Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

Seabury Quinn — Robert E. Howard — Arlton Eadie
Edmond Hamilton — Adolphe de Castro — and Others

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW LIFE

Until You've Read the Greatest of All Forbidden Books!

YOU'LL never know the tremendous force of human passions until you've feasted on the most thrilling Tales from that greatest of all true-to-life books—the immortal Decameron! . . . Here are the frankest tales of love and intrigue ever set down on paper. Written in an age of plain speaking they show us how real flesh-and-blood men and women act in time of stress—the deep secret motives that influence our actions today no less than they did centuries ago.

And now for a short time only you can inspect these great examples of realistic writing—the stories which you have always longed to read—in your own home for five days, without obligation! Read all about this surprising offer, then send for your copy at once.

AMAZING . . . . INSPIRING

For centuries the Decameron has thrilled millions—has inspired countless great authors—has been lauded by the most discriminating critics. Rich in fascinating plots, vibrant with all the passions of a warm-blooded race, it has furnished plots for the world's great masters of literature—Shakespeare, Chaucer, Keats, Tennyson, Dryden and Longfellow. No one can know literature, can call himself truly sophisticated, until he has drunk from the bottomless loving cup of that genial old Italian, Giovanni Boccaccio. . . . And far from being immoral as many narrow minded people used to think, these Tales from the Decameron are in reality almost a text book for the earnest student of that greatest of all studies—human nature.

Boccaccio's stories have already lived five times as long as our United States. They were the "best sellers" when Broadway was still a wilderness—and yet today they still delight us with their immortal vitality, forever young, forever gay, forever thrilling.

The morals and customs of Italy of the fourteenth century are all laid before you—the way people lived, the hovels and palaces they dwelt in, the strange pleasures they indulged in—all are told with a wit and pathos that never crept between the covers of any other book. Thus the stories not only amuse and entertain, which after all is the first requirement of good fiction, but they give us the history of manners and morals of a long passed age. They constitute a landmark of literature, which must not be passed over, if you would broaden your vision—make yourself truly cultured.

SEND NO MONEY
5 DAY TRIAL

And now we are enabled to offer you three great classics—thirty-five of the best stories from the famous Decameron for the amazingly low sum of only $1.98. Send no money—just fill out and mail the coupon below. When the package arrives pay the postman $1.98 plus few cents postage. Inspect this great book for five days, then if you are not delighted return it and your money will be refunded. Mail the coupon this instant before this low price offer is withdrawn! Franklin Publishing Co., 800 N. Clark St., Dept. W-610, Chicago.

Franklin Publishing Co.,
800 N. Clark St., Dept. C-610,
Chicago.

Please send me a copy of The Tales from the immortal Decameron by Boccaccio. When package arrives I will pay postman only $1.98 plus few cents postage. If not delighted, I am at liberty to return the volume within five days and my money will be refunded.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

If you may be out when the postman calls, enclose $2 with this coupon and we will pay all delivery charges. Customers outside U. S. must send cash with order.

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 2

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States, $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Contents for August, 1930

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

A GRATIFYING letter from Henry S. Whitehead, author of the Jumbee stories, may prove of interest to our readers. "It pleases me," writes Doctor Whitehead, "from both writer's and reader's viewpoints, to see how you have brought the magazine up. Its conception as a medium for the occult filled a vast need both for writers and readers. So important does this existence of a medium for the publication of occult and similarly weird stories appear to me that in 1927 I did an article entitled *The Occult Story* for *The Free-Lance Writer's Annual*. In that article, which is today regarded as the standard statement on the subject, and along with John Farrar, A. Hamilton Gibbs, John Gallishaw, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Burges Johnson, Augustus Thomas, Henry Seidel Canby, John Bakeless, Robert E. Sherwood, Ivy L. Lee, Ben Ames Williams, Coningsby Dawson and other contributors (for it was the editor's desire to cover the whole field of fiction writing), I took occasion to mention WEIRD TALES as the sole medium for the occult story in the United States.

"To one particularized point all this comment of mine (intended to be read by professional writers) was directed; viz: that editors in general, editors of magazines, that is, would not touch the occult story with a ten-foot pole! This need of both authors desiring to write in this medium and readers wishful of reading their output, has been met by WEIRD TALES, and, I am tempted to add, in the current argot of the flappers—'and how!'

"It is on this 'how' that I offer congratulations. When you took over the magazine its front office was overloaded, as I happen to know, with material purchased by the former proprietors, not all of it up to the standard you have set by careful discrimination, wise and gradual improvement, and a steady pull toward perfection. Professional writers (as witness Elliott O'Donnell's forthcoming tale, and E. F. Benson's *James Lamp* in the current issue) are 'coming back' in WEIRD TALES. This, from my viewpoint, is one of the most encouraging signs for the future of WEIRD TALES. The magazine is far beyond (and above) the pulp-paper 'news stand' class which litters the wastebaskets and junk-

(Continued on page 150)

12 Detective Story Novels

12 Novels for $1.00

These are copyright novels by well known writers. Printed on good paper with illustrated covers.

Thrilling Mystery Fiction

Each of these books is an exciting mystery or detective story. Guaranteed to hold your interest.

And you get the entire set of twelve novels for only one dollar! There is no other charge.

But—you must act immediately! The supply is limited. Right now, while you think of it, tear out this advertisement, fill in the coupon below, and return to us with $1.00 (coin, stamps or money order). The complete set of twelve novels will be mailed to you promptly, postage prepaid.

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING CO.,
Dept. 58, 840 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1.00. Send me the twelve novels, postage prepaid, at once. This $1.00 is payment in full.

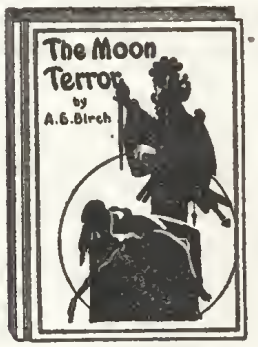
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

IT IS NOT TOO LATE—

to read one of the most popular stories that has been printed in this magazine to date. Through popular demand we have published a cloth-bound edition of "The Moon Terror," by A. G. Birch, to satisfy those who were not fortunate enough to read this startling story when it appeared serially in the early issues of WEIRD TALES.



READ the thrilling adventures of Dr. Ferdinand Gresham, the eminent American astronomer, in his encounters with Kwo-Sung-tao, high priest of the Seuen-H'sin (the Sect of Two Moons). The Seuen-H'sin are the sorcerers of China, and the most murderously diabolical breed of human beings on this earth. Each turn of the page increases the suspense when you follow Dr. Gresham to take part in the hellish ceremonies in the Temple of the Moon God—when he crosses the Mountains of Fear—half starves on the dead plains of Dzun-sz'chuen—swims the River of Death—sleeps in the Caves of Nganhwiu, where the hot winds never cease and the dead light their campfires on their journey to Nirvana. Here is a story that will thrill you.

SPECIAL OFFER

This book is beautifully bound in rich blue cloth with attractive orange-colored jacket and is for sale direct from the publishers at the special price of $1.50 postpaid.

Remember, this edition is limited and this offer is good only as long as the supply lasts. Send for this fascinating book now while it is fresh in your mind.

Weird Tales, Book Dept., M-28,
840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

Enclosed find $1.50 for cloth-bound copy of THE MOON TERROR at publishers' price.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

(Continued from page 148)

heaps of our beloved, reading-crazy land! It is a real accomplishment on your part.

"Your writers in the Eyrie comment twice on my own work in the magazine in the June issue. I beg to thank both approving readers herewith. But it is of greater interest, perhaps, to comment on that work by saying that I feel my stories have, in the past, been handicapped by their very authenticity! The Whitehead Jumbee stories are written with as much care for that same authenticity as though they were being composed for a posterity of classical commentators as numerous and one-minded as Edgar Allan Poe's! They run through the veritable gamut of the beliefs and practises of the Caribbean peoples, and there has never been a single point about them which is not 'authentic,' i. e., the beliefs brought into and woven through their plots are real beliefs; the settings are settings of actuality; the history involved is real history; the speech of the various types of natives is taken from their own lips; and what Mr. Dwyer is kind enough to call 'my color and real atmosphere' is the color and breath of the West Indies as they are. Like a Beethoven sonata (granted one has the technical skill to play it properly), it is not necessary to do more than to reproduce what the composer has set down."

Martin J. Eberhardt, of Brooklyn, writes to the Eyrie: "As a consistent reader of WEIRD TALES, I should like to join in the monthly debate conducted in the Eyrie. Specifically, I should like to offer a brief criticism of the criticism of the magazine by Bernard Austin Dwyer, of Kingston, New York, which appeared in the June issue. In the main, I think Mr. Dwyer is justified in all he says, but I want to rise in defense of the thousands of readers who consider Seabury Quinn the premier writer of the corps of entertainers who help make WEIRD TALES the truly Unique Magazine. Beyond doubt both Lovecraft and Whitehead can outwrite Doctor Quinn occasionally. Both have published occasional stories as good as Quinn's best, probably better than anything by him with the possible exception of *The Phantom Farmhouse*. But what Mr. Dwyer overlooks is the consistent high class of Quinn's product. He doesn't turn out an occasional masterpiece, but he does write excellent, exciting, highly entertaining stories, and writes them month after month, with no appreciable falling off in quality. This, I think, is what we Quinn fans mean when we say we consider our favorite your best writer. We may be thrilled or horrified once in a while by the truly wonderful stories of the other writers. Every issue we're sure of entertainment and thrills by Seabury Quinn. He's good, solid stuff from start to finish. His opening situations are always novel, the adventures of Jules de Grandin are widely different in each tale, and about the only thing the reader can safely predict when he begins one of Quinn's stories is that the little French ghost-breaker will develop a mighty thirst by the time the adventure is done. Just one thing more: Mr. Dwyer complains that Jules de Grandin is speaking better English now than he did when we first met him. Well, why not? He's been living with

(Continued on page 152)

$2 DOWN

BRAND NEW CORONA GENUINE *Model #3*

Lowest Price — Easiest Terms Ever Offered

HERE's your chance to own that *brand new* Genuine Model 3 Corona you've wanted — on the easiest terms ever offered — at LOWEST PRICE ever offered. Complete in every detail; back spacer, etc., *Manufacturer's Guarantee.* Recognized the world over as the finest, strongest, sturdiest portable built.

Yours for 10 DAYS FREE

Only a limited number of these splendid machines available. To get one, you must act now! Experience the joy this personal writing portable typewriter can give you! Use it ten days free! See how easy it is to run and the splendidly typed letters it turns out. Ideal for the office desk, home, traveling. Small, compact, light, convenient. Don't send out letters, manuscripts, reports, bills in poor handwriting when you can have this Corona at such a low price on such easy terms. Remember these are *brand new* machines right out of the Corona factory.

Carrying Case FREE
If You Act Now!

Leatheroid carrying case, oiler, instructions free on this offer. Send no money—just the coupon. Without delay or red tape we will send you the Corona. Try it 10 days. If you decide to keep it, send us only $2—then $3 a month until our special price of $39.90 is paid. Now is the time to buy. Special Xmas Package if you act now!

Save Money—Use this Coupon

Smith Typewriter Sales Corp., (Corona Division)
469 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill. Dept. 614.

Ship me the Corona, F.O.B. Chicago. On arrival I'll deposit $2 with express agent. If I keep the machine, I'll send you $3 a month until the $37.90 balance of $39.90 price is paid; the title to remain with you until then. I am to have 10 days to try the typewriter. If I decide not to keep it, I will repack and return to express agent, who will return my $2. You are to give your standard guarantee.

Name _____

Address _____

Employed by _____

(Continued from page 150)

'Friend Trowbridge' for upward of five years now, speaking English almost exclusively. He wouldn't be the brilliant little fellow we know him to be if his English hadn't improved in that time. 'When he remembers to make mistakes,' as Mr. Dwyer has it, it's only in the stress of extraordinary excitement; at all other times he shows that he's done what every foreigner does if he remains here long enough: learned to think in English."

"I have been a reader of your magazine for over a year," writes D. T. Logan, of Redding, California, "and let me tell you it's wonderful, absolutely wonderful! The stories are just the type to make one forget everyday cares, they are so different from the average run of stories. Be sure that you never let that good author, Seabury Quinn, get away from you, he's a marvel. So far I have only found one thing wrong with WEIRD TALES, and that is the fact that it doesn't come around soon enough. A month is certainly a long time to wait for so much pleasure, but at that, it gives one something mighty pleasant to look forward to. Would it be asking too much to request you to publish Matthew Arnold's poem, *The Forsaken Merman?* I think that poem is sufficiently weird to merit a couple of pages in WEIRD TALES." [It is against our editorial policy to print poems more than one page long. *The Forsaken Merman* can be found in any public library and we recommend its perusal to those who wish to read a fine weird poem.—THE EDITORS.]

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue of WEIRD TALES? The most popular story in our June issue, as shown by your votes, was *The Rats in the Walls,* by H. P. Lovecraft, which was reprinted from WEIRD TALES of six years ago.

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE AUGUST WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)----------	----------
(2)----------	----------
(3)----------	----------

I do not like the following stories:

(1)---------- Why? ----------

(2)---------- ----------

It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Reader's name and address:

NEXT MONTH

A group of amazingly fine stories is to appear in the September issue of WEIRD TALES, on sale August 1.

The Invisible Bond

by Arlton Eadie

The white girl leaped and pranced like a glorified dancing Venus in the savage and hideous rites of the Red Drinkers—a gripping tale of wild adventure in Africa.

Another Dracula?

by Ralphe Milne Farley

A weird and startling story about the superstitious vampire-terror that held a Pennsylvania town in its grip.

Guardians of the Guavas

by Charles Henry Mackintosh

A tale of the menehunes of Hawaii—a blood-chilling story of a plague of giant centipedes, and an eery obsession.

