while down upon us darted flash on flash of purple, destroying fire, from the central orbs.

The flashes fell short! Between us and the Raider was hanging a veil of transparent black, a tenuous black net that was suspended in midair above us, and against which the purple flashes splashed and stopped. I turned swiftly, and a little behind and above me was hovering the air-boat of Kethra. It moved toward us, and we stepped on it. And in that same instant, there appeared in the air all around us, above and around the temple and the Raider, score on score of the air-boats, crowded with the men of Kom.

From them darted a hundred black nets like the one that hung before us. The black veils closed upon the Raider, contracted, and while he spun and changed and twisted with mad speed, the veils contracted still until they were a black ball five feet across,

in which he was prisoned. Then, from Kethra's air-boat and from all around us, there darted flash on flash of orange flame, which struck the black ball, burned fiercely for a moment, and then vanished. In the air there drifted only a shining mist, and then that too was swept away!

Now, from all the hovering air-boats came the thrumming of the sound-rays, directed at the temple and the city, from all the scores of cars that hung above that city. The ground beneath pitched, heaved up torturedly, and then the city collapsed, sank down with a thundering, ear-splitting roar into the great pit that lay beneath, the earth over the cavern being shattered by the disintegrating vibrations of the sound-rays.

All the city, with the great temple below us, crashed down, and vanished in a mighty cloud of dust. The dust hung, cleared, disappeared. And beneath lay nothing but a great depression in the earth, a vast, raw bowl in the earth's surface, with here and there a white fragment showing in the brown earth. Under that huge sunken bowl, I well knew, lay the city of the cylinders, with its Kanlars and soulless slaves, and under it, too, lay the city of the pit, and the people of the pit, the thousands of fierce warriors who had pressed us up the stair so savagely, seeking to carry destruction and death down to a peaceful city.

Standing there on Kethra's car, we surveyed the scene in silence. And there was silence all around us, for from all the massed cars came no word or shout, the men on them gazing down into the torn depression below as though loth to believe that their victory was won at last, the evil menace of the Raider crushed forever. So we looked, there in the hushed silence.

In the east, the sun was rising higher . . . higher. . . .

CHAPTER 18

EIGHT MINUTES!

It was hours later, toward the end of the hot, brilliant afternoon, that we parted at last from Kethra and his men. On the green earth around that brown pit where once had stood the city of cylinders, the Khlun air-boats were resting, ready for their long flight homeward across the ice. Our own time-car lay behind us, for in that tense moment before the city had collapsed under the sound-rays' vibrations, a hovering air-boat had spied our car in the little glade where we had left it, and had managed to raise it from the ground before the crash. And now, with our four friends, we stood beside it, bidding Kethra farewell.

We had heard from him the story, as amazing as our own, of what had befallen his forces when they pursued the Raider into the future, how they had chased him almost to the world's end, indeed, pursuing him into time so far that the sun grew old and small, and the world a world of death and twilight; of how they had forced the Raider to desert the Kanlar cars it held, which they had destroyed; and of how it had eluded them in time and come racing back to confront us on the temple's roof. He told, too, of how the messenger sent through time by Lantin and me had finally found him and brought him back in the nick of time to destroy Raider, hordes and city.

Kethra, and all his men, had pressed us to return with them to Kom, but we refused. An intolerable nostalgia, a longing for our own time, filled us, and our four friends were as eager to return to their own centuries as we were. And so, standing with them beside our time-car, we bade our friends of Kom farewell.

"You do wisely, men of the past," said Kethra. "It is not good that a

man should leave his own time and venture into others. The secret of time-traveling is an evil secret. And when our fleet has returned to Kom, every car in it will be stripped of the time-wave apparatus, and all those time-wave mechanisms will be destroyed by us. For now that our end has been accomplished, and the Raider destroyed, none of us will ever again venture into past or future."

"You speak truth," said Lantin, sadly; "for though we came on through the ages ourselves, we could not save our friend. And when we have returned our four friends here to their own ages, and reached ours again, we too will destroy this car. And the secret of time-traveling will remain with us, a secret."

We each grasped Kethra's hand, waved farewell to the hundreds in the air-boats on the ground around us, and then entered our own car. With our four friends, its interior was crowded, but there was enough room for Lantin to manipulate the controls, and so the car rose swiftly, circled for a moment above the air-boats on the ground, then fled swiftly toward the southwest.

Behind us the green, warm land of the Kanlars faded to a speck against the ice, and as we sped on, we moved through time also, passing swiftly into the past.

THREE hours later we hung above a vast highland country, having penetrated into the past to the year 1520, four hundred years before our own time. And below us hung the white city of Tenochtitlan, metropolis of the Aztec people.

We slanted down toward it, through the darkness, for we had come to it at night. Toward the city's edge was the glimmer of a broad lake, and from great pyramids flashed burning fires of crimson. In its dark streets was a stir of movement, and up to us came the roar of a fierce battle, with cries of wounded, and twang of bows, and here and there the roar of an arquebus or cannon.

Ixtil leaned toward the window, gazed down with tense interest. "It is my people," he said, turning to us, "my city, my time."

And so, swooping down upon the city through the concealing darkness, we halted the car on a flat, white roof, and Ixtil stepped out. He turned, and with more emotion than I had ever yet seen upon his fierce face, bade us farewell.

D'Alord, Denham, Fabrius, each wrung his hand silently, and then the Aztec turned to me. He drew the saw-edged sword from his belt, and handed it to me, hilt-foremost.

"Take it," he told me. "I can give you nothing else, and it may remind you of our fight on the stair, comrade, when you have reached your own time."

I took the weapon, stammered my thanks, and he inclined his head gravely, then turned and sped from the roof, down through the building to the battle in the street below, racing toward it with fierce haste.

D'Alord broke the silence that followed. "What a fighter!" he exclaimed. "And now he is gone. Well, on, friends!"

So we rose again from the roof, above the body-choked streets, where we knew the conquistadors of Cortez strove with the city's people. The car rose high, and then raced east with the power opened to the last notch.

In the hours that followed, as we rocketed over the gray Atlantic at a speed of nearly ten miles a minute, we were again speeding into the past, back still farther, so that when the green, leg-shaped peninsula of Italy lay beneath us, we had gone back to the First Century of the Christian

era, as nearly as possible to the year which Fabrius claimed as his own.

We left him there, on a bare, grassy hilltop outside the city of Rome. Before parting, he too unbuckled his heavy shortsword and handed it to me. "Ixtil gave you his sword," he said, "and when it is your car that has brought me back to my own world, I can do no less." He stepped back and said simply, "*Vale!*" and then we had sped on into time and left him.

We turned, now, in time, sped on to the first year of the Seventeenth Century, and in space fled north till we hung over southern France. And with D'Alord guiding our course from the window, exclaiming at every familiar landmark on the ground below, we came finally to the little village where he desired to be left.

" 'Twas there I was stationed when the Raider seized me, curse him!" he told us; "so set me down outside it."

Again the car came down to the ground, in a field beyond the village, just at sunrise. D'Alord opened the car's door, then hesitated.

"*Sacré!*" he exclaimed. "When I was in the pit I was afire to get back to my own time, but now I half wish that we could have stayed together, comrades. But Kethra was right. Every man to his own time."

He drew and regarded his long, heavy sword. "It's for you, comrade," he told me. "Like Ixtil and Fabrius, it's all I can give you. Though I don't think you'll need it to make you remember our fight on the stair, eh?" His laugh rang out. "*Dieu,* what a fight was that!"

He grasped the hands of Denham and of Lantin and me, and with forced gayety slapped us on the back, then sprang quickly out of the car, and stood beside it. I closed the door, and our car rose swiftly above the field. And looking down, I saw the receding figure of D'Alord, still standing where we had left him, waving his hat toward us in a final gesture of farewell, the wind of dawn blowing through his hair.