The House of the Golden Eyes

by Theda Kenyon

The author of the book, "Witches Still Live," tells an eery tale of werewolves and a dreadful night in rural Ireland.

Gesture

by Gertrude Macaulay Sutton

A strange psychic experience and a message from the other side that got through.

A Visitor from Egypt

by Frank Belknap Long, Jr.

Wild panic resulted from the visit to the museum of this strange being from abroad.

The Invading Madness

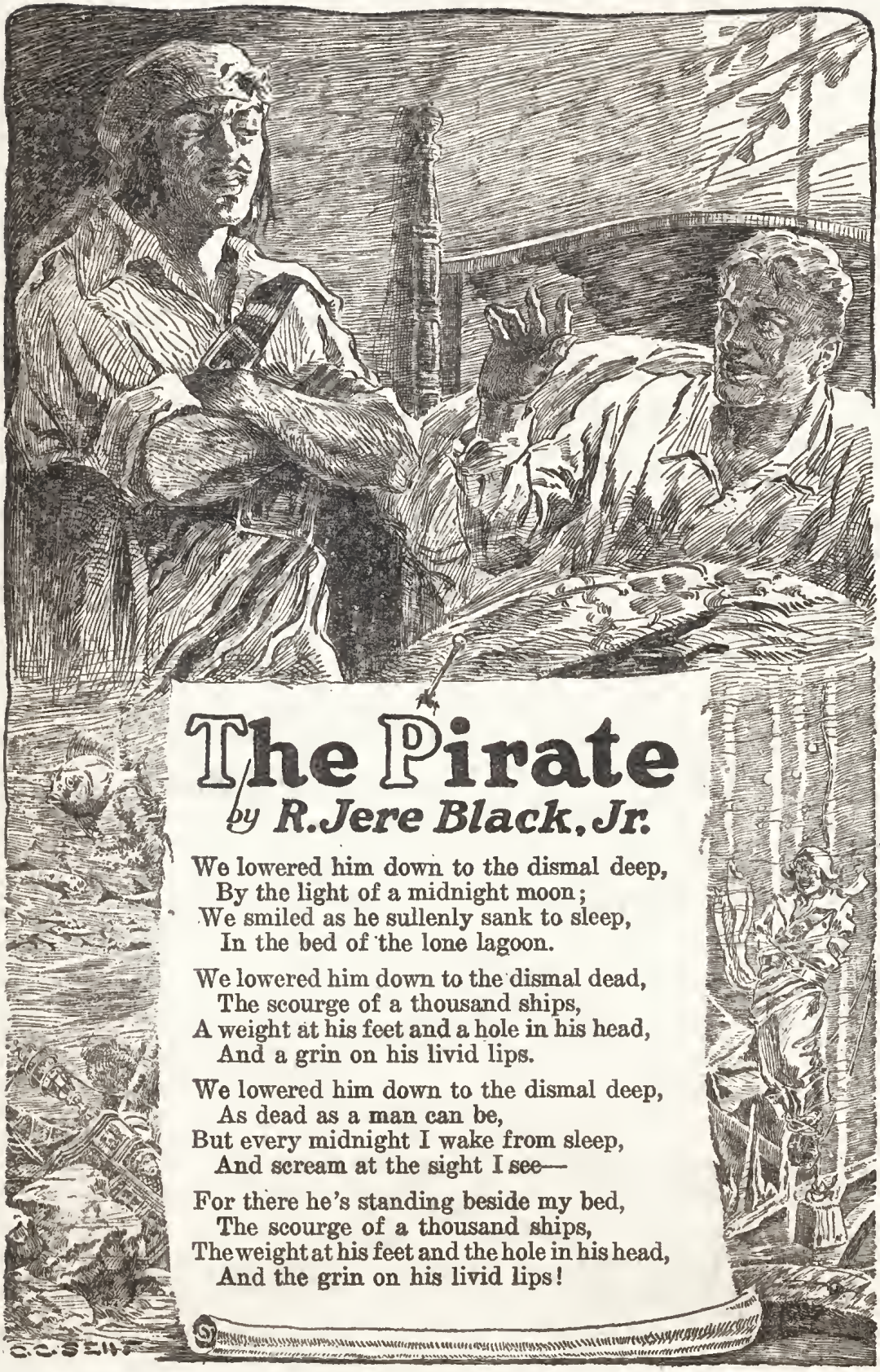
by H. F. Scotten

A discordant medley of sounds tortured the ears of millions, as it was broadcast by radio in deafening volume, until the world was brought to the brink of insanity. A spectacular radio story.

These are some of the super-excellent stories that will appear in the September issue of WEIRD TALES

September Issue on Sale August 1

Subscription Rates: $2.50 a year in U. S. or possessions; Canadian $3.00; Foreign $3.50.
WEIRD TALES 840 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Ill.



The Pirate

by R. Jere Black, Jr.

We lowered him down to the dismal deep,
By the light of a midnight moon;
We smiled as he sullenly sank to sleep,
In the bed of the lone lagoon.

We lowered him down to the dismal dead,
The scourge of a thousand ships,
A weight at his feet and a hole in his head,
And a grin on his livid lips.

We lowered him down to the dismal deep,
As dead as a man can be,
But every midnight I wake from sleep,
And scream at the sight I see—

For there he's standing beside my bed,
The scourge of a thousand ships,
The weight at his feet and the hole in his head,
And the grin on his livid lips!

Win a Buick Sedan

or $2,900.00 in Cash

SOMEONE who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-passenger Buick Sedan or its full value in cash ($2,000.00) and $900.00 in cash for promptness. We are also giving away 6 Three Window Fordor Ford Sedans, an Eastman Home Moving Picture Outfit, a Shetland Pony, a Radio, Gold Watches, Silverware and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash to people who solve our puzzle and win our prizes. Already we have given away more than $200,000.00 in cash and prizes to advertise our business. Miss Jewell Casey won $3,720.00, Mr. I. Nystrom won $3,375.00, Miss Anna Linke won $2,320.00, Mr. M. D. Reidman won $3,920.00, Mrs. Robt. Ellington won $1,750.00 and Mr. E. N. Garrett won $2,320.00. More than $7,500.00 in prizes will be awarded in this offer, which is guaranteed by an old reliable company with a reputation of many years of honest dealings and is open to anyone living in the United State outside of Chicago.

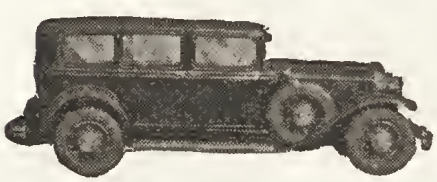
Solve This Puzzle

There are many objects in the picture of the barnyard above, such as dog, girl, fence, automobile, rooster, boy, tent, etc. If you can find 5 starting with the letter "C," fill in the coupon below (or write them on a separate sheet of paper) and send it to me at once.

$900.00 Cash Given for Promptness

In addition to the 7-passenger Buick Sedan and 6 Ford Sedans and the many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash—I am also going to give an extra added Cash prize of $900.00 for Promptness to the winner of the Buick Sedan, making a total of $2,900.00 you may win. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded, and any winner may have cash instead of the prize won if so preferred. Get busy right away. Find 5 objects starting with the letter "C," fill in the coupon below (or write them on a separate sheet of paper) and send it to me just as soon as possible to qualify for an opportunity to share in the $7,500.00 total grand prizes. EVERYBODY PROFITS. Who knows but that you may be the Lucky First Prize Winner. It pays to act promptly.

Mail Today



Robert Harrison, Mgr., Dept. C-439,
315 So. Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.

The objects starting with the letter "C" are:_____

My Name_____

Address_____

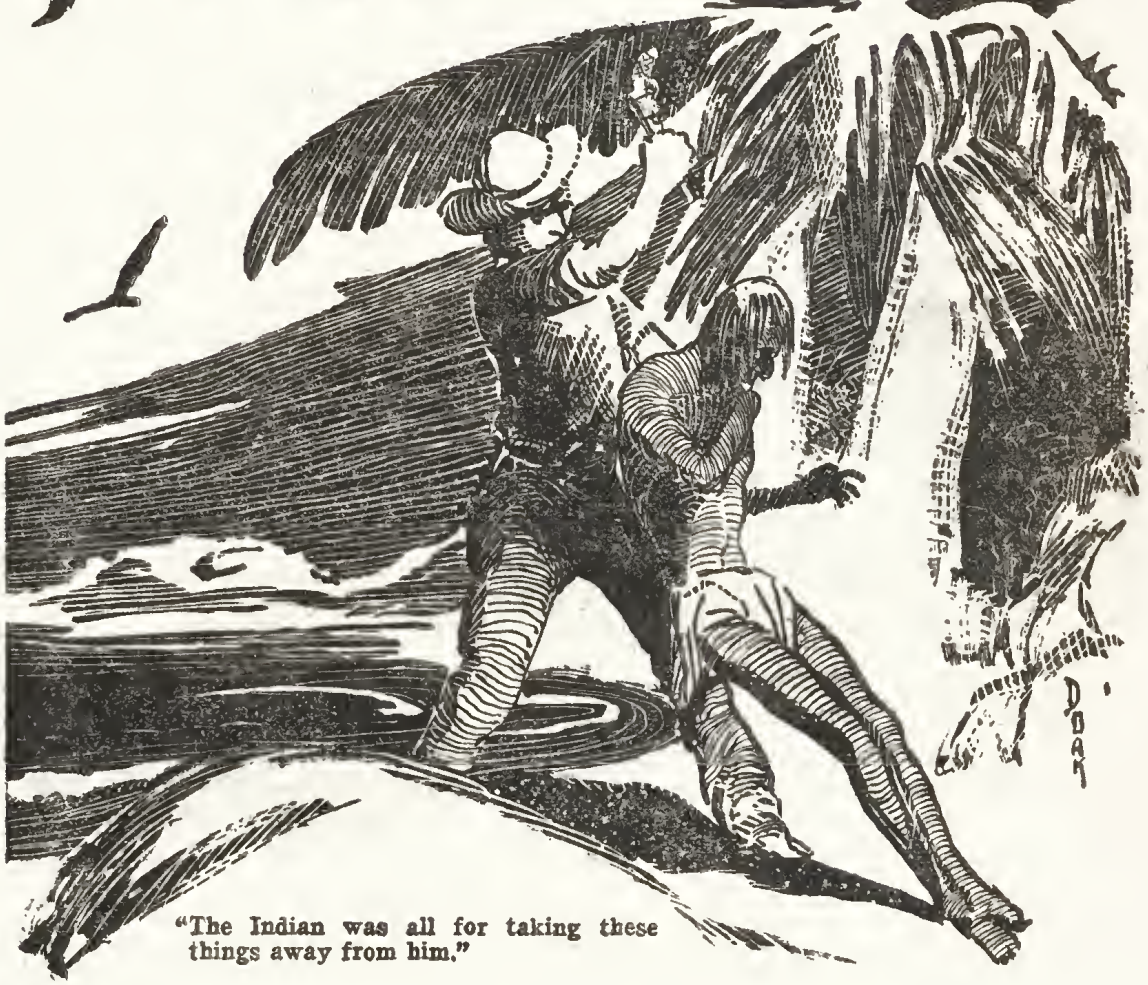
The Curse

by Harry Noyes Pratt

"JADE is an evil thing. I tell you, sir, that green stone holds all the wickedness of centuries. Did you know that nobody can say for sure where it comes from? No. That is part of the wickedness. Stone it is; a gem stone. Here and there it turns up, all over the world; in lost cities, in old graves. They find it, but always it has been in the hands of some artist out of those dim past centuries—carved, smoothed, polished. Some say all the jade in the world came from the furnaces of those evilly wise priests of the lost Atlantis, ages since. It may be so. I've seen jade that——

"Listen. I jumped ship that night at—well, never mind; it was one of those misbegotten ports on the coast of Yucatan. Just a scattered group of huts above a strip of white sand, with the green wall of the jungle coming down like a wave behind it. I swam ashore and lay hid there in a native hut until the ship had gone. The Indian hid me. Why not?

# of Nimu-tal



"The Indian was all for taking these things away from him."

That small silver coin was wealth to him. Or it would have been, if—yes, sir; money buys a lot in those out of the way places.

"When I woke up the *mozo* was talking to himself. I looked over from my corner and saw him sitting in the doorway. There were things scattered around him on the sand, and he was picking them up one by one and talking to himself. Very well pleased he was, and why not; queer things for a *mozo* to have—white men's things—a canteen, a hat, a belt with a gun on it.

"The old fellow looked them over, laid them down. He picked up a drill coat and emptied out the pockets; a lot of stuff—notebooks, maps, one thing and an-

other. And then he picked up something that made me sit up; a bit of green, all cool-looking and transparent, like the sea out by the reef. 'Here,' I says, 'let's see that.'

"He didn't know I was awake, and it scared him. First off, he was all for putting everything away, but I talked him out of it; persuaded him; gave him another silver piece.

"You know what that green thing was? Jade. A little piece of green stone no bigger than my thumb, as cool to the touch as it looked, and smooth. I tell you, sir, there is nothing smoother than polished jade. Carved, it was. I couldn't make it out at first; then I saw. It was an elephant, fighting, trunk up and ears wide; and twined around him, choking him, was a snake. Think of it—a snake big enough to choke an elephant!

"The *mozo* put out his hand; he wanted that jade elephant back. 'Wait a bit,' I says. 'Where'd this come from?'

"That Indian shook his head, scared. He didn't want to talk; but when I hung onto the elephant he motioned over his shoulder at the jungle and muttered something. It sounded like 'Ximu-tal.'

" 'Ximu-tal?' I says. 'What's that?' And finally I got out of him that Ximu-tal was one of the old gods; or maybe just a high priest, a big medicine man, ages before this Indian's people had come to the coast. 'Where?' I said, but he wouldn't tell me.

"I handed the jade piece back to him, hating to let go of it. It's like that with jade, you want to hang onto it, smoothing of it. . . . And then I lay down and pretended to go to sleep again. I wasn't asleep, though. I was watching that *mozo* to see where he'd hide the stuff. And I was thinking. Funny that an Indian would have a white man's outfit like that. I kept wondering where he got it, and how.

"I saw where he hid it, in the thatch of the wall. The old fellow lay down right in front of it, but after awhile when I was sure he was asleep I got out of the hut and went around outside where I could burrow in and get it. I felt better when I got that belt around me and the gun against my leg. Bad customers, sometimes, those coast Indians. Treacherous; yes, sir.

"I was sitting there, back inside, looking over the maps and things, when the *mozo* woke up. They didn't mean much to me, those maps, not knowing the lay of the country. One of the notebooks had pictures, sketched in, and one of them was of a stone building, sort of a temple, on a little hill. What made me notice it was the way it had a big snake around it, carved in the stone.

"The Indian was all for taking those things away from me. Kept after me, ugly. I didn't have any more silver. Finally I had to persuade him with the gun, hitting him over the head with the butt. I didn't want to shoot him; the whole village would have been in on top of me. I tied him up and leaned him against a wall. He wouldn't talk; just sat there looking at me with his eyes glinting at me, hard, like brown glass. I was glad he was tied up, I tell you, sir. They are treacherous devils, those Indians.

"But he had to talk. I made him. I had to know. That jade elephant was in my pocket, under my thumb. I had to know where it came from. And the *mozo* knew, I could see that. There was a little fire in the hut. I shoved some coals over against his feet and let him think about it—hot coals.

"I slipped out of the village that night. The Indian had a little *boucan* hung up; there was a little fruit. I took that, slung in a net over my shoulder. I left the *mozo* tied up and gagged. He couldn't have followed me, though; not far. No. . . .

"JUST inside the green wall of jungle I found the road he'd told about, a stone road running away from the coast straight as a string. Sometime that had been a great road, I tell you, sir; stone blocks laid wide enough for two or three to walk abreast. They had great engineers, the old boys who built those lost cities. Why, I saw later on—but never mind that.

"Three days I followed that road, and didn't make three times that many miles. The jungle had taken it, smothered it. Trees grew against the stones, across them, between them. Vines wove green nets until you couldn't see beyond arm's reach. And the stone blocks, big as a wagon-bed, were torn up and tossed aside by the roots that reached in between and under. And all the time I had a queer feeling that the jungle was alive, growing up behind me as fast as I was cutting it away in front. I knew I was watched, too. No, it wasn't the Indians. I wasn't worrying about the Indians. The way that *mozo* had talked I knew they wouldn't come that road. Snakes, he'd said, but I didn't see any; not many, anyway.

"The fourth morning I came into more of an open. The jungle wasn't quite so thick. I tell you, I was glad! My hand was one blister and my arm an ache from using the machete so much to cut my way through. My food was gone, too, and my water; and so when the trees opened up a little and I could see around, I was glad.

"It was a queer place that road had brought me to. A stone city that covered acres and acres, and not a soul living in it. Can you believe it? No, sir, not a living soul. Great walls hundreds of feet long, all carved with queer heads and curlycues. On the biggest building there were heads that looked like elephants. Think of that; elephants in a jungle where no one had ever seen an elephant. But on all the other buildings—over the big arches of the doorways, along the tops of the walls, twined about carved heads of queer-looking men—were snakes cut from the stone. It got so after awhile it seemed like they were alive. Oh, it was a bad place! And everywhere—in the streets, in the houses, on the walls—were trees growing, hundreds of years old.

"I was looking for that little hill with the snake temple on top of it that I'd found in the notebook, and by and by I found it. The hill was a pyramid. Did you know those old engineers built pyramids, like the Egyptians did? Yes. Some say both came from the same stock, from that same sunken island where they made the jade. . . .

"There were wide stone steps running up on all four sides of the pyramid to the temple on top, and I climbed up. I could see someone had been here not very long ago, and I knew for sure this was the place. From what that Indian had told me, and what I could make out from the notebook and maps, I knew pretty well what to look for. And I found it—a big stone block in the floor of the temple propped up with a rock, with a dark hole under it.

"I didn't like the looks of that hole. No, sir! I went outside and looked at the stone snake that ran like a balustrade all

around the temple, and I liked it less than ever. Then my fingers touched that jade elephant in my pocket and the smooth feel of it made me go on. I made up some bundles of dry wood, rolled tight, for torches, and started down the hole.

"The white man, whoever he was, had worked hard. I wondered how he knew where to dig. The old passage had been full of dirt and little rocks, and he had carried it all out, burrowing. He must have been a worker, that fellow. I lit one of my torches and crawled down.

"There was one bad place. A big rock in the top of the passage had started to fall in and the white man had propped it up with a thick stick. Just room to edge by, with dirt and little rocks dropping if you just touched that stick. I didn't like it; no, sir!

"Stooped over, bent double, I went down that passage. First thing I knew, there I was in a room. I was below the level of the city, by then; 'way down beneath the hill in the virgin rock. Part of the wall looked like rock that water has worn, and part of it had been cut away and smoothed off.

"First off, I thought this was as far as I could go. There was just this room, a score of feet, maybe, across. Not a sign, anywhere, of an opening except that low doorway where I'd come in. Silent, it was; still. You've thought you knew what silence was, maybe—out in the woods, or at night. There never was anything as still and silent as that low room down under Ximu-tal's temple. It was a stillness that you could feel, if you know what I mean; soft and gentle at first, but pushing and pushing until you'd feel you couldn't stand it any longer. Just wear you out, it would, with its soft pushing.

"I couldn't find any way beyond, and yet I knew there must be. That Indian had said—— It was then I noticed it, that carved snake of Ximu-tal's. It was like that great carved snake around the temple above, only not quite the same. This looked a lot older. The old fellow that cut it there in the living rock of that cave didn't know his job as well as the one that came later, but you knew what he meant it for. Oh, I knew what it was! That head. . . .

"I saw the tail of it first. That sculptor fellow had carved it so that it hung down the wall and out upon the floor. I lighted up another of my torches and followed the body of the snake, winding along the wall, over and above the door where I'd come in; right around that room until it came back to the side where the tail was. And there was the head. God, what a head! The old artist had taken a knob of stone on the wall and cut it into the head of a snake with jaws wide open, just like the serpent was coming for you, ready to strike.

"They'd painted that snake. Green it was, head to tail, all the length of it. And between the open jaws, back in the throat, it was red like a flame. But it was the eyes—I tell you, sir, those eyes were alive, bright and hard and glistening; pieces of jade as big as my hand, round and polished.

"Beneath the snake's head on one of the stone blocks of the floor was carved something; some of that picture stuff. It was one of those old hieroglyphs that not one of these blessed science sharps has been able to read—not one of them.

"I couldn't read it, but I knew what it meant. Just as plain as could be it told me to turn around and go, and never

come back. I looked from the picture writing to the head of that emerald snake and my heart was like water. I knew, if I didn't do what that old priest chap Ximu-tal was telling me, that his snake would get me. Yes, sir, I knew it.

"I was going. I tell you I was going, when my thumb hit upon the little jade elephant in my pocket, cool and smooth. And then I couldn't go. I had to see it through. It was like the snake was warning me to pull out, and the elephant was telling me to stay. And I stayed.

"I knelt there by that picture writing, just under the head of Ximu-tal's snake, and felt the carving over with my fingers. I could see someone had been there before me, doing that same thing; disturbing the dust that had lain there nobody knows how long.

"I knew I was on the right track. I felt the carving over. There was a snake running through, and I had a thought. I pressed on the head of the snake. I pulled on it. Something I did, and one end of that stone block swung up.

"A queer, wicked smell came from that black hole; a strange smell, I didn't know what. But I took the last of my torches and went down. All the way down those stone steps, all the way along the passage that slanted off into the rock, I knew—mind you, I knew!—that at the end I was going to hit upon something wickeder and more evil than anything I had ever seen. But I went.

"Pretty soon away off there in front of me I saw a light; a little flickering light like a green flame. I came to a doorway, and put my torch through, and saw what it was. I'll tell you, but you won't believe me; nobody would.

"It was a round room, deep down there in the living rock beneath that dead city; a big, round room with a vaulted ceiling. It was like I was on the inside of half a hollow ball. Out there in the middle, just in front of me, was a stone coffin, with more of that picture stuff on it. Ximu-tal's coffin, it was; huge and heavy. And on top of the stone lid was a green snake. That was what I had seen like green flame ahead of me, the upraised head of that snake of Ximu-tal's.

"I blew my torch into burning—my last torch it was, too—and went over to the coffin. There was something under my feet, brittle things that snapped under me like dried sticks, but I couldn't stop to look. God, what a thing that was, that jade snake on Ximu-tal's coffin! Big. My two arms wouldn't go around that piece, I tell you; and cold and translucent as green ice.

"But that wasn't it, not the size of it. It was what it *was*. There was the snake and the elephant again, but they weren't fighting. No, they weren't fighting any more. The elephant was down, dead—crushed in the folds of that great snake. Think what a snake must be to crush an elephant that way!

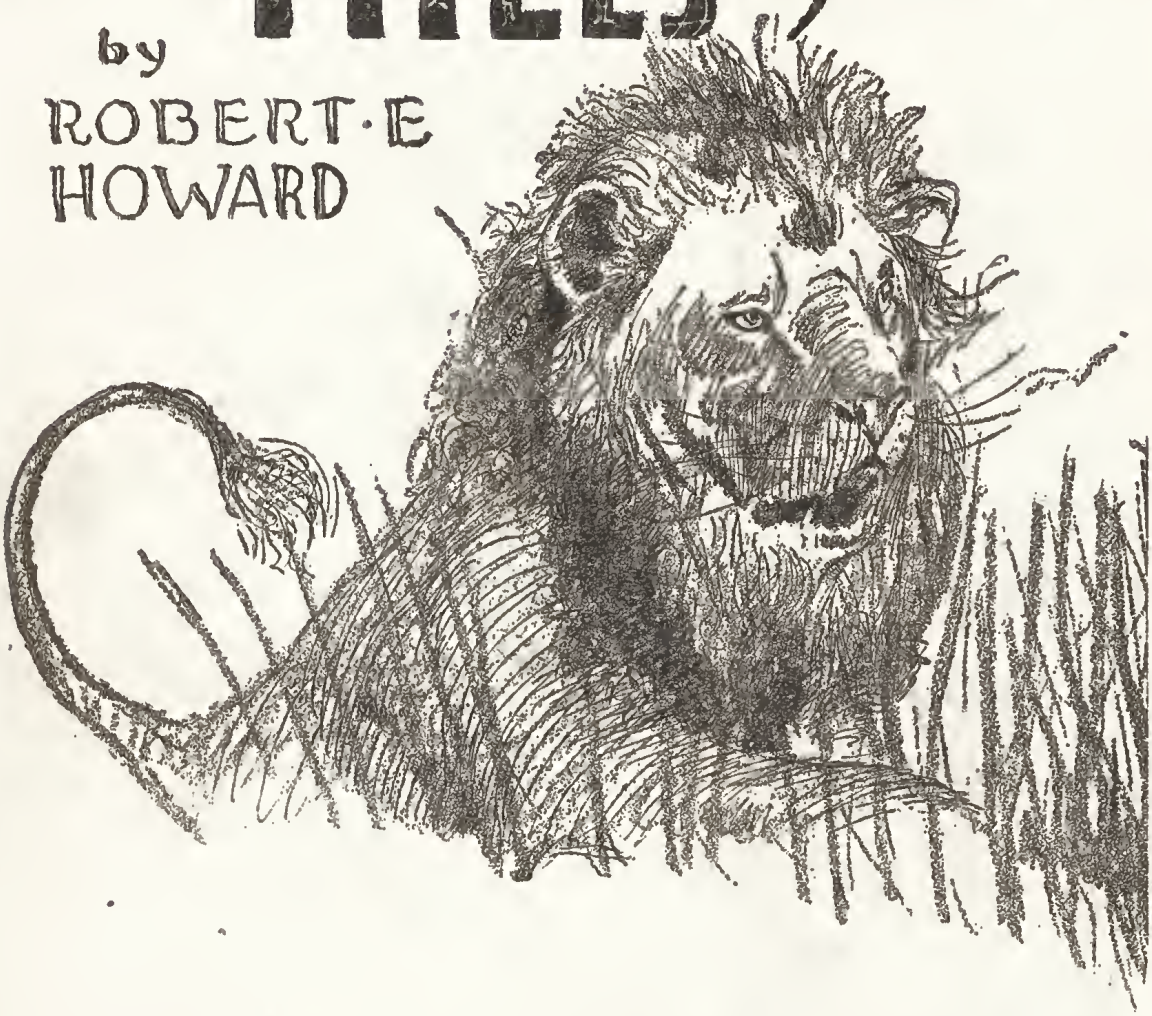
"Oh, it was a wicked thing, that snake, head up, jaws wide. And yet the beauty of it, the evil loveliness of that snake as it reared above the stone coffin! My hands ached for it. I wanted to feel the cool smoothness of it flowing over my fingers, up my arms. And I was afraid. I knew that if I touched the snake of Ximu-tal as the other man had—I could see where his fingers had smoothed the dust from it—I was done. I wanted it; and I was afraid. My fingers went out to it—slow—slow. . . .