And so we left him, and raising the car high above the earth, sped back again across the broad Atlantic. And too, we came on farther into time until when we came into view of the New Jersey coasts, we had come on into time a space of almost two hundred years, for the dials registered the fact that our car had reached the year 1777, when Denham had been seized by the Raider.

We had offered to land him in England, but he had refused. "I'm a soldier," he told us, "and it would be desertion. Let me down at Philadelphia, or near it." So the car planed down through the darkness to a field beyond Camden, and there came to rest in deep snow, for we had stopped our time-progress in the dead of winter, and at night.

Denham stepped out of the car, and we followed him. There was no moon, but the stars above were brilliant, the sheen of their light reflected from the glistening, silent fields around us. It was bitterly cold, and we shivered, standing there.

"And so the last of us part," said Denham. "Curse me if I like it, either. Think of it, Wheeler: Ixtil and Fabrius and D'Alord are already dead and dust, have been for centuries."

"They're not, Denham," I said. "They're only separated from us by time, as well as space. At least we have learned one thing, that time is largely a delusion, after all, and that the men of one age are not much different from those of another."

"It's so," he said. "And I never had better friends than Ixtil and D'Alord and Fabrius, and Lantin and you. We've seen some things together, since we met in the city of cylinders, Wheeler. Well, we shan't meet again. And so—good-bye."

He shook my hand, and Lantin's, and then, like the other three, drew and handed to me his slender rapier.

"You have four swords now, Wheeler. And each from a different time. It may be that they'll remind you of all we went through together, in the city of cylinders and in the pit below it. I am only sorry that we could not find your friend Cannell in time to save him. But it was fate."

"It was fate," Lantin repeated, "and he died nobly. So, in a measure, I am content."

Lantin and I stepped back into our car, now. Outside, as we rose above the ground, Denham called to us again.

"Good-bye, Wheeler! Good-bye, Lantin!"

I answered, waving to him at the car's window, and thus we left him, a dark, dwindling figure against the starlit fields of snow. We raced north, now, and sped on toward our own time, back to the year, the month, the day, when we had started. We swept down upon pinnacled Manhattan, through the warm darkness of the summer night, and after hovering for a time above the perplexing maze of buildings, sank gently down upon the roof from which we had started.

The car stopped, and we stepped out on the roof, looking around us strangely. The scene was the same as when we had left, the panorama of the city's lights around us, the brilliant stars above, and the stabbing searchlights of the anchored battleship.

Lantin stepped across the roof into his apartment. He snapped on the lights, then called to me. When I entered the room and stood beside him, he pointed mutely toward a clock above the fireplace. I looked, and a strange feeling swept over me.

We had made our momentous start from the roof at 10 o'clock exactly, when we had first ventured into time. And now it was but eight minutes past 10, but eight minutes later in that same night.

Eight minutes!

We had gone on into the future fifteen thousand years, had lain for days imprisoned, in the city of the cylinders and the city of the pit. We had met our friends of the pit, had planned and executed our daring escape, had fled madly to our car, pursued by the guards, and had then flashed south across countless leagues of ice. We had stayed for days at Kom, amid the wonders of Kom, had raced back north with the great fleet of Kethra, had met and battled the Kanlars, and had held the ravening thousands of the pit in check upon the great stair, with our friends. We had seen the Raider destroyed, had sped back in time to hang above the wonder-city of the Aztecs, while Aztec and Spaniard battled in the streets below us. Had sped across the world to Rome, in the days of its imperial glory, back through time to Seventeenth Century France, and so on to our own land, to stop once and part with the last of our friends and then speed down to the very roof from which we had made our start. From the far past to the far future, we had ranged through time, from the Rome of the Cæsars to the mighty city of the Khluns.

Eight minutes!

EPILOGUE

So our great adventure ended, and so this record of it comes to a close. We destroyed the time-car, and burned all of our written records of the experiments connected with it. For never again, through the knowledge that we gathered, shall men venture into time.

Yet because we felt that some part of what we had learned belonged to the world of science, Lantin and I, in

this history and in our two technical works, have striven to record part of what we saw and did. Reading, men will not be able to build time-cars for themselves, but they may gain suggestions and do work that will make better our own life, our own world.

Lantin and I live quietly enough, now, sharing a small Long Island cottage. Yet for all our work at the Foundation, and our contacts with our friends there, I do not think that either of us takes much interest in the world around us, or in our fellow-men. I think that the day's best hours, for each of us, are those of evening, when we can sit quietly together, recalling to mind the things we saw and did in that far time which the world will not see for fifteen thousand years to come.

We speak often of that strange being of alien terror which we called the Raider. Speak, too, of the Kanlars and their city of cylinders, of the barbaric city of the pit, and the Babel-like hordes that filled it, of Kom and the men of Kom. And sometimes, gazing musingly into our fireplace in the length of the winter evenings, Lantin will speak of Cannell, whom we crossed a hundred centuries to rescue, and who plunged down to a voluntary death to save his friend.

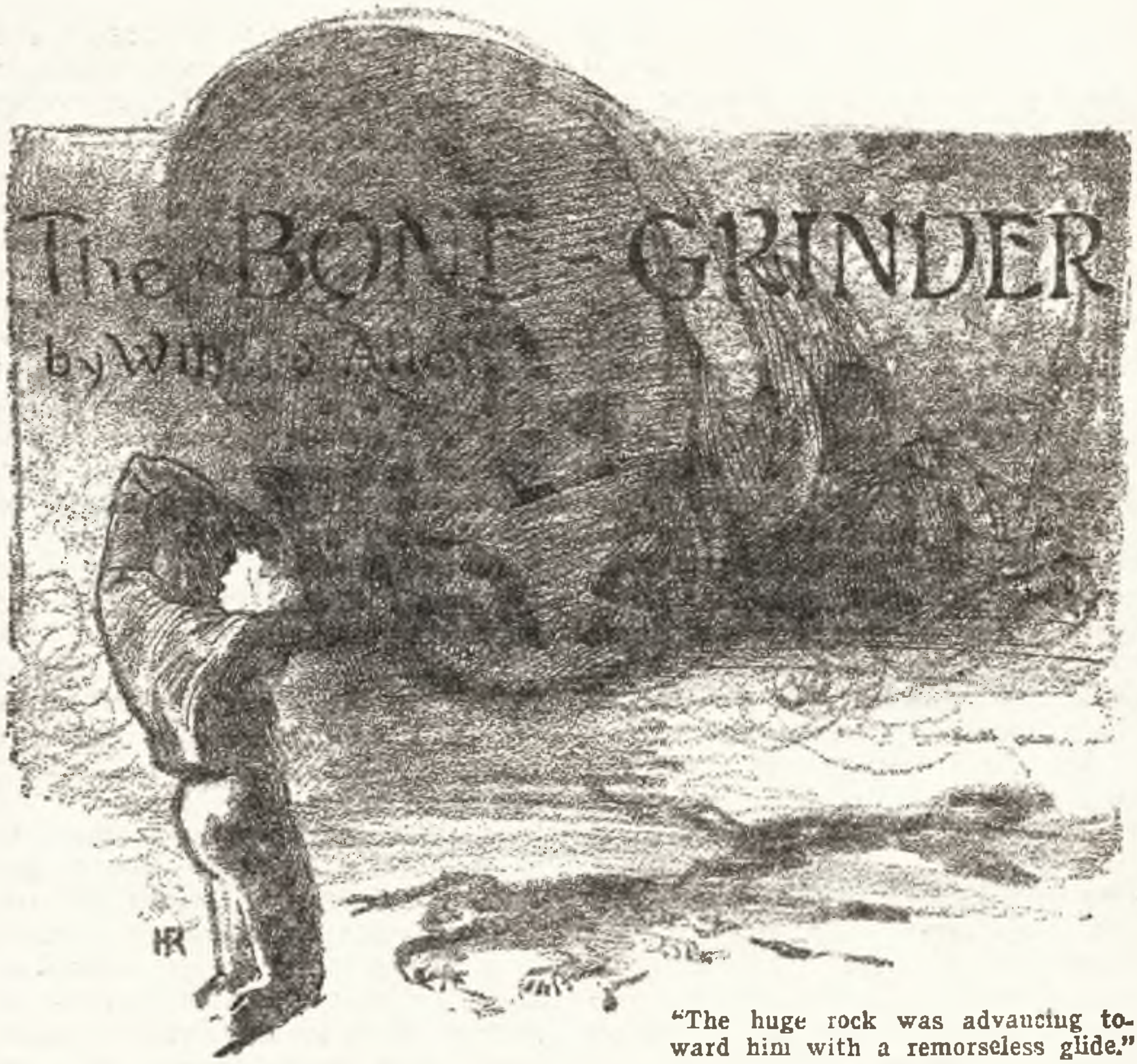
Always, though, sooner or later, there comes a halt to our speech and we look up with a common impulse to a spot where a sheaf of four swords is fastened to the wall. Four strange weapons, from four different ages.