"Did you ever stand—in the dark, maybe, or in a lonely place of the moun-

(Continued on page 282)

The Hills of the

by ROBERT·E HOWARD



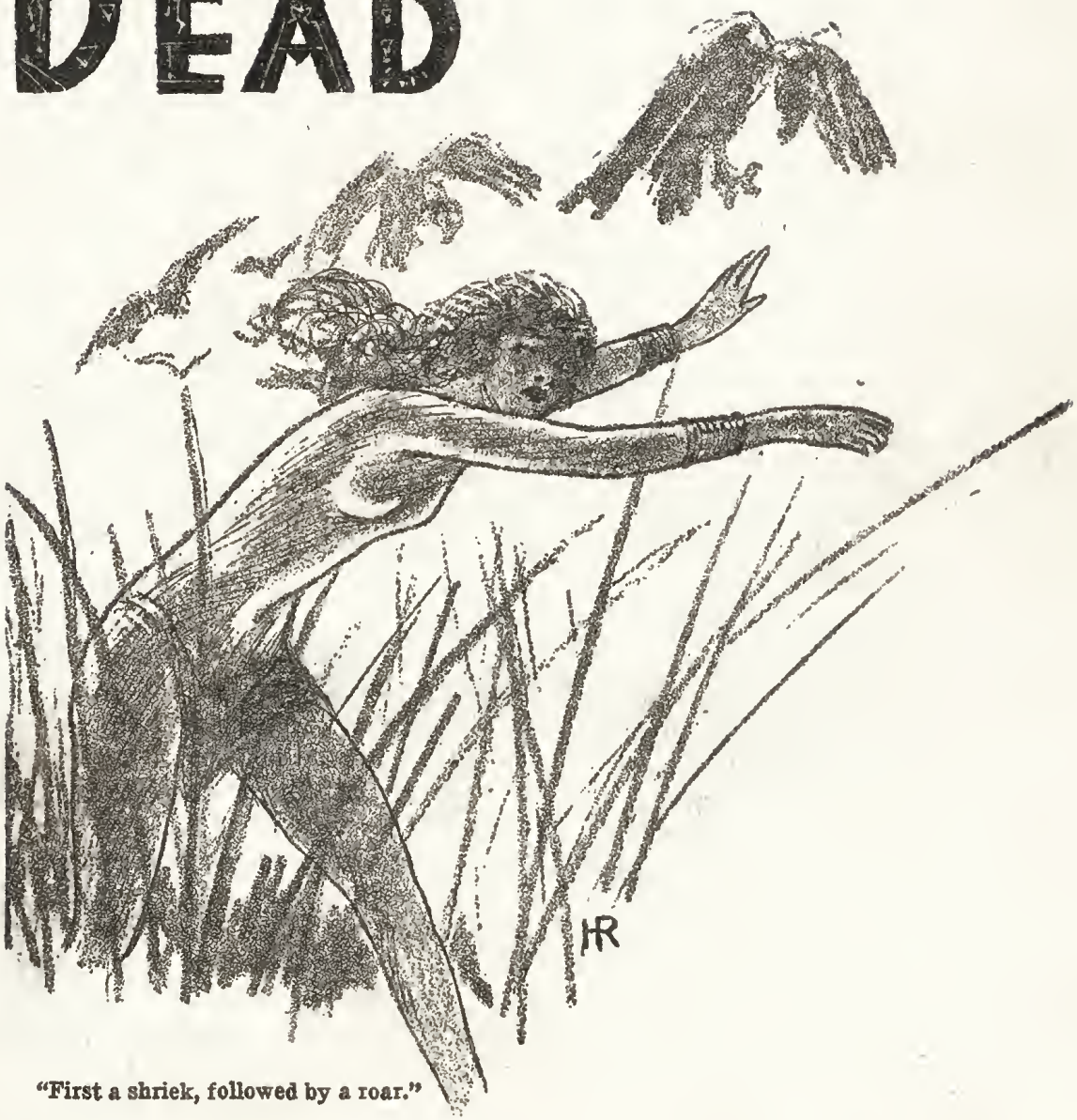
1. Voodoo

THE twigs which N'Longa flung on the fire broke and crackled. The upleaping flames lighted the countenances of the two men. N'Longa, voodoo man of the Slave Coast, was very old. His wizened and gnarled frame was stooped and brittle, his face creased by hundreds of wrinkles. The red firelight glinted on the human finger-bones which composed his necklace.

The other was a white man and his name was Solomon Kane. He was tall and broad-shouldered, clad in black close garments, the garb of the Puritan. His featherless slouch hat was drawn low over his heavy brows, shadowing his darkly pallid face. His cold deep eyes brooded in the firelight.

"You come again, brother," droned the fetish-man, speaking in the jargon which passed for a common language of black man and white on the West Coast. "Many

DEAD



"First a shriek, followed by a roar."

moons burn and die since we make blood-palaver. You go to the setting sun, but you come back!"

"Aye." Kane's voice was deep and almost ghostly. "Yours is a grim land, N'Longa, a red land barred with the black darkness of horror and the bloody shadows of death. Yet I have returned——"

N'Longa stirred the fire, saying nothing, and after a pause Kane continued.

"Yonder in the unknown vastness"—his long finger stabbed at the black silent jungle which brooded beyond the firelight—"yonder lie mystery and adventure and nameless terror. Once I dared the jungle—once she nearly claimed my bones.

Something entered into my blood, something stole into my soul like a whisper of unnamed sin. The jungle! Dark and brooding—over leagues of the blue salt sea she has drawn me and with the dawn I go to seek the heart of her. Mayhap I shall find curious adventure—mayhap my doom awaits me. But better death than the ceaseless and everlasting urge, the fire that has burned my veins with bitter longing."

"She call," muttered N'Longa. "At night she coil like serpent about my hut and whisper strange things to me. *Ai ya!* The jungle call. We be blood-brothers, you and I. Me, N'Longa, mighty worker of nameless magic. You go to the jungle as all men go who hear her call. Maybe you live, more like you die. You believe in my fetish work?"

"I understand it not," said Kane grimly, "but I have seen you send your soul forth from your body to animate a lifeless corpse."

"Aye! Me N'Longa, priest of the Black God! Now watch, I make magic."

Kane gazed at the black man who bent over the fire, making even motions with his hands and mumbling incantations. Kane watched and he seemed to grow sleepy. A mist wavered in front of him, through which he saw dimly the form of N'Longa, etched black against the flames. Then all faded out.

Kane awoke with a start, hand shooting to the pistol in his belt. N'Longa grinned at him across the flame and there was a scent of early dawn in the air. The fetish-man held a long stave of curious black wood in his hands. This stave was carved in a strange manner, and one end tapered to a sharp point.

"This voodoo staff," said N'Longa, putting it in the Englishman's hand. "Where your guns and long knife fail, this save you. When you want me, lay this on your breast, fold your hands on it and sleep. I come to you in your dreams."

Kane weighed the thing in his hand, highly suspicious of witchcraft. It was not heavy, but seemed hard as iron. A good weapon at least, he decided. Dawn was just beginning to steal over the jungle and the river.

2. *Red Eyes*

SOLOMON KANE shifted his musket from his shoulder and let the stock fall to the earth. Silence lay about him like a fog. Kane's lined face and tattered garments showed the effect of long bush travel. He looked about him.

Some distance behind him loomed the green, rank jungle, thinning out to low shrubs, stunted trees and tall grass. Some distance in front of him rose the first of a chain of bare, somber hills, littered with boulders, shimmering in the merciless heat of the sun. Between the hills and the jungle lay a broad expanse of rough, uneven grasslands, dotted here and there by clumps of thorn-trees.

An utter silence hung over the country. The only sign of life was a few vultures flapping heavily across the distant hills. For the last few days Kane had noticed the increasing number of these unsavory birds. The sun was rocking westward but its heat was in no way abated.

Trailing his musket he started forward slowly. He had no objective in view. This was all unknown country and one direction was as good as another. Many weeks ago he had plunged into the jungle with the assurance born of courage and ignorance. Having by some miracle survived the first few weeks, he was becoming hard and toughened, able to hold his own with any of the grim denizens of the fastness he dared.

As he progressed he noted an occasional lion spoor but there seemed to be no animals in the grasslands—none that left tracks, at any rate. Vultures sat like black, brooding images in some of the stunted trees, and suddenly he saw an activity among them some distance beyond. Several of the dusky birds circled about a clump of high grass, dipping, then rising again. Some beast of prey was defending his kill against them, Kane decided, and wondered at the lack of snarling and roaring which usually accompanied such scenes. His curiosity was roused and he turned his steps in that direction.

At last, pushing through the grass which rose about his shoulders, he saw, as through a corridor walled with the rank waving blades, a ghastly sight. The corpse of a black man lay, face down, and as the Englishman looked, a great dark snake rose and slid away into the grass, moving so quickly that Kane was unable to decide its nature. But it had a weird human-like suggestion about it.

Kane stood over the body, noting that while the limbs lay awry as if broken, the flesh was not torn as a lion or leopard would have torn it. He glanced up at the whirling vultures and was amazed to see several of them skimming along close to the earth, following a waving of the grass which marked the flight of the thing which had presumably slain the black man. Kane wondered what thing the carrion birds, which eat only the dead, were hunting through the grasslands. But Africa is full of never-explained mysteries.

Kane shrugged his shoulders and lifted his musket again. Adventures he had had in plenty since he parted from N'Longa some moons agone, but still that nameless paranoid urge had driven him on and on, deeper and deeper into those trackless ways. Kane could not have analyzed this call; he would have attributed it to Satan, who lures men to their destruction. But it was but the restless turbulent spirit of the adventurer, the wanderer—the same urge which sends the gipsy caravans about the world, which drove the Viking galleys over unknown seas and which guides the flights of the wild geese.

Kane sighed. Here in this barren land seemed neither food nor water, but he had wearied unto death of the dank, rank venom of the thick jungle. Even a wilderness of bare hills was preferable, for a time at least. He glanced at them, where they lay brooding in the sun, and started forward again.

He held N'Longa's fetish stave in his left hand, and though his conscience still troubled him for keeping a thing so apparently diabolic in nature, he had never been able to bring himself to throw it away.

Now as he went toward the hills, a sudden commotion broke out in the tall grass in front of him, which was, in places, taller than a man. A thin, high-pitched scream sounded and on its heels an earth-shaking roar. The grass parted and a slim figure came flying toward him like a wisp of straw blown on the wind—a brown-skinned girl, clad only in a skirt-like garment. Behind her, some yards away but gaining swiftly, came a huge lion.

The girl fell at Kane's feet with a wail and a sob, and lay clutching at his ankles. The Englishman dropped the voodoo stave, raised his musket to his shoulder and sighted coolly at the ferocious feline face which neared him every instant. Crash! The girl screamed once and slumped on her face. The huge cat

leaped high and wildly, to fall and lie motionless.

KANE reloaded hastily before he spared a glance at the form at his feet. The girl lay as still as the lion he had just slain, but a quick examination showed that she had only fainted.

He bathed her face with water from his canteen and presently she opened her eyes and sat up. Fear flooded her face as she looked at her rescuer and she made to rise.

Kane held out a restraining hand and she cowered down, trembling. The roar of his heavy musket was enough to frighten any native who had never before seen a white man, Kane reflected.

The girl was a much higher type than the thick-lipped, bestial West Coast negroes to whom Kane had been used. She was slim and finely formed, of a deep brown hue rather than ebony; her nose was straight and thin-bridged, her lips were not too thick. Somewhere in her blood there was a strong Berber strain.

Kane spoke to her in a river dialect, a simple language he had learned during his wandering, and she replied haltingly. The inland tribes traded slaves and ivory to the river people and were familiar with their jargon.

"My village is there," she answered Kane's question, pointing to the southern jungle with a slim, rounded arm. "My name is Zunna. My mother whipped me for breaking a cooking-kettle and I ran away because I was angry. I am afraid; let me go back to my mother!"

"You may go," said Kane, "but I will take you, child. Suppose another lion came along? You were very foolish to run away."

She whimpered a little. "Are you not a god?"

"No, Zunna. I am only a man, though the color of my skin is not as yours. Lead me now to your village."

She rose hesitantly, eyeing him apprehensively through the wild tangle of her hair. To Kane she seemed like some frightened young animal. She led the way and Kane followed. She indicated that her village lay to the southeast, and their route brought them nearer to the hills. The sun began to sink and the roaring of lions reverberated over the grasslands. Kane glanced at the western sky; this open country was no place in which to be caught by night. He glanced toward the hills and saw that they were within a few hundred yards of the nearest. He saw what seemed to be a cave.

"Zunna," said he haltingly, "we can never reach your village before nightfall and if we bide here the lions will take us. Yonder is a cavern where we may spend the night——"

She shrank and trembled.

"Not in the hills, master!" she whimpered. "Better the lions!"

"Nonsense!" His tone was impatient; he had had enough of native superstition. "We will spend the night in yonder cave."

She argued no further, but followed him. They went up a short slope and stood at the mouth of the cavern, a small affair, with sides of solid rock and a floor of deep sand.

"Gather some dry grass, Zunna," commanded Kane, standing his musket against the wall at the mouth of the cave, "but go not far away, and listen for lions. I will build here a fire which shall keep us safe from beasts tonight. Bring

some grass and any twigs you may find, like a good child, and we will sup. I have dried meat in my pouch and water also."

She gave him a strange, long glance, then turned away without a word. Kane tore up grass near at hand, noting how it was seared and crisp from the sun, and heaping it up, struck flint and steel. Flame leaped up and devoured the heap in an instant. He was wondering how he could gather enough grass to keep a fire going all night, when he was aware that he had visitors.

Kane was used to grotesque sights, but at first glance he started and a slight coldness traveled down his spine. Two black men stood before him in silence. They were tall and gaunt and entirely naked. Their skins were a dusty black, tinged with a gray, ashy hue, as of death. Their faces were different from any negroes he had seen. The brows were high and narrow, the noses huge and snout-like; the eyes were inhumanly large and inhumanly red. As the two stood there it seemed to Kane that only their burning eyes lived.

He spoke to them, but they did not answer. He invited them to eat with a motion of his hand, and they silently squatted down near the cave mouth, as far from the dying embers of the fire as they could get.

Kane turned to his pouch and began taking out the strips of dried meat which he carried. Once he glanced at his silent guests; it seemed to him that they were watching the glowing ashes of his fire, rather than him.

The sun was about to sink behind the western horizon. A red, fierce glow spread over the grasslands, so that all seemed like a waving sea of blood. Kane knelt over his pouch, and glancing up, saw Zunna come around the shoulder of the hill with her arms full of grass and dry branches.

As he looked, her eyes flared wide; the branches dropped from her arms and her scream knifed the silence, fraught with terrible warning. Kane whirled on his knee. Two great black forms loomed over him as he came up with the lithe motion of a springing leopard. The fetish stave was in his hand and he drove it through the body of the nearest foe with a force which sent its sharp point out between the negro's shoulders. Then the long, lean arms of the other locked about him, and white man and black man went down together.

The talon-like nails of the black were tearing at his face, the hideous red eyes staring into his with a terrible threat, as Kane writhed about and, fending off the clawing hands with one arm, drew a pistol. He pressed the muzzle close against the black's side and pulled the trigger. At the muffled report, the negro's body jerked to the concussion of the bullet, but the thick lips merely gaped in a horrid grin.

One long arm slid under Kane's shoulders, the other hand gripped his hair. The Englishman felt his head being forced back irresistibly. He clutched at the other's wrist with both hands, but the flesh under his frantic fingers was as hard as wood. Kane's brain was reeling; his neck seemed ready to break with a little more pressure. He threw his body backward with one volcanic effort, breaking the deathly hold. The black was on him and the talons were clutching again. Kane found and raised the empty pistol, and he felt the black man's skull cave in like a shell as he brought down the long

barrel with all his strength. And once again the writhing lips parted in fearful mockery.

And now a near panic clutched Kane. What sort of man was this, who still menaced his life with tearing fingers, after having been shot and mortally bludgeoned? No man, surely, but one of the sons of Satan! At the thought Kane wrenched and heaved explosively, and the close-locked combatants tumbled across the earth to come to a rest in the smoldering ashes before the cave mouth. Kane barely felt the heat, but the mouth of his foe gaped, this time in seeming agony. The frightful fingers loosened their hold and Kane sprang clear.

The black man with his shattered skull was rising on one hand and one knee when Kane struck, returning to the attack as a gaunt wolf returns to a wounded bison. From the side he leaped, landing full on the black giant's back, his steely arms seeking and finding a deadly wrestling hold; and as they went to the earth together he broke the negro's neck, so that the hideous dead face looked back over one shoulder. The black man lay still but to Kane it seemed that he was not dead even then, for the red eyes still burned with their grisly light.

The Englishman turned, to see the girl crouching against the cave wall. He looked for his stave; it lay in a heap of dust, among which were a few moldering bones. He stared, his brain reeling. Then with one stride he caught up the voodoo staff and turned to the fallen negro. His face set in grim lines as he raised it; then he drove it through the black breast. And before his eyes, the giant body crumbled, dissolving to dust as he watched horror-struck, even as had crumbled he through whom Kane had first thrust the stave.

3. *Dream Magic*

"GREAT God!" whispered Kane; "these men were dead! Vampires! This is Satan's handiwork manifested."

Zunna crawled to his knees and clung there.

"These be walking dead men, master," she whimpered. "I should have warned you."

"Why did they not leap on my back when they first came?" asked he.

"They feared the fire. They were waiting for the embers to die entirely."

"Whence came they?"

"From the hills. Hundreds of their kind swarm among the boulders and caverns of these hills, and they live on human life, for a man they will slay, devouring his ghost as it leaves his quivering body. Aye, they are suckers of souls!

"Master, among the greater of these hills there is a silent city of stone, and in the old times, in the days of my ancestors, these people lived there. They were human, but they were not as we, for they had ruled this land for ages and ages. The ancestors of my people made war on them and slew many, and their magicians made all the dead men as these were. At last all died.

"And for ages have they preyed on the tribes of the jungle, stalking down from the hills at midnight and at sunset to haunt the jungle-ways and slay and slay. Men and beasts flee them and only fire will destroy them."

"Here is that which will destroy them," said Kane grimly, raising the voodoo stave. "Black magic must fight black magic, and I know not what spell N'Longa put hereon, but——"

"You are a god," said Zunna decidedly. "No man could overcome two of the

walking dead men. Master, can you not lift this curse from my tribe? There is nowhere for us to flee and the monsters slay us at will, catching wayfarers outside the village wall. Death is on this land and we die helpless!"

Deep in Kane stirred the spirit of the crusader, the fire of the zealot—the fanatic who devotes his life to battling the powers of darkness.

"Let us eat," said he; "then we will build a great fire at the cave mouth. The fire which keeps away beasts shall also keep away fiends."

Later Kane sat just inside the cave, chin rested on clenched fist, eyes gazing unseeingly into the fire. Behind in the shadows, Zunna watched him, awed.

"God of Hosts," Kane muttered, "grant me aid! My hand it is which must lift the ancient curse from this dark land. How am I to fight these dead fiends, who yield not to mortal weapons? Fire will destroy them—a broken neck renders them helpless—the voodoo stave thrust through them crumbles them to dust—but of what avail? How may I prevail against the hundreds who haunt these hills, and to whom human life-essence is Life? Have not—as Zunna says—warriors come against them in the past, only to find them fled to their high-walled city where no man can come against them?"

The night wore on. Zunna slept, her cheek pillowed on her round, girlish arm. The roaring of the lions shook the hills and still Kane sat and gazed broodingly into the fire. Outside, the night was alive with whispers and rustlings and stealthily soft footfalls. And at times Kane, glancing up from his meditations, seemed to catch the gleam of great red eyes beyond the flickering light of the fire.

Gray dawn was stealing over the grasslands when Kane shook Zunna into wakefulness.

"God have mercy on my soul for delving in barbaric magic," said he, "but demonry must be fought with demonry, mayhap. Tend ye the fire and awake me if aught untoward occur."

Kane lay down on his back on the sand floor and laid the voodoo staff on his breast, folding his hands upon it. He fell asleep instantly. And sleeping, he dreamed. To his slumbering self it seemed that he walked through a thick fog and in this fog he met N'Longa, true to life. N'Longa spoke, and the words were clear and vivid, impressing themselves on his consciousness so deeply as to span the gap between sleeping and waking.

"Send this girl to her village soon after sun-up when the lions have gone to their lairs," said N'Longa, "and bid her bring her lover to you at this cave. There make him lie down as if to slumber, holding the voodoo stave."

The dream faded and Kane awoke suddenly, wondering. How strange and vivid had been the vision, and how strange to hear N'Longa talking in English, without the jargon! Kane shrugged his shoulders. He knew that N'Longa claimed to possess the power of sending his spirit through space, and he himself had seen the voodoo man animate a dead man's body. Still——

"Zunna," said Kane, giving the problem up, "I will go with you as far as the edge of the jungle and you must go on to your village and return here to this cave with your lover."

"Kran?" she asked naïvely.

"Whatever his name is. Eat and we will go."

AGAIN the sun slanted toward the west. Kane sat in the cave, waiting. He had seen the girl safely to the place where the jungle thinned to the grasslands, and though his conscience stung him at the thought of the dangers which might confront her, he sent her on alone and returned to the cave. He sat now, wondering if he would not be damned to everlasting flames for tinkering with the magic of a black sorcerer, blood-brother or not.

Light footfalls sounded, and as Kane reached for his musket, Zunna entered, accompanied by a tall, splendidly proportioned youth whose brown skin showed that he was of the same race as the girl. His soft dreamy eyes were fixed on Kane in a sort of awesome worship. Evidently the girl had not minimized the white god's glory in her telling.

He bade the youth lie down as he directed and placed the voodoo stave in his hands. Zunna crouched at one side, wide-eyed. Kane stepped back, half ashamed of this mummery and wondering what, if anything, would come of it. Then to his horror, the youth gave one gasp and stiffened!

Zunna screamed, bounding erect.

"You have killed Kran!" she shrieked, flying at the Englishman who stood struck speechless.

Then she halted suddenly, wavered, drew a hand languidly across her brow — she slid down to lie with her arms about the motionless body of her lover.

And this body moved suddenly, made aimless motions with hands and feet, then sat up, disengaging itself from the clinging arms of the still senseless girl.

Kran looked up at Kane and grinned, a sly, knowing grin which seemed out of place on his face somehow. Kane started. Those soft eyes had changed in expression and were now hard and glittering and snaky—N'Longa's eyes!

"Ai ya," said Kran in a grotesquely familiar voice. "Blood-brother, you got no greeting for N'Longa?"

Kane was silent. His flesh crawled in spite of himself. Kran rose and stretched his arms in an unfamiliar sort of way, as if his limbs were new to him. He slapped his breast approvingly.

"Me N'Longa!" said he in the old boastful manner. "Mighty ju-ju man! Blood-brother, not you know me, eh?"

"You are Satan," said Kane sincerely. "Are you Kran or are you N'Longa?"

"Me N'Longa," assured the other. "My body sleep in ju-ju hut on Coast many treks from here. I borrow Kran's body for while. My ghost travel ten days march in one breath; twenty days march in same time. My ghost go out from my body and drive out Kran's."

"And Kran is dead?"

"No, he no dead. I send his ghost to shadowland for a while—send the girl's ghost too, to keep him company; bimeby come back."

"This is the work of the Devil," said Kane frankly, "but I have seen you do even fouler magic—shall I call you N'Longa or Kran?"

"Kran—*kah!* Me N'Longa—bodies like clothes! Me N'Longa, in here now!" he rapped his breast. "Bimeby Kran live along here—then he be Kran and I be N'Longa, same like before. Kran no live along now; N'Longa live along this one fellow body. Blood-brother, I am N'Longa!"

Kane nodded. This was in truth a land of horror and enchantment; anything was possible, even that the thin voice of N'Longa should speak to him from the

great chest of Kran, and the snaky eyes of N'Longa should blink at him from the handsome young face of Kran.

"This land I know long time," said N'Longa, getting down to business. "Mighty ju-ju, these dead people! No, no need to waste one fellow time—I know—I talk to you in sleep. My blood-brother want to kill out these dead black fellows, eh?"

"'Tis a thing opposed to nature," said Kane somberly. "They are known in my land as vampires—I never expected to come upon a whole nation of them."

4. *The Silent City*

"NOW we find this stone city," said N'Longa.

"Yes? Why not send your ghost out to kill these vampires?" Kane asked idly.

"Ghost got to have one fellow body to work in," N'Longa answered. "Sleep now. Tomorrow we start."

The sun had set; the fire glowed and flickered in the cave mouth. Kane glanced at the still form of the girl, who lay where she had fallen, and prepared himself for slumber.

"Awake me at midnight," he admonished, "and I will watch from then until dawn."

But when N'Longa finally shook his arm, Kane awoke to see the first light of dawn reddening the land.

"Time we start," said the fetish-man.

"But the girl—are you sure she lives?"

"She live, blood-brother."

"Then in God's name, we can not leave her here at the mercy of any prowling fiend who might chance upon her. Or some lion might——"

"No lion come. Vampire scent still linger, mixed with man scent. One fellow lion he no like man scent and he fear the walking dead men. No beast come; and"—lifting the voodoo stave and laying it across the cave entrance—"no dead man come now."

Kane watched him somberly and without enthusiasm.

"How will that rod safeguard her?"

"That mighty ju-ju," said N'Longa. "You see how one fellow vampire go along dust alongside that stave! No vampire dare touch or come near it. I gave it to you, because outside Vampire Hills one fellow man sometimes meet a corpse walking in jungle when shadows be black. Not all walking dead men be here. And all must suck Life from men—if not, they rot like dead wood."

"Then make many of these rods and arm the people with them."

"No can do!" N'Longa's skull shook violently. "That ju-ju rod be mighty magic! Old, old! No man live today can tell how old that fellow ju-ju stave be. I make my blood-brother sleep and do magic with it to guard him, that time we make palaver in Coast village. Today we scout and run; no need it. Leave it here to guard girl."

Kane shrugged his shoulders and followed the fetish-man, after glancing back at the still shape which lay in the cave. He would never have agreed to leave her so casually, had he not believed in his heart that she was dead. He had touched her, and her flesh was cold.

They went up among the barren hills as the sun was rising. Higher they climbed, up steep clay slopes, winding their way through ravines and between great boulders. The hills were honeycombed with dark, forbidding caves, and these they passed warily, and Kane's flesh crawled as he thought of the grisly occupants therein. For N'Longa said:

"Them vampires, he sleep in caves most all day till sunset. Them caves, he be full of one fellow dead man."

The sun rose higher, baking down on the bare slopes with an intolerable heat. Silence brooded like an evil monster over the land. They had seen nothing, but Kane could have sworn at times that a black shadow drifted behind a boulder at their approach.

"Them vampires, they stay hid in daytime," said N'Longa with a low laugh. "They be afraid of one fellow vulture! No fool vulture! He know death when he see it! He pounce on one fellow dead man and tear and eat if he be lying or walking!"

A strong shudder shook his companion.

"Great God!" Kane cried, striking his thigh with his hat; "is there no end to the horror of this hideous land? Truly this land is dedicated to the powers of darkness!"

Kane's eyes burned with a dangerous light. The terrible heat, the solitude and the knowledge of the horrors lurking on either hand were shaking even his steely nerves.

"Keep on one fellow hat, blood-brother," admonished N'Longa with a low gurgle of amusement. "That fellow sun, he knock you dead, suppose you no look out."