One is a thick shortsword of bronze, its edges scarred and dented. Another is a saw-toothed weapon, the like of which you may see in more than one museum, but which I saw flashing in deadly action. The third blade is a long one, a silver fleur-de-lys inlaid upon its heavy hilt. And the last is a slender, flexible rapier, which took toll of half a hundred lives in our last mad battle.

Where are they now, our four friends, who stood with us on the great stair when six men held back thousands, who planned and fought and bled with us until together we brought about the destruction of the Kanlars and the Raider? Shall we ever see them again?

I do not know. But one thing I do know, that was known even to the supreme wisdom of Kethra and the men of Kom. And that is that there is a power above man's, a wisdom above his, secrets that will never be his. So if, on the other side of death, there lies a timeless world, we'll yet foregather there with our four friends, strike hands in friendship once again, and range that world together, as once we ranged through time.

[THE END]



"The huge rock was advancing toward him with a remorseless glide."

THERE was a legend in the mountains of the upper corner of Sonora. If the four had ever heard of it, or rather, if they had known what gave the legend its basis, probably they would have stayed away. Perhaps, being the adventurers they were, they would have gone the sooner. But they had never heard—never have yet, for of the four, only one came out alive, and he, fearing madness if he allows his mind to dwell on the horrors of that trip, will not let anyone even speak of Sonora in his presence.

But among the natives, ninety-nine parts Indian, one part Spanish—though they will savagely resent any implication that theirs is not the pure blue blood of the Castilian—the legend was whispered, with a fearful crossing of the heart and an appeal to the Virgin to precede and follow the whispering. For the legend represented more than a legend to them. It was a very real and present danger; though today, thanks to the good God who had at last answered their prayers and sent the strong-willed gringo to break the power of the Bone-Grinder, it is only a legend of past horror.

Bert Alldyne it was who organized the hunt. Bert was always organizing some sort of a hunt or trip. He had heard that a species of the bighorn was found in scanty numbers in the more inaccessible parts of

the mountains of Sonora. Perhaps the horns would not be any finer than those which adorned the heads of the more northerly sheep, but the difficulty of obtaining them was a great charm. So, gathering three friends, he made up the party.

The little collection of adobe huts which was the point at which they left the railroad was hardly cooler than the rickety train which had carried them down. But it meant activity, and within an hour the four had obtained and saddled their horses, including a pack burro to carry the necessary supplies. The sleepy place, which for a time had been disturbed by the unusual intrusion, was again going to sleep, only a few of the natives hanging about to watch the departure, when with the suddenness of a stroke of lightning, it happened.

The first warning was when the other two heard Jim Nelson's startled voice: "For God's sake, look at Tom!"

Turning quickly, the others saw Jim's brother, Tom, standing beside his mount, his eyes toward the hills behind the little place, his face contorted as though it were the battleground of demons. Before any of the others could move, he sprang on the horse and was off at a mad pace, the few Mexicans in his path scurrying aside to cross themselves as though it were the devil himself who was dashing off at break-neck speed. The very dogs which usually ran yipping and nipping at the heels of one's horse seemed to cower and slink away in terror as though recognizing the presence of some unseen force.

The three who were left turned to each other in consternation. It was Alldyne who broke the silence as he leapt toward his horse with a muttered exclamation.

The other two followed his lead in a flash, when one of the Mexicans who had been in the cowering group stepped forward quickly and grasped Alldyne's reins while he spoke with a curious mixture of terror and urgency, "No, *Señor,* do not go. It will be enough that that poor man should die, for now we shall be free for another year. If you go you can not save him and only would it mean that you all should die too."

The earnestness of the Mexican's manner, in strange contrast with the evident terror which paled his red skin to a sickly yellow, caused the rider to halt for a moment. Then, without speaking, he tore the reins loose from the trembling fingers of the Mexican, and turning his horse's head, was off after the fast-disappearing figure of Tom Nelson, his companions at his heels.

THE way the fleeing man had taken did not follow the main trail, but rather a faintly marked trail which was to all appearances abandoned, at least so far as modern travel was concerned. So deeply worn that it had evidently been a well-traveled path at one time, that time must have been long ago, for it was overgrown and so filled in places with gravel wash that it was plain its ancient users had been almost the last to travel over it. Yet while in its condition it was a dangerous way to travel on horseback at faster than a walk, the flying figure ahead was urging forward recklessly at a pace that was leaving his pursuers far behind, although in their desperation they themselves were far exceeding the speed which ordinary caution would dictate.

A half hour passed, and the small dot moving ahead dodged out of sight around a turn of the ridge, and by the time the three had reached that point it had seemingly vanished in the distance. Yet they followed on, pausing only in one spot where a sycamore tree showed a spring of water, for they knew too well that it might be some time before they saw another sycamore. The trailing be-

came fearful, for at each turn there was the fear of seeing a dark blot lying beside the trail to tell them that at last the unbelievable luck of the horseman ahead had failed, and that he had been thrown, to break his neck in the rocks and chapparal. But no blot showed, and the marks in the untraveled trail where the flying horse had sent the gravel flying showed with unending regularity.

Night found them with their own horses exhausted, far into the mountains. The heat of the lower country had disappeared, and the chill of the coming night warned them that they must stop for the night. The fugitive was still ahead, though the hoof-marks of his horse showed that it was even nearer exhaustion than their own mounts were.

THERE was little talk about the fire that night. Of the two topics brought up, the first met short shrift. It was Tom's brother who brought it up, and he only asked, "What did that Mex say to you, Bert?"

Alldyne started. "Just some of their crazy superstition."

But Jim kept on. "I thought I heard him say that Tom would have to die and they would be free for another year. Do you think those Mexicans did anything to Tom?"

"I tell you that was just some of their crazy superstition," Alldyne repeated. "How the devil could they have done anything? Something struck Tom, maybe some quick fever, and he went off his head. Better not talk of it unless we have to."

And he refused to talk about it any more.

Bud Carson brought up the other thing. He pulled on his pipe in the darkness, with his head turned toward the stars, seeming to make his remark to the universe at large rather than to the others.

"The whole damn country is queer. Did you notice that the hills here are all scarred as though rockslides were occurring daily? This may be an earthquake country for all I know, but did you notice that some of the rocks had not made their trails through the chapparal straight downhill as a rock should roll? I saw one that went horizontally along the side of a hill!"

Alldyne cursed uncomfortably. "Shut up! If you get to seeing things, that's no reason for bothering the rest of us."