Kane shifted the musket he had insisted on bringing and made no reply. They mounted an eminence at last and looked down on a sort of plateau. And in the center of this plateau was a silent city of gray and crumbling stone. Kane was smitten by a sense of incredible age as he looked. The walls and houses were of great stone blocks, yet they were falling into ruin. Grass grew on the plateau, and high in the streets of that dead city. Kane saw no movement among the ruins.

"That is their city—why do they choose to sleep in caves?"

"Maybe-so one fellow stone fall on them from roof and crush. Them stone huts, he fall down bimeby. Maybe-so they no like to stay together—maybe-so they eat each other, too."

"Silence!" whispered Kane; "how it hangs over all!"

"Them vampires no talk nor yell; they dead. They sleep in caves, wander at sunset and at night. Maybe-so them black fellow bush tribes come with spears, them vampires go to stone kraal and fight behind walls."

Kane nodded. The crumbling walls which surrounded that dead city were still high and solid enough to resist the attack of spearmen—especially when defended by these snout-nosed fiends.

"Blood-brother," said N'Longa solemnly, "I have mighty magic thought! Be silent a little while."

KANE seated himself on a boulder and gazed broodingly at the bare crags and slopes which surrounded them. Far away to the south he saw the leafy green ocean that was the jungle. Distance lent a certain enchantment to the scene. Closer at hand loomed the dark blotches that were the mouths of the caves of horror.

N'Longa was squatting, tracing some strange pattern in the clay with a dagger point. Kane watched him, thinking how easy they might fall victim to the vampires if even three or four of the fiends should come out of their caverns. And even as he thought it, a black and horrific shadow fell across the crouching fetish-man.

Kane acted without conscious thought.

He shot from the boulder where he sat like a stone hurled from a catapult, and his musket stock shattered the face of the hideous black thing who had stolen upon them. Back and back Kane drove his inhuman foe staggering, never giving him time to halt or launch an offensive, battering him with the onslaught of a frenzied tiger.

At the very edge of the cliff the vampire wavered, then pitched back over, to fall for a hundred feet and lie writhing on the rocks of the plateau below. N'Longa was on his feet pointing; the hills were giving up their dead.

Out of the caves they were swarming, the terrible black silent shapes; up the slopes they came charging and over the boulders they came clambering, and their red eyes were all turned toward the two humans who stood above the silent city. The caves belched them forth in an unholy judgment day.

N'Longa pointed to a crag some distance away and with a shout started running fleetly toward it. Kane followed. From behind boulders black-taloned hands clawed at them, tearing their garments. They raced past caves, and mummied monsters came lurching out of the dark, gibbering silently, to join in the pursuit.

The dead hands were close at their back when they scrambled up the last slope and stood on a ledge which was the top of the crag. The fiends halted silently a moment, then came clambering after them. Kane clubbed his musket and smashed down into the red-eyed faces, knocking aside the upleaping hands. They surged up like a black wave; he swung his musket in a silent fury that matched theirs. The black wave broke and wavered back; came on again.

He—could—not—kill—them! These words beat on his brain like a sledge on an anvil as he shattered wood-like flesh and dead bone with his smashing swings. He knocked them down, hurled them back, but they rose and came on again. This could not last—what in God's name was N'Longa doing? Kane spared one swift, tortured glance over his shoulder. The fetish-man stood on the highest part of the ledge, head thrown back, arms lifted as if in invocation.

Kane's vision blurred to the sweep of hideous black faces with red, staring eyes. Those in front were horrible to see now, for their skulls were shattered, their faces caved in and their limbs broken. But still they came on and those behind reached across their shoulders to clutch at the man who defied them.

Kane was red but the blood was all his. From the long-withered veins of those monsters no single drop of warm red blood trickled. Suddenly from behind him came a long piercing wail—N'Longa! Over the crash of the flying musket-stock and the shattering of bones it sounded high and clear—the only voice lifted in that hideous fight.

The black wave washed about Kane's feet, dragging him down. Keen talons tore at him, flaccid lips sucked at his wounds. He reeled up again, disheveled and bloody, clearing a space with a shattering sweep of his splintered musket. Then they closed in again and he went down.

"This is the end!" he thought, but even at that instant the press slackened and the sky was suddenly filled with the beat of great wings.

Then he was free and staggered up, blindly and dizzily, ready to renew the

(Continued on page 284)

Mammy, on Ghos'es

By W. K. MASHBURN, JR.

Huh? *Who* say dey ain't no ghos'es?
Chile, is yuh plumb done los' yo' min'?
Mammy nussed yo' paw—go ax *him*. . . .
Dey's leastways fawty diffunt kind!

Yuh know wha is de ol' grabeya'd?
Doan' neber go th'ough hit, come night,
*On*less yuh' hankerin' t' see things
Dat'll tu'n 'em cu'ls o' yo's snow-white.

Huh? Yuh'd see ol' Debbil, Honey,
Settin' on a toomstone, yowlin';
An' skeleptons uh-prancin' roun'
Dey wide-open grabes an' howlin'.

Yes, Lawd! Da's whut yuh'd see, awright:
An' doan' ne'mind but *dey'd* see *you*—
'N'en dey wouldn' *be* no Sonny,
When ha'nts 'n' skeleptons got frough!

Law'! Dey's goblins en de canebrake
'Bout ten foot tall, 'n' black ez soot. . . .
Doan' neber go dere when hit's dark,
Eb'n *ef* yuh got uh rabbit's foot.

Ghos'es? Well Ah reckon! Mammy
Ain't foolin'—jes' go ax yo' paw. . . .
But Missy (she's kinda funny). . . .
Bes' doan' say *nothin'* t' yo' maw!

PIGMY-ISLAND

by EDMOND HAMILTON

"There was a sickening smell of burnt hair and flesh."

RUSSELL dived sharply from the yawl's deck as the last great wave struck and submerged it. He rose and sank in the foam-churned surf, then rose again and with great strokes fought toward the shoreline he could glimpse through the spray. The waters were thunderous in his ears and behind him the descending sun lit the world with coppery fire.

As he struggled on Russell was aware by brief glimpses that the beach ahead was nearer. The giant waves from behind bore him forward toward it in great leaps, but the deadly undertow gripped his feet with serpent grasp to pull him back. He kicked, struggled, and at last felt firm sand beneath his feet, and staggered up onto it beyond the clawing grasp of the waves.

He looked about him, dazed for a moment by his struggle with the furious ocean. He was standing on the beach of an island some three miles in length. Its surface, clothed green with sycamore and oak and brush, sloped gently up to higher ground at the island's center.

A sound came to Russell's ears over the roar of the surf, and he half turned. Down from the island's wooded center by a narrow path a shirt-sleeved and hatless man was hastening toward him. As he approached, Russell saw that he was over middle age, with quick eyes and a keen, intellectual countenance beneath his graying hair. His face held anxiety as he came closer, hand outstretched.

"My dear sir! I saw your boat foundering from my place—but it seems it was all over before I got here. You're not hurt?"

"More chagrined than hurt," Russell managed to smile. "They told me over in Charleston that if I went too far out from the coast the squalls would get me, but I thought I could pull the yawl through them."

The other seemed relieved. "Well, it was as narrow an escape as I've ever seen. These squalls are treacherous, and if you hadn't been near this island——"

"It was just dumb luck that I was," Russell admitted. "And I never looked to find anyone here until you appeared. Most of the islands this far off the Carolina coast are uninhabited, aren't they?"

"Most of them are," said the other, "but this one happens to be the site of the Northern University Biological Station. You've heard of it, perhaps?"

"Of course!" Russell was interested. "Over in Charleston I heard."

"I'm Dr. James Garland, the bio-chemist of the station and just now its only member," the other introduced himself. "There are ordinarily a half-dozen of us here—Dr. Wallace, the head, Professor Lowerman, and three others, but they've all gone off to Charleston for a vacation and I'm the unlucky one who stays here to tend their routine-work while they're gone."

"Russell's my name," the younger man replied. "Just one of New York's struggling young attorneys, on a trip south in a yawl that I always thought until now I could manage."

Dr. Garland smiled. "I'm afraid you'll have to put in a few days here with me until the others get back, for they went in our only boat. If you can put up with a somewhat irregular one-man household——?"

"Crusoes can't be choosers," Russell told him. "Besides—I've heard something about this station—I'm really glad of the opportunity to visit it."

"Well, you'd better begin your visit by changing to dry clothes," observed the other. "Lowerman's about your size—I'm sure he'd be glad to lend you anything of his if he were here."

He led the way across the beach and along the narrow path that twisted upward through the spring-green woods. The sun was sinking lower behind them and the keen sea-wind, striking Russell's dripping garments, soon had his teeth chattering. He was glad enough when they came out onto the more sparsely wooded plateau that was the island's highest part, and glimpsed the squat frame bungalow and the long and broad unpainted frame building some distance behind it.

"The laboratories," Garland gestured toward the latter structure. "I'll show you all over them, later, but just now the quicker you change the better."

Russell followed him into the bungalow and across a roomy living-room with comfortable, masculine furnishings to one of the bedrooms at the rear. There the bio-chemist dug from a mass of carelessly piled clothing and impedimenta a set of garments that were well-worn but dry and warm. When Garland left him with them darkness was falling, and Russell switched on the lights.

Arrayed in the dry clothes he ventured back into the living-room and found Dr. Garland busy with rolled-up sleeves in the surprizingly neat little kitchen. Russell, proficient in a boat's galley, helped him prepare the meal that they were soon

falling upon, their only conversation the occasional monosyllables of hungry men at table.

SITTING before the blazing fireplace a little later and smoking one of the cigarettes his host had proffered, Russell reflected that there were, indisputably, worse places. Over the whine of winds outside there came to his ears the dim thunder of the distant surf. He hitched his chair closer to the comforting fire.

"I'm really immensely interested in your place here," he told the other. "I heard quite a bit about it over in Charleston."

"All of it good?" asked his host quizzically, and Russell grinned.

"Well, as a matter of fact some of them did talk a good bit of rot about you and your friends. They had some melodramatic whispers about something pretty diabolical going on out here, and I gathered that you're all regarded as so many Twentieth Century Friar Bacons by a good many of them."

Garland laughed, blowing smoke from his cigarette. "Friar Bacon's a good example," he said. "The ignorance of modern people is often amazing, and the mere fact that we came to this lonely spot to set up our research station was enough to let those good people know that we were up to something that we wanted to keep hidden."

"It is a rather unusual spot for a research station, isn't it?"

"Not at all," Garland promptly disclaimed. "The main purpose of this station is to make an exhaustive study of the evolutionary differences between some of the lower invertebrate sea-creatures. For that reason a sea-location with varied depths and conditions is necessary; so when we started the station we persuaded the university to let us come here. Of course we all have our own side-lines here still—Wallace has his chromosomes, and Snelling his cell-theory, and I my size-changing work—but we've all got to spend most of our time on the station's main research or the university wouldn't support it long."

Russell caught at one of his phrases. "Your size-changing work?"

The bio-chemist waved his cigarette. "My pet hobby. I've been able to stimulate the pituitary's functioning to an unheard-of degree, or to halt it almost altogether. Of course, control is still rather a problem."

"I'm afraid you'll think me deplorably ignorant," Russell said, "but that means as much to me as algebra to a Hottentot."

Garland laughed. "These schools! What do they teach you nowadays? Well, the thing's simple enough in theory. You know, I suppose, that the size of a human or animal body is directly dependent on the functioning of its pituitary gland?"

"I seem to have heard something about a gland controlling the body's size," Russell admitted.

"No doubt," said Garland dryly. "Well, the pituitary gland, which is located near the center of the head, does actually control the size of the body by its secretions. If it secretes normally your body is of normal size. If it secretes more than normally you are a giant. If less than normally, you are a dwarf. Now since that fact became known—I hope you will pardon my classroom manner, but for years I dinned these facts into sophomores—since that fact became known biologists over all the world have been attempting an artificial regulation of the body's size by means of it. That is, they have sought to stimulate or lessen the gland's secre-

tions, and so increase or decrease the body's size.

"This experimentation has been on the whole rather fruitless so far. It's true that by tampering with the gland biologists have been able to make some animals a little larger or smaller than normal, but that's all they've been able to accomplish —a mere stunting or hastening of growth. The fact is that the ductless glands like the pituitary and thyroid are such delicate organisms that when we tamper with them surgically we damage them nine times out of ten. I became aware of that years ago, so left it off and started working from a different point of attack.

"I have——" Garland suddenly halted, rising to his feet. Grasping a heavy stick of firewood he stepped softly to the door, then flung it suddenly open.

Russell, amazed, heard the quick scurrying of something on the veranda outside as the door was flung open. For a moment Garland gazed intently out into the darkness, then closed the door.

"Damn them—they get bolder every day!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Rats?" asked Russell, and the other looked over at him and nodded.

"And cursed annoying ones, too," he said irritably. "Under the house and laboratory and all around them, yet you can't lay hands on them at all."

His brow cleared as he resumed his seat. "Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, as I was saying, I've gone at this problem of influencing the pituitary gland in a different way. I said to myself, why cut open the head and take immense risks to reach the gland, when through the blood that nourishes it we can reach it easily? I said, what if I devise a compound which when injected into the blood-stream will in time flow through the pituitary gland and excite it into unheard-of activity? And what if I work out an opposite compound that will reach the gland in the same way through the blood, but that instead of stimulating will halt, or almost halt, its functioning? You perceive what that would mean?"

Russell's brow puckered. "Why, good Lord!" he exclaimed. "That would enable you to increase or decrease the body's size at will!"