" 'S all right, Bert," Carson answered. "I was just sort of thinking out loud. And I saw you looking at that path of broken brush, so you've got nothing to say about my seeing things."

Which was all that anyone felt like saying.

In the early morning they resumed the trail. The remarks about the rockslides were in the consciousness of each, so that they noted the trails through the chapparal which had seemingly been made by some huge boulder being dragged or rolling over the hills. Over, for as Bud Carson had said, the trail did not always lead downward. Finally, coming to where such a trail crossed the path, Carson dismounted to inspect it, remounting with a worried shrug.

"Find out anything?" Bert asked, bitingly.

"Nothing more than you saw. Only something with legs could drag a trail like that. Unless they've got perambulating boulders around here."

"Find any marks of feet of any kind?"

Carson looked off for a moment as though he had not heard the question before he answered, "Not a mark. But if something is dragging a big rock around, the rock would wipe out its tracks."

"Sure, that's sense."

"But then—what kind of a thing would it be that would be dragging a hundred-ton boulder over these

hills for the fun of smashing the chapparal?"

"For God's sake, shut up!" Jim's voice came throatily. "We've got to get Tom before it's too late."

THE sun was on its way down the second day before they found him. All day the strange paths through the brush had become increasingly numerous, and at last the hills seemed to have been plowed up by the rocks. Rounding a last turn in the trail, they saw ahead a slightly sloping bare spot which occupied an amphitheater in the high hills. The soil seemed to have been stripped off the bedrock, which lay like a great gray floor. It was marked by lines which seemed to be the outlines of the walls of houses which had been ground down in the same strange manner as the chapparal about.

The appearance was so suggestive that the same word came from the mouths of each, as they reined up in surprize. "Ruins!" Anyone who had seen the pueblo cities of the southwest Indians could recognize the outline stenciled on the rocks, though of the walls, the buildings themselves, there was nothing left. Forgetting for the time the object of their search, they pressed forward, and in the moment of forgetting, they found it.

Near the center of the bare rock floor of the ancient town was a bloody mass which at first they did not recognize. The terrible truth came to the brother first, and he rushed forward with a cry, to stop and draw back in horror as he got near enough to see the details. The others pressed on and passed him, until they looked shudderingly down on the pulpy mass that had been Tom Nelson and his horse. A trail of blood and ground rock-dust led down to where the thing was standing, a huge long boulder, fully fifty feet long and a quarter as high, shaped more like a gigantic worm which had crawled over and ground its victims to death.

Nauseated, they looked from the rock to the dead man, then into each other's eyes. There had certainly been no earthquake of such intensity as to move that huge block of basalt, though possibly a weak shock might have passed unnoticed while they were riding. What then had moved that rock, ground Tom Nelson to death?

Their horrified speculations were cut short by a cry of terror from the brother of the dead man, who had stayed back, unable to bring himself to approach more closely. They turned toward him, to see him standing as though petrified, the same look of insane struggle on his face that his brother had worn as he sprang on his horse for the fatal ride. Following his glance, they saw a sight which robbed them too of the power to move.

The huge rock was moving again, not to continue its downward path, but turning as though it were indeed a worm, turning toward them. Paralyzed, they watched until it had turned completely around and was advancing toward Jim Nelson with a remorseless glide, crunching and crackling as it ground the lesser rocks under it to dust.

Of a sudden Carson screamed and ran, followed by Alldyne. But Nelson stood still, directly in the path of the oncoming juggernaut. Torn between horror and the necessity for helping Nelson, they hesitated, started, turned, and leapt to his aid. But something interposed itself—something which neither could see but which barred their path with the unyielding opposition of a solid, immovable body. In an excess of terror they beat against it as though against a solid wall, until their fists were broken and bleeding. But it would not yield, and in another instant the realization of the horror

broke over them and they turned madly toward their horses.

They were almost beyond earshot in the mad flight when the stricken cry in the distance behind them told that it was over.

TEN minutes perhaps, they tore on, ten minutes that might have been ten hours. Then Alldyne, who had been in the lead, heard the hoofbeats behind him slacken and cease. He turned in time to see Carson turn his horse's head and urge it back toward the town of death. He yelled desperately, but as the other paid no heed, he turned his own horse and followed. The other kept ahead, traveling at the same break-neck pace that Tom Nelson had set the day before, and when Alldyne rounded that turn again he saw Carson standing, already as though by command, in the center of the bare-ground rock. The huge, wormlike rock of death was far off, on the other side of the place, but coming toward the waiting man.

Alldyne rushed forward but again met the resistance of the invisible wall. Sagging to his knees beside it, as the horror weakened him, for the first time he saw that the white, stick-like things which littered the bare floor of the prehistoric city were not what he had thought at first, bleached pieces of chapparal, but the remnants of the bones of others from which the flesh had been ground. There were now two bloody things, and beside them, in sight but utterly out of reach, Bud Carson stood as though hynotized, awaiting the same end.

For the second time Alldyne turned and fled in mad terror.

In that flight back to the little Mexican town the terror rode behind him. At times it fell back until it was out of feeling, behind the last turn. Again it gained until it was at his elbow. Then it would reach over and touch his neck, its cold hand would swipe against his face. And in an added frenzy he would strike the spurs into the terrified horse, which tore on down the trail with only blind luck to keep it on its feet.

When night came on he did not dare go so fast, but neither did he dare to stop. So through the night the flight kept on, and at dawn the horse staggered into the town, bearing, it seemed to the inhabitants, a fugitive escaped from hell itself.

Far down the track the morning train was creeping along. In hysterical relief he swallowed the water which the natives brought him, the while he kept his eyes on the slowly approaching train. He paid no heed to their repeated questions, until finally as it penetrated his mind that they were asking after the others, he looked straight into their faces with the single word, "Dead!" at which all fell back and crossed themselves again.

The train was nearing, whistling, and he could hardly wait for it to draw up to a stop. So intent was he in watching its approach that he did not note at first the presence of something beside him. Until again it reached out and touched his neck, and the chill ran up and down and quivered in his brain. An insistent urge to turn back into the hills came over him, compelling him to turn and move. But the strong personality which made Bert Alldyne the leader he was would not die without a fight, and it was reinforced by his memory of the others, ground to a pulp beneath the crunching juggernaut.

HE NEVER knew how he resisted, but he fought as though it were another being who opposed him, wrestling, striking, crying. The Mexicans drew back in fright, all but a few running into their mud houses to hide. He fought on, but he felt that he was losing. The desire to flee back into the mountains began to drive out the repulsive consciousness of the fate that was waiting there, when help came from a source which

he had forgotten. The train drew up with a screech which echoed shrilly in the hills, and in an instant he felt firm hands upon him, holding him down.

In the moment the presence was gone, and the train crew which had thrown him down thinking he was a maniac, decided that he had only had a touch of the sun. His appearance as he lay limp and colorless, like a man suffering from surgical shock, seemed to confirm them in their opinion, so they placed him on the train to hurry him to the doctor down in Hermosillo.

As the train vanished down the track a sudden mania of rejoicing broke out in the little town, as the realization came to the Mexicans that he had actually opposed successfully the spell of the Bone-Grinder.

For the legend, coming down from long ago, when the long-dead dwellers in that city of death back in the hills had been wiped out by their fiendish enemy, was that it would have power to take its toll on the country until a day when some man should successfully defy its power. Then it would vanish, and with it even the scars on the high hills over which it had dragged its life-crunching juggernaut.

Alldyne has never heard the legend, for he knows too much already and would rather believe that it was a hallucination.