Garland bowed. "You see it. So I set to work devising the two necessary compounds. The thing seemed clear in theory, but I don't mind saying that it's proved cursed difficult in actual fact. Nature's a mistress whose work is mighty hard to change. But I've plugged away, at the university and here, until I have the formulas for my two compounds all worked out, and have been able to make enough of them to prove their efficacy beyond any doubt.

"I take a dog, for instance. I inject into one of his arteries leading into the head the stimulating compound. Soon that compound, carried by the blood-stream, reaches the pituitary gland, and at once, by reason of its irritant effect upon the gland, spurs it to tremendous activity. It throws its secretions into the dog's body at a terrific rate. I may say parenthetically that the injection produces coma almost at once in the subject. Within a day that dog, lying in coma, will have increased in bodily size to a giant dog six times its normal stature, if the stimulating compound has been injected in sufficient quantity. It will wake as a giant dog and will remain that size indefinitely, the compound in the gland stimulating it unceasingly until neutralized by the opposing compound.

"You will say, that dog increases six

times in actual bulk and weight in its day of coma; how can that be? I ask in turn how did the dog increase from a small puppy to a full-grown dog in a year? It did so because in the food it ate and the air it breathed it took in food elements that its body-organism turned into tissue. Had it breathed more or eaten more it would not have grown faster, for the body organism can only assimilate the food-elements at a certain rate, and that rate is directly dependent upon the secretions of the vital pituitary gland.

"But by immensely increasing their secretions, I have immensely accelerated the rate at which the body-organism can assimilate food-elements. The sleeping dog, in its coma, does not eat, but it breathes. The air it breathes contains in itself and in its carbon dioxid and water-vapor all the vital food-elements of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon and hydrogen. These elements are assimilated thus from the breathed air by the body-organism at a tremendous rate, cells forming into tissue and bone at incredible speed, building up a body several times the size of the normal body.

"If the opposite compound were injected, it would slow the secretion of the pituitary gland, and with that vital function almost halted the body would begin to throw off its own tissues with immense speed. By the familiar waste-processes of exhalation of air and perspiration it would throw off matter from itself at an unheard-of rate until it had reached a size consonant with the reduced functioning of its vital gland. If that compound were injected the dog would wake from its coma of a day to find itself but a fifth or sixth of its normal size. That the whole process would work in exactly the same way with a human being I have no doubt whatever."

Russell shook his head. "And you've really made those compounds? You've actually tested them on animals?"

"Of course—and with very great success. But that success will have to be complete before I can publish."

"It seems like something out of fairy-tales," the younger man commented. "Of course I don't doubt your word—but to make a living thing greater or smaller in size—it's one of those things you'd have to see to believe."

Garland laughed, relighting his cigarette. "Simple enough," he said. "I'll show you something over in the laboratory tomorrow that will make you believe. I could show you tonight, but I'm afraid your dreams would be rather nightmarish."

"Speaking of dreams makes me realize that I'm half into them now," said Russell, yawning. "I don't know why I feel so sleepy tonight——"

"The usual effect of scientific discourse," commented Garland. "Don't apologize—I'm used to it—my classrooms were veritable halls of Morpheus when I got well into a lecture."

"Much more likely it's the effect of my tough time today," replied Russell, laughing. "That same room's mine for tonight? Well, I hope I'll be wakeful enough by morning to look at your experiment."

"Don't worry, you will be," retorted the other smilingly. "You're the first society I've had for a week, and as such you can't hope to escape without being bored mercilessly!"

RUSSELL found himself stretching and yawning hugely as he prepared to retire, and it seemed to him that his head

no sooner rested on the pillow than he was slipping into sleep. He half-heard a scratching and scurrying somewhere in the room's wall or floor, but was on the last rim of consciousness by then, and in another moment had drifted off it into dreamless slumber.

When he came back to wakefulness his first sensation was of a strange tingling in all his body, accompanied by a recurring nausea. He stirred, rubbed his eyes, sat up, his movements seeming oddly clumsy to him. He opened his eyes, blinking, looking around him with an irritated incomprehension that in a moment more had changed to stupefaction. His heart leapt uncontrollably.

He was not in bed in the room where he had retired, but was resting, quite unclothed, upon a thick mass of folded cloths that made a small pallet. It rested directly on the floor, but the floor itself was of smooth glass that was apparently immensely thick. And all around Russell there rose the gleaming walls of a great glass room, illuminated by clear sunlight.

He staggered to his feet, uttering an inarticulate cry. For almost a score of feet above him, apparently, rose the foot-thick glass walls. In them was no door or window or opening of any kind. They came to an end above with the glass room's ceiling or roof quite open and roofless. Russell stumbled to the glass wall of his strange prison and gazed dazedly through it.

Another hoarse cry came from him, for he was gazing out upon a scene that seemed at the same time unutterably familiar yet unutterably strange and grotesque. The great glass room seemed to rest upon a long gleaming platform of burnished metal, scores of feet in width and hundreds in length. Upon it there rested here and there objects familiar in shape, metal and glass beakers and retorts, balance-scales and microscope, but all of size gigantic. The microscope's great tube loomed for twice Russell's height into the air! He could have hidden in the beakers!

He swayed to another of his glass prison's four walls. From it the view was different—a window a short distance from the glass wall. But the window was colossal in size, too, on a scale with the microscope and beakers! Through it he made out the fiery disk of the descending sun, and against it outside swung branches that seemed of trees huge beyond all experience!

Russell, strange sounds in his throat, reached another wall, and saw that from it the view was one of a room, a colossal room of cathedral proportions but rectangular in shape, with white walls and ceiling and with huge tables and chairs several times his own height ranged along it. And it was on the metal top of one such enormous table that his square glass prison rested!

There came to his giving brain a flash of vague remembrance and comprehension—Garland's talk of the night before—Garland's calm statement of his powers—and Russell, his mind submerged in horror, sank to the gleaming floor.

Into his stunned brain in the next instant penetrated a great clicking and clashing sound from the distance that brought him to his feet in a bound. One of the great doors at the vast room's end had swung suddenly open and there had stepped inside an appalling figure. A man colossal! Between thirty and forty feet into the air he seemed to loom, a giant who came toward Russell's glass

prison with thundering tread. And it was Garland! Garland—his eyes keen with interest as he bent over the glass enclosure. As his huge head loomed over the glass room's open top Russell could only stare upward, paralyzed. Then he saw the great lips moving and there came down to him the rumbling thunder that was Garland's voice.

"I PROMISED to show you something that would make you believe in my work, Russell," he was saying. "Well, behold that something—yourself!"

"Garland, damn you!" Russell was sobbing in his rage and terror. "What have you done to me? Made me like this — made a pigmy — out of a human being!"

The scientist's vast laugh thundered. "Don't take it so hard, Russell. You're not the first one to find yourself a foot in height—Wallace and Lowerman and the others of my esteemed co-workers are no larger than you, so you're not alone."

"Wallace——" Russell almost forgot his own terrible situation in that revelation. "Then Wallace and the others—you did the same——"

"The same as to you," the great voice rumbled. It became suddenly again thunderous. "Do you think that I would restrict my theory always to animals and never try working it out on men? Men—the mere raw material of experimentation, to me! So many guinea-pigs to aid test-tube and microscope in the search for truth!" His great eyes burned.

"I perfected the two compounds two weeks ago, Russell. I drugged the other five, Wallace and Snelling and Lowerman and Johnson and Hall. I injected the gland-depressant compound, the size-decreasing compound, into the neck-arteries while they lay in that drugged sleep. Of course it would have been just as easy to use the other compound, but I knew too well what their reactions would be when they woke to try making the unsuspecting subjects of my experiment giants!

"Through the next score of hours the bodies of the five shrank almost visibly before me, their tissues disintegrating and being thrown off at a terrific rate. I brought them here to the laboratory when they had ceased shrinking, each a pigmy man hardly a foot in height, like you. I had prepared a crude prison for them and meant to use the size-increasing compound on them when they woke. That way, you see, I could test it also without danger of making them large enough to be formidable to myself. They were dazed and crazy with rage and all that when they woke, of course, just as you are, but I counted on making the second test even if against their will. So many guinea-pigs, to me!

"But they escaped, damn them! My prison for them had been too crude and they got away in the night, got down one of the rat-holes in the laboratory here and have been lurking around and under the place ever since. You heard them last night at the door? I hope the rats get them, and they surely will in time — a foot-high man is no match for a full-grown rat or snake, I assure you.

"But I had to have another subject to go on with the experiment, and fate sent me you, Russell. I would have swum out into that surf to rescue you if you hadn't got ashore, I wanted you so badly to work on. Well, you ought to know the rest. You were so sleepy because your food was drugged last night, and in the twenty-odd hours since then you've had the size-decreasing compound in your pituitary, have been shrinking in size

every minute until you're the magnificent pigmy proof of my work that you now are. And now I can give the other compound, the size-increasing one, its final tests on you."

As Garland spoke he placed on the table and opened a narrow black case. It held two six-inch glass tubes, one filled with a bright red liquid and the other with a brilliant green one, and also a hypodermic needle of odd design.

Russell was raging futilely at the great head bent above him. "Garland—you fiend! You're mad—mad!"

Garland was calmly withdrawing the liquid-tubes from their case. "Quite possibly," he admitted. "Madness and genius are so closely akin that no one has ever been able to mark their exact dividing-line. Are all madmen merely geniuses of an order incomprehensible to us? An interesting thought."

"But you'll go no farther in your insane experiments with me!" cried Russell.

"You'll do well to remember, Russell, that on me depends your one chance of regaining your normal size. I make no promises, but——"

Russell shook his hand grotesquely toward the looming giant face. "No—I'll die this way first, Garland! You've made a pigmy, a monster, of me—but you'll get no chance to go farther with your devilish work on me!"

Garland slipped the liquid-tubes imperturbably back into the case. "Quite illogical," he remarked. "I'll give you until morning, Russell, and if you're still so obstinate I think I can bring you to terms. A few large spiders put in with you—they'd seem rather terrible in size and ferocity to you. Really, it would be amusing. You'd better think it over, and lest you have any hope of getting away as the others did——"

He drew over the top of the square glass box a sheet of heavy wire-screen that he fastened tightly over the box's top by means of projecting hasps, through which ran a chain held by a small strong padlock. Fastened thus it formed a strong lattice-work secured over the box's top. With it in place Garland grasped the black case.

"Until the morning, Russell——"

Russell, leaning weakly against the glass wall of his prison, saw Garland's huge form passing down the laboratory, case in hand, and departing through the door he closed behind him.

LEFT alone, Russell crouched for some moments in silence, unmoving. The sun was sinking outside, he saw, for its level rays were fading and dusk was beginning to thicken in the laboratory's corners. There came to Russell dim memory of the sunset—how long before?—that had seen him struggling through the surf toward this island of horror. He strove to think calmly, but his thoughts dissolved with each attempt into unreasoning horror.

He rose, paced along the wall of his glass cage, then with sudden crazy impulse flung himself against it. The impact left him bruised and breathless. He lay for some time panting, the shadows in the laboratory deepening as night came outside. Through an opposite window, though, an intensifying flood of silver moonlight was pouring into the long room, so vast to his diminished perceptions.

Russell looked up to where the heavy screen that Garland had fastened over his glass prison gleamed dully in the moonlight. It seemed more than twenty

feet over his head, and it took but a few futile leaps to convince him that all hope of touching it even was futile. The smooth and perpendicular glass walls gave no slightest hold and there was nothing in his transparent cell to aid him in climbing. There was nothing, in fact, but the thick mass of dark cloth on which he had lain. Russell tore from it enough of the stuff to make a clumsy tunic which he tied around him. The garment comforted him oddly.

He sat down at last, his hope waning, vanishing. Even were he to escape from his prison, Russell told himself, only Garland and his size-increasing compound could release him from the more terrible prison of his pigmy size. Only Garland—and he knew without shadow of doubt that whatever promises Garland might make, he would never permit him to leave the island alive, much less regain his normal stature.

Russell sat on with dull horror and hopelessness gnawing his mind, unheedful of the moonlight that was brilliant now in the laboratory. It picked out things here and there, the flange of the microscope, the handle of a tool, the pans of the balances—and made them shine dazzlingly. To his ears there came no sound from outside, and Russell was only aware of how deep was the silence in the laboratory, when it was broken finally by a sound.

It was an odd scratching sound from the laboratory's floor, beneath the shadow of one of the tables. Russell listened intently.

The sound came again, stopped, and then he heard light, hesitant footsteps. He rose and sprang silently to the wall of his glass cell, gazing into the laboratory. At first he saw nothing unusual; then his eye caught a movement and he saw that out from the shadow of the great table opposite were cautiously advancing two figures. They were men, two pigmy men of the same foot-high stature as himself!

They were quite visible in the bright moonlight, gazing cautiously around. Both were dressed in rough, tunic-like garments not unlike his own, and both carried what seemed long, metal-pointed spears. They halted, and Russell saw them gazing up toward his glass prison. He almost uttered a shout but changed it in time to a loud hiss. At the sibilant call the two waved quickly, as though glimpsing him, and then were running away beneath him, along the laboratory floor and out of sight.

Russell's heart was pounding. Had the two fled? For a moment in which his heart sank he thought so; then he saw them again.

Far along his great table a chair stood close to its edge, and the two were clambering up with some difficulty onto this. Grasping rungs and leg, they pulled themselves up until they were on the chair's seat. Then they were at the harder task of climbing up one of the rungs of the back toward the table's level. Russell saw them toiling upward, the corrugations of the rung helping them, until they were level with the table's top, a few inches from them. They clung to the rung an instant, then leaped.

They struck the table's metal top and collapsed in a heap, but almost at once were up and hastening along the table toward his prison. As they came closer he saw that one was young, his own age, and the other somewhat older, both dark-haired and unshaven men. The spears they carried were in fact slender wooden rods about eight to ten inches in

length, to the end of each of which had been bound with fine wire, a small, sharp-pointed nail. These were, for the foot-high men, heavy and formidable weapons.