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

Metzengerstein

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

Pestis eram vivus—moriens tua mors ero.
—*Martin Luther.*

HORROR and fatality have been stalking abroad in all ages. Why then give a date to this story I have to tell? Let it suffice to say, that at the period of which I speak, there existed, in the interior of Hungary, a settled although hidden belief in the doctrines of the Metempsychosis. Of the doctrines themselves—that is, of their falsity, or of their probability—I say nothing. I assert, however, that much of our incredulity (as La Bruyere says of all our unhappiness) "*vient de ne pouvoir être seuls.*"

But there were some points in the Hungarian superstition which were fast verging to absurdity. They—the Hungarians—differed very essentially from their Eastern authorities. For example. "The soul," said the former—I give the words of an acute and intelligent Parisian—"*ne demeure qu' une seul fois dans un corps sensible: au reste—un cheval, un chien, un homme même, n' est que la ressemblance peu tangible de ces animaux.*"

The families of Berlifitzing and Metzengerstein had been at variance for centuries. Never before were two houses so illustrious, mutually em-

bittered by hostility so deadly. The origin of this enmity seems to be found in the words of an ancient prophecy—"A lofty name shall have a fearful fall when, as the rider over his horse, the mortality of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortality of Berlifitzing."

To be sure, the words themselves had little or no meaning. But more trivial causes have given rise—and that no long while ago—to consequences equally eventful. Besides, the estates, which were contiguous, had long exercised a rival influence in the affairs of a busy government. Moreover, near neighbors are seldom friends; and the inhabitants of the Castle Berlifitzing might look, from their lofty buttresses, into the very windows of the Palace Metzengerstein. Least of all had the more than feudal magnificence, thus discovered, a tendency to allay the irritable feelings of the less ancient and less wealthy Berlifitzings. What wonder then, that the words, however silly, of that prediction should have succeeded in setting and keeping at variance two families already predisposed to quarrel by every instigation of hereditary jealousy? The prophecy seemed to imply—if it implied anything—a final triumph on the part of the already more powerful house; and was of course remembered with the more bitter animosity by the weaker and less influential.

Wilhelm, Count Berlifitzing, although loftily descended, was, at the epoch of this narrative, an infirm and doting old man, remarkable for nothing but an inordinate and inveterate personal antipathy to the family of his rival, and so passionate a love of horses, and of hunting, that neither bodily infirmity, great age, nor mental incapacity, prevented his daily participation in the dangers of the chase.

Frederick, Baron Metzengerstein, was, on the other hand, not yet of age. His father, the Minister G———, died young. His mother, the Lady Mary, followed him quickly. Frederick was, at that time, in his eighteenth year. In a city, eighteen years are no long period; but in a wilderness—in so magnificent a wilderness as that old principality, the pendulum vibrates with a deeper meaning.

From some peculiar circumstances attending the administration of his father, the young baron, at the decease of the former, entered immediately upon his vast possessions. Such estates were seldom held before by a nobleman of Hungary. His castles were without number. The chief in point of splendor and extent was the "Palace Metzengerstein." The boundary line of his dominions was never clearly defined; but his principal park embraced a circuit of fifty miles.

Upon the succession of a proprietor so young, with a character so well known, to a fortune so unparalleled, little speculation was afloat in regard to his probable course of conduct. And, indeed, for the space of three days, the behavior of the heir out-Heroded Herod, and fairly surpassed the expectations of his most enthusiastic admirers. Shameful debaucheries—flagrant treacheries—unheard-of atrocities—gave his trembling vassals quickly to understand that no servile submission on their part—no punctilios of conscience on his own—were thenceforward to prove any security against the remorseless fangs of a petty Cáligula.

On the night of the fourth day, the stables of the Castle Berlifitzing were discovered to be on fire; and the unanimous opinion of the neighborhood added the crime of the incendiary to the already hideous list of the baron's misdemeanors and enormities.

But during the tumult occasioned by this occurrence, the young noble-

man himself sat apparently buried in meditation, in a vast and desolate upper apartment of the family palace of Metzengerstein. The rich although faded tapestry hangings which swung gloomily upon the walls represented the shadowy and majestic forms of a thousand illustrious ancestors. Here, rich-ermined priests, and pontifical dignitaries, familiarly seated with the autocrat and the sovereign, put a veto on the wishes of a temporal king, or restrained with the fiat of papal supremacy the rebellious scepter of the arch-enemy. There, the dark, tall statures of the Princes Metzengerstein—their muscular war-coursers plunging over the carcasses of fallen foes—startled the steadiest nerves with their vigorous expression; and here, again, the voluptuous and swanlike figures of the dames of days gone by floated away in the mazes of an unreal dance to the strains of imaginary melody.

But as the baron listened, or affected to listen, to the gradually increasing uproar in the stables of Berlifitzing—or perhaps pondered upon some more novel, some more decided act of audacity—his eyes were turned unwittingly to the figure of an enormous and unnaturally colored horse, represented in the tapestry as belonging to a Saracen ancestor of the family of his rival. The horse itself, in the foreground of the design, stood motionless and statuelike—while, farther back, its discomfited rider perished by the dagger of a Metzengerstein.

On Frederick's lips arose a fiendish expression, as he became aware of the direction which his glance had, without his consciousness, assumed. Yet he did not remove it. On the contrary, he could by no means account for the overwhelming anxiety which appeared falling like a pall upon his senses. It was with difficulty that he reconciled his dreamy and incoherent feelings with the certainty of being awake. The longer he gazed the more absorbing became the spell—the more impossible did it appear that he could ever withdraw his glance from the fascination of that tapestry. But the tumult without becoming suddenly more violent, with a compulsory exertion he diverted his attention to the glare of ruddy light thrown full by the flaming stables upon the windows of the apartment.

The action, however, was but momentary; his gaze returned mechanically to the wall. To his extreme horror and astonishment, the head of the gigantic steed had, in the meantime, altered its position. The neck of the animal, before arched, as if in compassion, over the prostrate body of its lord, was now extended, at full length, in the direction of the baron. The eyes, before invisible, now wore an energetic and human expression, while they gleamed with a fiery and unusual red; and the distended lips of the apparently enraged horse left in full view his sepulchral and disgusting teeth.

Stupefied with terror, the young nobleman tottered to the door. As he threw it open, a flash of red light, streaming far into the chamber, flung his shadow with a clear outline against the quivering tapestry; and he shuddered to perceive that shadow—as he staggered awhile upon the threshold—assuming the exact position, and precisely filling up the contour, of the relentless and triumphant murderer of the Saracen Berlifitzing.

To lighten the depression of his spirits, the baron hurried into the open air. At the principal gate of the palace he encountered three equerries. With much difficulty, and at the imminent peril of their lives, they were restraining the convulsive plunges of a gigantic and fiery-colored horse.

"Whose horse? Where did you

get him?" demanded the youth, in a querulous and husky tone, as he became instantly aware that the mysterious steed in the tapestried chamber was the very counterpart of the furious animal before his eyes.

"He is your own property, sire," replied one of the equerries, "at least he is claimed by no other owner. We caught him flying, all smoking and foaming with rage, from the burning stables of the Castle Berlifitzing. Supposing him to have belonged to the old count's stud of foreign horses, we led him back as an estray. But the grooms there disclaim any title to the creature; which is strange, since he bears evident marks of having made a narrow escape from the flames."

"The letters W. V. B. are also branded very distinctly on his forehead," interrupted a second equerry; "I supposed them, of course, to be the initials of William Von Berlifitzing—but all at the castle are positive in denying any knowledge of the horse."

"Extremely singular!" said the young baron, with a musing air, and apparently unconscious of the meaning of his words. "He is, as you say, a remarkable horse—a prodigious horse! although, as you very justly observe, of a suspicious and untractable character; let him be mine, however," he added, after a pause, "perhaps a rider like Frederick of Metzengerstein may tame even the devil from the stables of Berlifitzing."

"You are mistaken, my lord; the horse, as I think we mentioned, is *not* from the stables of the count. If such had been the case, we know our duty better than to bring him into the presence of a noble of your family."

"True!" observed the baron, dryly; and at that instant a page of the bed-chamber came from the palace with a heightened color, and a precipitate step. He whispered into his master's ear an account of the sudden disappearance of a small portion of the tapestry, in an apartment which he designated; entering, at the same time, into particulars of a minute and circumstantial character; but from the low tone of voice in which these latter were communicated, nothing escaped to gratify the excited curiosity of the equerries.

The young Frederick, during the conference, seemed agitated by a variety of emotions. He soon, however, recovered his composure, and an expression of determined malignancy settled upon his countenance, as he gave peremptory orders that the apartment in question should be immediately locked up, and the key placed in his own possession.

"Have you heard of the unhappy death of the old hunter Berlifitzing?" said one of his vassals to the baron, as, after the departure of the page, the huge steed which that nobleman had adopted as his own, plunged and curvetted, with redoubled fury, down the long avenue which extended from the palace to the stables of Metzengerstein.

"No!" said the baron, turning abruptly toward the speaker, "dead! say you?"

"It is indeed true, my lord; and, to the noble of your name, will be, I imagine, no unwelcome intelligence."

A rapid smile shot over the countenance of the listener. "How died he?"

"In his rash exertions to rescue a favorite portion of the hunting stud, he has himself perished miserably in the flames."

"I—n—d—e—e—d—!" ejaculated the baron, as if slowly and deliberately impressed with the truth of some exciting idea.

"Indeed," repeated the vassal.

"Shocking!" said the youth, calmly, and turned quietly into the palace.

From this date a marked alteration took place in the outward demeanor of the dissolute young Baron Frederick Von Metzengerstein. Indeed, his behavior disappointed every expectation, and proved little in accordance with the views of many a maneuvering mamma; while his habits and manner, still less than formerly, offered anything congenial with those of the neighboring aristocracy. He was never to be seen beyond the limits of his own domain, and, in his wide and social world, was utterly companionless — unless, indeed, that unnatural, impetuous, and fiery-colored horse, which he henceforward continually bestrode, had any mysterious right to the title of his friend.

Numerous invitations on the part of the neighborhood for a long time, however, periodically came in. "Will the baron honor our festivals with his presence?" "Will the baron join us in a hunting of the boar?"—"Metzengerstein does not hunt;" "Metzengerstein will not attend," were the haughty and laconic answers.

These repeated insults were not to be endured by an imperious nobility. Such invitations became less cordial —less frequent—in time they ceased altogether. The widow of the unfortunate Count Berlifitzing was even heard to express a hope "that the baron might be at home when he did not wish to be at home, since he disdained the company of his equals; and ride when he did not wish to ride, since he preferred the society of a horse." This, to be sure, was a very silly explosion of hereditary pique; and merely proved how singularly unmeaning our sayings are apt to become, when we desire to be unusually energetic.

The charitable, nevertheless, attributed the alteration in the conduct of the young nobleman to the natural sorrow of a son for the untimely loss of his parents;—forgetting, however, his atrocious and reckless behavior during the short period immediately succeeding that bereavement. Some there were, indeed, who suggested a too haughty idea of self-consequence and dignity. Others again (among whom may be mentioned the family physician) did not hesitate in speaking of morbid melancholy, and hereditary ill-health; while dark hints, of a more equivocal nature, were current among the multitude.

Indeed, the baron's perverse attachment to his lately-acquired charger—an attachment which seemed to attain new strength from every fresh example of the animal's ferocious and demonlike propensities—at length became, in the eyes of all reasonable men, a hideous and unnatural fervor. In the glare of noon—at the dead hour of night—in sickness or in health—in calm or in tempest—the young Metzengerstein seemed riveted to the saddle of that colossal horse, whose intractable audacities so well accorded with his own spirit.

There were circumstances, moreover, which, coupled with late events, gave an unearthly and portentous character to the mania of the rider, and to the capabilities of the steed. The space passed over in a single leap had been accurately measured, and was found to exceed, by an astounding difference, the wildest expectations of the most imaginative. The baron, besides, had no particular name for the animal, although all the rest of his collection were distinguished by characteristic appelations. His stable, too, was appointed at a distance from the rest; and with regard to grooming and other necessary offices, none but the owner in person had ventured to officiate, or even to enter the enclosure of that horse's particular stall. It was also to be observed, that although the three grooms, who had caught the steed as he fled from the conflagration at Berlifitzing, had succeeded in arrest-

ing his course, by means of a chain-bridle and noose—yet not one of the three could with any certainty affirm that he had, during that dangerous struggle, or at any period thereafter, actually placed his hand upon the body of the beast. Instances of peculiar intelligence in the demeanor of a noble and high-spirited horse are not to be supposed capable of exciting unreasonable attention, but there were certain circumstances which intruded themselves perforce upon the most skeptical and phlegmatic; and it is said there were times when the animal caused the gaping crowd who stood around to recoil in horror from the deep and impressive meaning of his terrible stamp—times when the young Metzengerstein turned pale and shrunk away from the rapid and searching expression of his human-looking eye.

Among all the retinue of the baron, however, none were found to doubt the ardor of that extraordinary affection which existed on the part of the young nobleman for the fiery qualities of his horse; at least, none but an insignificant and misshapen little page, whose deformities were in everybody's way, and whose opinions were of the least possible importance. He (if his ideas are worth mentioning at all) had the effrontery to assert that his master never vaulted into the saddle without an unaccountable and almost imperceptible shudder; and that, upon his return from every long-continued and habitual ride, an expression of triumphant malignity distorted every muscle in his countenance.

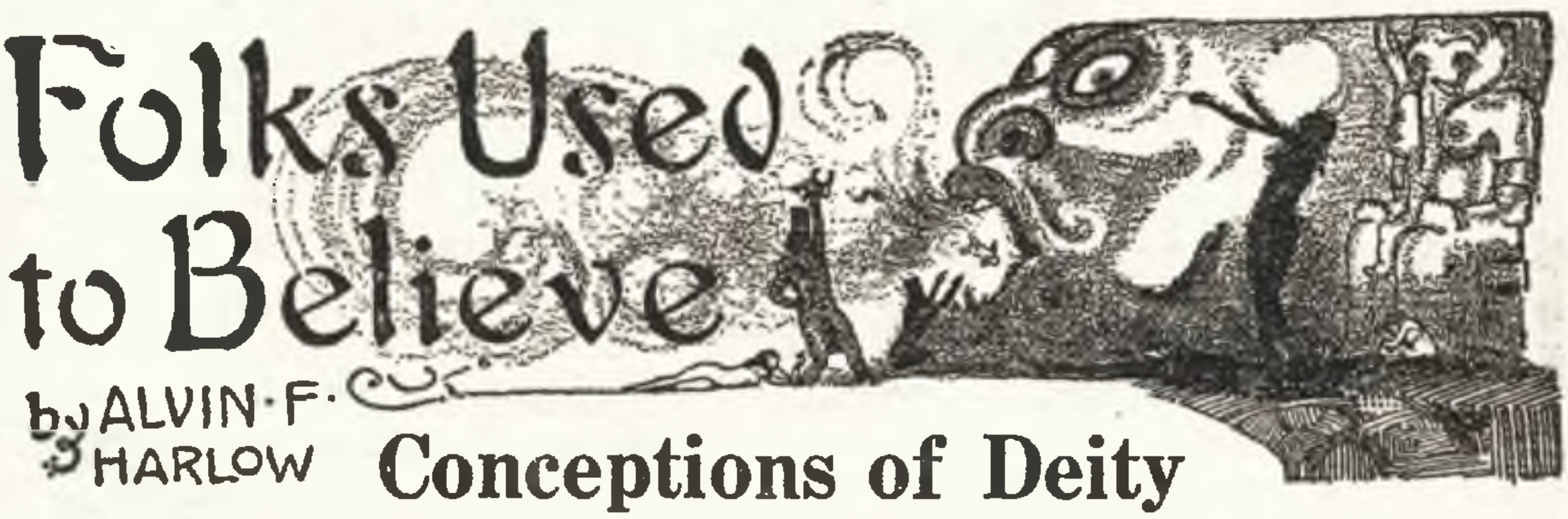
One tempestuous night, Metzengerstein, awaking from a heavy slumber, descended like a maniac from his chamber, and, mounting in hot haste, bounded away into the mazes of the forest. An occurrence so common attracted no particular attention, but his return was looked for with intense anxiety on the part of his domestics, when, after some hours' absence, the stupendous and magnificent battlements of the Palace Metzengerstein were discovered crackling and rocking to their very foundation, under the influence of a dense and livid mass of ungovernable fire.

As the flames, when first seen, had already made so terrible a progress that all efforts to save any portion of the building were evidently futile, the astonished neighborhood stood idly around in silent if not pathetic wonder. But a new and fearful object soon riveted the attention of the multitude, and proved how much more intense is the excitement wrought in the feelings of a crowd by the contemplation of human agony, than that brought about by the most appalling spectacles of inanimate matter.

Up the long avenue of aged oaks which led from the forest to the main entrance of the Palace Metzengerstein, a steed, bearing an unbonneted and disordered rider, was seen leaping with an impetuosity which outstripped the very Demon of the Tempest.

The career of the horseman was indisputably, on his own part, uncontrollable. The agony of his countenance, the convulsive struggle of his frame, gave evidence of superhuman exertion: but no sound, save a solitary shriek, escaped from his lacerated lips, which were bitten through and through in the intensity of terror. One instant, and the clattering of hoofs resounded sharply and shrilly above the roaring of the flames and the shrieking of the winds—another, and, clearing at a single plunge the gateway and the moat, the steed bounded far up the tottering staircases of the palace, and, with its rider, disappeared amid the whirlwind of chaotic fire.

The fury of the tempest immediately died away, and a dead calm sullenly succeeded. A white flame still enveloped the building like a shroud, and, streaming far away into the quiet atmosphere, shot forth a glare of preternatural light; while a cloud of smoke settled heavily over the battlements in the distinct colossal figure of—*a horse.*



Conceptions of Deity

THE early Christian artists were very careful to avoid any representation of God in their paintings or sculpture. For example, He is only symbolically indicated by a hand stretched out to stay the knife of Abraham from Isaac, issuing from the clouds to give the tables of law to Moses, or holding a crown over the head of Christ, the Virgin or the saints. In a Greek painting executed as late as the Eighth Century, the souls of the righteous in a state of beatitude are represented by five infant figures in a gigantic hand thrust out from the clouds.

It was not until the Ninth or Tenth Century that artists dared to paint their ideas of the personal appearance of God. At first a head alone was pictured—for instance, a winged head with a cruciform halo, surrounded by numerous stars, uttering the word FIAT, which calls the earth and its inhabitants into being. Later on, the bust began to be drawn amid the clouds, and finally the whole body.

The Almighty was pictured variously as the God of Battles, armed with sword and bow, as a king or an emperor, or in Italy oftenest in the vestments of a pope. A window at Troyes, France, shows Him as a bearded papal figure, throned in glory, crowned with a quintuple tiara and robed in alb and tunic, even with the papal slippers.

Most of the artists conceived great age in His appearance. As the "Ancient of Days," He is shown as a feeble old man, bowed by the weight of years, leaning heavily on a staff or even reposing on a couch after the labors of creation. One picture of the Creation represents Him as a tottering old man in ecclesiastical vestments and with a lantern in His hand.

With the degradation of taste in the Middle Ages, the conceptions were often coarse and even imbecilic. Attempts to picture the Trinity were made in grotesque figures with three heads, or a head with three faces joined together. In other examples, the Trinity is represented by three stiff, aged figures, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost being identified by the tiara, the cross and the dove. The three figures are enveloped in one common robe, and are jointly crowning the Virgin Mary in Heaven, her train being borne by angels.

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The Eyrie

(Continued from page 6)

winners, in my estimation. I think Mr. Dyalhis has Mr. Quinn outstripped for fantastic setting and imagination, but for charm of relation and continuous interest, Mr. Quinn's Jules de Grandin is unequaled in any of the stories you have ever published."

Edmond Hamilton, author of *The Time-Raider,* writes: "The other day I reread Lovecraft's *The Outsider.* It's surely the best thing WEIRD TALES ever published. If some literary detective had found it among Poe's papers it would have been acclaimed as his greatest work, without a doubt."

Writes Victor C. d'Unger, of Little Rock, Arkansas: "Permit me to congratulate you upon H. P. Lovecraft's consistently excellent work and upon the illustrations in the magazine, which have at last found expression worthy of the stories they concern. The general tenor of the magazine has been praised by too many for me to add more than these comments."

Lovecraft himself pays tribute to another writer for WEIRD TALES, in a postscript to a letter sent to the editor: "There's one fine story in your current issue—*The Shadows,* by Henry S. Whitehead. Wish you could get more of his material—it has the marks of a real brain and fancy behind it."

Readers, your favorite story in the November issue, as shown by your votes, is *The Invading Horde,* by Lieutenant Arthur J. Burks. It is closely pressed for first place by part two of *The Time-Raider,* by Edmond Hamilton, and by *Other Earths,* by Will Smith. What is your favorite story in this issue? Write to The Eyrie and let us know.

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"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in his life."

They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

ARTHUR had just played "The Rosary." The room rang with applause. Then to the amazement of all my friends, I strode confidently over to the piano and sat down.

"Jack is up to his old tricks," somebody chuckled. The crowd laughed. They were all certain that I couldn't play a single note.

"Can he really play?" I heard a girl whisper to Arthur.

"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in all his life. . . . . ."

I decided to make the most of the situation. With mock dignity I drew out a silk handkerchief and lightly dusted off the piano keys. Then I rose and gave the revolving piano stool a quarter of a turn. The crowd laughed merrily. Then I started to play. Instantly a tense silence fell on the guests. I played the first few bars of Liszt's immortal Liebestraume. I heard gasps of amazement. My friends sat breathless—spellbound! I played on.

A Complete Triumph!

As the last notes of the Liebestraume died away, the room resounded with a sudden roar of applause. I found myself surrounded by excited faces. Everybody was exclaiming with delight—plying me with rapid questions . . . "Jack! Why didn't you tell us you could play like that?" . . . "Where *did* you learn?"—"Who *was* your teacher?"

"I have never even *seen* my teacher," I replied. "And just a short while ago I couldn't play a note."

"Quit your kidding," laughed Arthur, himself an accomplished pianist. "You've been studying for years. I can tell."

"I have been studying only a short while," I insisted. "I kept it a secret so that I could surprise you folks."

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While the Lamps Hissed

(Continued from page 43)

To one watching, such a scene would have seemed the height of the bizarre. The thief working silently beneath the glare of the hissing lamps, an actor in a strange pantomime. Perturbing drafts, which seemed to come from nowhere, caused the flames to waver and set the heaving mass of shadows into noiseless commotion. Long blots of blackness came from the darker corners, beckoning or pointing tauntingly at him. The entire chamber seemed strangely astir. It appeared as a turbulent sea.

Frantically Adallah worked while the perspiration rolled down his face in streams. He knew that every second was precious, but the tenth diamond was already his. For a brief instant he paused to listen, then continued with renewed vigor.

Again his hand sought a diamond. It was the last. Then, it happened. A sharp, metallic click—the hidden spring released by the removed tooth sent the brass tongue out with the swiftness of a striking serpent. It pierced the Arab's arm. With a startled cry he drew back. Vainly he sought to steady himself upon the smooth stone legs of the god, but the deadly drug was coursing through his veins like molten metal.

In the brief instant that followed, he was able to regain his consciousness to behold a strange sight. The curtain about the walls had been drawn back, revealing the entire number of Doorgha's attending priests, their eyes filled with malignant hatred as they watched the thief in his struggle. Among those upturned faces Adallah saw one that was familiar. Now he occupied the

(Continued on page 140)

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An Ideal Christmas Gift Suggestion Appears on Cover Opposite Page 144 of This Issue.

(Continued from page 138)

position of chief priest here in the temple, but was the one who had played the part of a simple mountaineer drugged with opium, revealing a great secret back in the city four nights ago. From their places of concealment these ministers of Doorgha had been watching him ever since he had entered.

A last piercing scream rent the air and the robber tottered backward upon the knees of the statue. His lean brown fingers clutched vainly at nothingness, while his spine bent almost double. He fell and landed athwart the altar below.

Later, the Brahmins gathered about the human sacrifice on the stone, and lifted their voices in solemn chant to the greatness of Doorgha, the Goddess of Death:

"Ho mother! Thou art the ruler of the universe in the reincarnation of Jagan-Matri. But as a malignant being, the Goddess of Fear, delighting in blood and in the acrid smell of death, thou art Doorgha . . . Doorgha.

"Ho, three-eyed Goddess of horrid form, around whose neck hangs a string of human skulls, a precious pendant!

"Ho, malign image of destructiveness! Listen thou to my mantra!"

Above, the lamps hissed, their flames leapt and fell and the shadows advancing, receding more rapidly, pointed mockingly toward the lifeless thing that had once been the profaner of temples.

Watch for this story

Three Coffins

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

An eery tale of the West Indies

The Gods of East and West

(Continued from page 28)

a mixture of aboriginal blood in her veins, become affected by the strength of this heathen goddess? Or perhaps it is that fused blood is weaker than the pure strain, and the evil influence of the Black One may have found some loophole in her defense.' One thing was most sure, in Madame Chetwynde's house there was clearly the odor of Eastern incense, yet nowhere was there visible evidence of perfume save such as a dainty woman of the West might use. Me, I sniffed like a hound while examining her, and kissed her fingers twice in farewell to make sure. This incense which were so all unaccounted for did puzzle me.

"You recall, Friend Trowbridge, how I questioned her maid about the punk smell, and how little satisfaction I got of her. 'There is going on here the business of monkeys,' I tell me as we leave the house. And so I make a print of the front door key that we may enter again at our convenience and see what is what.

"*Eh bien*, my friends, did we not see a sufficiency the following night when we beheld Madame Idoline fall forward on her face and make a voluntary offer of her soul and body to the Black One? I shall say so.

"'How to overcome this Eastern fury?' I ask me. 'The excellent Katy Rooney have bathed her in holy water, and the blessed fluid have burned and sizzled on her so infamous head. Clearly, the force of Western churches is of little value in this case. Ah, perhaps she *have* attacked Madame Chetwynde through her strain of primitive blood. Then what?'

"*Mort d'un chat*, all suddenly I have it! At the dinner in New York I have met the young Dr. Wolf. He

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is a full-blood Indian and, he have told me, a medicine man of his people, as well. Now, if this woman's weakness is her Indian blood, may not that same blood be her strength and her protection as well? I hope so.

"So I persuade Monsieur Wolf to come with me and pit the strength of his Great Spirit against the evil force of Kali of the *Thags*. Who will win? *Le bon Dieu* alone knows, but I have hopes."

For a moment he regarded us with a quizzical smile, then resumed:

"The Indian of America, my friends, was truly *un sauvage noble*. The Spaniard saw in him only something like a beast to be enslaved and despoiled; the Englishman saw in him only a barrier to possession of the new country, and as such to be swept back or exterminated; but to the Frenchman he was a noble character. Ha, did not my illustrious countrymen, the Sieurs La Salle and Frontenac, accord him his just dues? Certainly. His friendship was true, his courage undoubted, his religion a clean one. Why, then, could we not invoke the Indians' Great Spirit?

"We know, my friends, or at least we think we know, that there is but one true God, almighty and everlasting, without body, parts or passions; but does that same God appear in the same manner to all peoples? *Mais non*. To the Arab He is Allah; to many so-called Christians He is but a sort of celestial Santa Claus; I greatly fear, Friend Trowbridge, that to many of your most earnest preachers He is little more than a disagreeable old man with the words 'Thou Shalt Not!' engraved upon His forehead. But, for all these different conceptions, He is still God.

"And what are these deities of heathendom?" He paused, looking expectantly from one of us to the other, but as we made no reply, proceeded to answer his own question: "They are nothing, and yet they are something, too. They are the concentrated power of thought, of mistaken belief, of misconception. Yet, because thoughts are truly things, they have a certain power—*parbleu*, I think a power which is not to be sneezed upon. For years, for centuries, perhaps, that evil statue of Kali has been invoked in bloody and unseemly rites, and before her misshapen feet has been poured out the concentrated hate and wickedness of countless monkey-faced heathens. That did indue her with an evil power which might easily overcome the resistance of a sensitive nature, and all primitive peoples are more sensitive to such influences than are those whose ancestors have long been agnostic, however much and loudly they have prated of their piety.

"Very good. The Great Spirit of the Indian of America, on the other hand, being a clean and noble conception, is one of the manifestations of God Himself. For countless generations the noble Red Man had clothed him with all the attributes of nobility. Shall this pure conception of the godhead go to waste? No, my friends, ten thousand times no! You can not kill a noble thought any more than you can slay a noble soul; both are immortal.

"And so I did prevail upon the good Wolf to come with us and summon the massed thought and belief of his great people to combat the massed thought of those despicable ones who have made them a goddess in the image of their own uncleanness of mind. *Nom d'une anguille*, but the struggle was magnificent!"

"You mean to tell me that I actually saw the Great Spirit, then?" I demanded incredulously.

"*Ah bah*, my friend," he replied, "have I not been at pains to tell you it was the massed, the concentrated thought and belief of all the Indians, of today and for countless generations

(Continued on page 144)

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(Continued from page 142)

before today, which our good Wolf invoked? *Mordieu,* can I never convince you that thought, though it be immaterial, is as much a thing as—as for example, the skull in your so thick head?"

"But what about Mrs. Chetwynde's maid?" I asked, for deep in my mind there lurked a suspicion that the woman might know more of the unholy sights we had seen than she cared to tell.

"Quite right," he replied, nodding gravely. "I, too, suspected her once. It was because of that I induced the excellent Katy to return to Madame Idoline's service and spy upon her. I discovered much, for Katy, like all her race, is shrewd, and when she knows what is wanted she knows how to get it. It appears the maid was fully aware of her mistress' subjection to the Black One, but, though she understood it not, so deep was her devotion to *Madame* her mistress that she took it on herself to cast obstacles in our way lest we prevent a continuance of *Madame's* secret worship. Loyalty is a great, a wonderful thing, my friends. That poor woman was shocked by the spectacle of her beloved mistress casting herself before the thing of stone, but the bare fact that her mistress did it was justification enough for her. Had she been asked to do so by Madame Chetwynde, I firmly believe she would have joined in the obscene devotions and given her own body and soul to the Black One along with that of her deluded mistress whom she adored."

"Well—I'll be—— But look here——" I began again, but:

"No more, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin commanded, rising and motioning to Dr. Wolf and me. "It is long since we have slept. Come, let us retire. Me, *parbleu,* I shall sleep until your learned societies shall issue profound treatises on the discovery of a twin brother to that Monsieur Rip Van Winkle!"

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