The two came to the glass wall, peered inside at him. He opened his mouth to call to them but one shook his head warningly. Russell was silent, watching them with pulse throbbing.

They conversed with each other in low whispers, pointing first to the thickness of the glass wall and then toward the heavy screen fastened over the box's top. At last one hurried off along the table, searching for something, while the other began to uncoil a roll of what seemed strong rope rolled around his body. It was in reality a length of ordinary twine. By the time he had it uncoiled and had knotted it here and there the other had returned, a short piece of steel wire in his grasp.

The two grasped it and with a great effort bent it into the form of a hook. In a moment they had tied the twine-rope to it; then the older of the two whirled the shining hook around his head and sent it hurtling upward. It curved down and fell upon the lattice-screen over the glass box, was dragged along it for a moment, then suddenly caught in one of the screen's openings. At once the younger of the two was climbing upward by the knots, the other holding the rope steady beneath.

Russell saw the climber gain the top and inspect quickly the chain-fastening and lock that secured the screen over the glass cell. After a moment he whispered down to the man below. The latter tied one of his spears to the rope, and in another instant the one above had it in his hands. He inserted it in one of the screen's openings, pried and levered this way and that until he had made an opening a few inches across. Russell was watching tensely.

Then the man above drew up the rope from outside and let it fall down through this opening into the glass cell's interior. His whispered order was not needed, for in an instant Russell had grasped the rope and was climbing. He reached the top, balanced beside the other on the glass wall's edge, panting.

"You're Garland's new experiment?" the other was whispering hoarsely. "You're the man who came yesterday—that Garland used the compound on?"

Russell panted his name. "And you?"

"I'm Snelling," the other whispered, "and that's Lowerman down there. Did you hear of us? I thought Garland might have told you when you woke. We saw you come with him yesterday—we did our best to warn you, but couldn't. There are Wallace and Johnson and Hall, besides us two. Garland's experiments—pigmies, all of us. The others are waiting for you now."

Russell struggled for reason. "But where——?"

"Down beneath the laboratory," Snelling whispered. "We have a place there—we use the rat-holes and runways to get about—and Wallace sent us after you—has a plan——"

There was a warning hiss from the waiting figure beneath, and Snelling pulled Russell toward the wall's edge, drew up and let down the rope again upon the outer side of the wall. Russell slid down it, the other close after him.

Lowerman hastened to their side, his haggard and unshaven face clear in the moonlight. He grasped Russell's hands.

"We've got to get down to the others at once," he told him in a tense whisper.

"There's not much time left, and we only have until morning."

"Until morning?" repeated the dazed Russell, and Lowerman nodded swiftly.

"It's Wallace's plan—he'll tell you about it—but we've got to get out of here now. You have the rope, Snelling? Good—there's no time to lose——"

RUSSELL found himself hastening along the long metal surface of table gleaming in the moonlight, with Lowerman and Snelling on either side of him. It came to his dazed brain to appreciate for a moment the utter grotesqueness of it—that he, a pigmy of twelve inches height, should run with two others like him along the surface of a table! A sensation of unreality held him until they came to the spot where the chair stood beside the table, its back-rungs a few inches away.

Lowerman, without hesitating, jumped for the nearest or corner rung and grasped it, clinging at the same time to his spear, sliding down to the chair's seat. Russell followed, grasping the rung with all his strength, lowering himself to the seat also. Snelling was but an instant behind him, and already Lowerman was clambering down from the seat to the floor. In another minute they all stood there.

Without hesitating, the other two hurried Russell across the floor, a vast wooden plain to his eyes, and into the lightless shadow beneath the great opposite table. They reached the wall, fumbled along its juncture with the floor, until Lowerman's whisper indicated that he had found what he sought. As Russell's eyes became a little accustomed to the darkness beneath the table he saw that Lowerman and Snelling had brought him to a round, ragged hole that had apparently been gnawed through the wooden strip at the wall's base. It was in reality, he knew, but a few inches across, but seemed to him that many feet.

Lowerman had already stooped, was wriggling through the hole and disappearing into the still deeper darkness inside. His whisper came out to Russell but the latter shrank back. Snelling, though, grasped his shoulder.

"It's the only way, Russell. Straight on—we've used these rat-holes for the last two weeks."

Russell mastered his instinctive terror, stooped and wriggled through also. He found himself in darkness absolute, and felt in a moment the touch of Lowerman's hands. A scraping sound told him that Snelling was beside them.

There was a loud scratch and splutter and a bright light flamed abruptly beside him. Lowerman held in his hand what seemed a short wooden cane burning brightly at one end. It was only when he suddenly remembered his own present pigmy size that Russell recognized the burning cane as an ordinary match.

The flame illuminated the place in which they stood, the interior of the wall. It seemed a narrow long hall whose walls towered up to colossal heights into the darkness above. Lowerman had fumbled for something on the floor, producing finally a crudely shaped and thick little piece of candle. With the great match he lit it, and as its light replaced that of the expiring match he motioned Russell onward. With Lowerman leading, holding the lighted candle-piece, they started along the vast-walled narrow corridor that was the wall's interior. Russell fought against his sense of utter unreality as they went forward.

They moved on until Russell estimated that they must be approaching the corner

of the wall. He wondered whither Lowerman was leading. He wondered——

"Snelling—back!"

As Lowerman's tense whisper hissed, the three sprang back as though plucked by a great hand. Russell heard from ahead a strange rushing, loping sound, then a confused deep squeaking grunt that froze his blood. Lowerman had thrust the candle-piece into his hands, had sprung forward with Snelling, their spears level! Russell glimpsed one—or was it two?—great dark shapes ahead of them, just beyond the range of the candle's light, saw the gleam of quick eyes; then a swift rush of feet as the things sprang.

There were two of them, twin monstrous shapes that Russell could not recognize as rats despite his brain's assurance. Fully half his own height they towered, with bodies as long as he was high, great fur-clad monsters whose eyes were gleaming and whose open jaws were white-fanged and snarling as they sprang. He felt the impact of their rush, saw Snelling go down and Lowerman knocked to his knees as they thrust at the onrushing beasts with their spears.

One of the huge rats squealed as Lowerman's long nail spearhead sank to its depth into its body. Russell glimpsed Lowerman, braced against the floor, thrusting the spear deeper into the thing as its great furry body flexed and stiffened convulsively against the wall. But Snelling was down beneath the other, the great jaws at his throat. Russell, a madness of combat on him, threw himself forward, thrust the lighted candle in his hand against the beast's side.

There was a sickening smell of burnt hair and flesh instantly and the beast whirled with a squealing snarl upon Russell. He dodged sidewise, felt the needle-pain of fangs closing on his thigh, then felt those fangs unclosing almost instantly. He staggered up, saw that Snelling and Lowerman were driving their already bloody spears again and again into the second rat's body. As Russell stumbled to his feet the great rat lay still, its paws slowly closing and unclosing. Russell felt Lowerman and Snelling at his side, found himself laughing weakly.

"Fighting with rats in a wall! Fighting death-combats with rats inside a wall!"

"Steady, Russell!" Lowerman clutched his shoulder. "We've got to go on—your leg's not hurt bad?"

Russell shook his head weakly. "It didn't have even a good hold on me. But let's go on, then—for God's sake let's go on!"

"Rats—more bold every day——" Snelling was panting as they hurried forward again. "Not afraid now of the candle-fire, even—almost took Johnson's arm off two days ago——"

"Down here, Russell," Lowerman directed.

They had come to a gnawed aperture in the wooden bottom of the wall. Lowerman dropped through it, Russell handed down the candle, and then followed with Snelling.

He found himself in another corridor, but one whose walls were of damp earth. It was narrow, and only by stooping could they go forward in it. With Lowerman ahead and Snelling behind again he moved along it. The corridor twisted and turned to right and left, and here and there was crossed by other earth-tunnels. Before coming to each of these crossings they waited, listening, before venturing ahead.

THE earthen tunnel twisted onward and at last Lowerman and Snelling turned with him into a branching corridor. This ended abruptly in a blank earth wall, in which was a single round opening that seemed a few feet across.

Lowerman extinguished their candle and as he did so Russell saw that through the opening from beyond came a faint yellow light. They crawled through the opening, and he found himself in a fairly large den hollowed in the black earth. It was illuminated by an ordinary candle burning at its center, one that seemed of enormous size to the pigmy Russell.

Around this candle, less than twice its height, three men awaited them. All were as unshaven and haggard of face as Lowerman and Snelling. One was big and white of hair, older than the others. Another had his shoulder tied in crude cloth bandages. Against the den's walls leaned several of the nail-head spears, some rude couches of cloth and grass, some scraps of food and candle. The smells of damp earth and smoke in the place were almost overpowering.

The white-haired man had grasped Russell's hand. "I hoped Lowerman and Snelling could bring you," he was saying quickly. "We dared not all venture up—Garland's laid so many traps for us——"

Russell dazedly returned the handclasp. "Then you're—you're——"

"Wallace—Dr. Fairfield Wallace. I am, or was, head of this research station. This is Hall here, and this Johnson—he had a pretty bad time of it with a rat in one of the runways, but he's getting better now."

They crouched down around the candle. Until he died Russell would not forget that scene—their six pigmy figures around the looming candle whose light flickered across the damp earth walls of the subterranean den and on the drawn faces of his companions. Wallace was leaning tensely toward him.

"Russell, your name is? Russell, we've got little time. Garland is mad. He is a mad genius of science, if there can be such a thing. He worked for years on his gland compounds, his size-changing compounds, until they have become a mania or obsession with him. His great aim was to try the compounds on human beings and that's why he got us to establish our research station on this isolated island, though we never guessed it at the time. And once here he drugged us and injected the size-decreasing compound into us all just as he drugged you and injected it into you, making pigmies of us as he has of you.

"We found ourselves pigmies and we were in horror of what further fiendish experiments he might carry out on us, so we managed to escape and get down into this maze of rat-runways under the laboratory and bungalow. The things we've seen and done here in these last two weeks! Russell, back home I have a house, a family, a position in the scientific world. And I'm here hiding from rats and snakes, fighting spiders, hunting bats to kill for food!

"But no more of that. Our one aim in these two weeks has been to get the red size-increasing compound of Garland's that alone can restore us to our normal size. He colored the two compounds red and green to distinguish between them, and the red one alone can ever bring us back from pigmies to men. And Garland knows that!

"He knows that our one aim is to get the red compound and he has taken care that we should not do so. The only sup-

ply of it is in the tube which he carries with the other compound and his needle in that small black case. That case never leaves his person. And each night Garland has locked himself securely in his bedroom in the bungalow, with the compound-case. There's no hope of getting the case from him while he's awake, of course, for in our pigmy size he could kill all of us with a blow. Our one hope is to steal the case while he sleeps.

"In the last week we have been burrowing up through the wall toward his bedroom. We have a runway now leading up from one of the rat-tunnels beneath the bungalow to his bedroom wall, and we've only a thin surface of plaster left to break through now. So tonight—now—we're going to try it, going to break through into his room and try stealing the case. If Garland discovers us it means death for us all, of course. But on the other hand only that single tube of red liquid will ever bring us back to normal stature. Are you going to try it with us?"

Russell drew a long breath. His brain seemed spinning. "I'm with you, of course," he said at last. "You're going to try it—now?"

"Now," Wallace affirmed. "We've got to make the attempt before Garland wakes, and it will take us some time to get from here over into the bungalow and up inside his room's wall."

They all stood up. Wallace gave quick orders to the others and they began crawling out of the cavity into the corridor or rat-tunnel outside. Wallace handed to Russell one of the heavy spears with its nail head.

"These wouldn't do us any good against Garland, God knows," he said, "but they help us against the rats and others."

"We go through the rat-tunnels to the bungalow?" Russell asked, but the other shook his head.

"No, just through them to the surface and then over to the bungalow and into its own tunnels. There is a perfect warren of them beneath these two buildings."

THEY crawled out after the others and stood in the rat-tunnel, with Lowerman and Hall carrying candles whose flickering light feebly illuminated the earth-walled corridor. At once and without words they set forth along it, but in an opposite direction from that by which Russell had come. To Russell it all was dream-like, by then—the flickering-lit low earth-tunnel they followed, their little band of rough-garbed, spear-armed men, the desperate venture that took them forward.

The tunnel wound this way and that. Lowerman led with one candle and Hall brought up the rear with the other. Once Snelling jabbed forth his spear to pin to the earth floor a great thing that had been scuttling sidewise, a dark many-legged shape that seemed of octopus size to Russell and that he only recognized after a moment as a big spider. Once, too, as they crossed another tunnel, there writhed in front of them a thick long snake-like thing that they passed unheedingly—a great earthworm.

The tunnel curved upward, and the going became harder, its roof still so low as to keep them stooping in it. In moments there came to Russell over the fumes of damp earth a breath of cleaner air. He glimpsed a round starlit opening ahead and above.

They were within a few yards of it, seemingly, when it was blocked by a dark

shape rushing in from outside. Without a word Snelling and Wallace and Lowerman had rushed forward with ready spears. There was a grunt and click of jaws, a threshing that dwindled suddenly, and before the dazed Russell could more than realize that another huge rat had rushed into the corridor from outside, the three were beckoning them on, panting and with their spears bloody. Russell followed them sickly over the big, still, furry body.

The candles were extinguished and they came out into open air. Russell found that they were standing in grass, whose great blades towered above their heads all around them. He made out the dark looming expanse of a gigantic wall behind them, realized that it was the side of the laboratory building up from beneath which they had come. Ahead, just visible above the grass-tops, loomed another wall.

They had halted, and Wallace pointed toward it. "The bungalow!" he whispered to Russell. "Go quiet now, Russell——"

They started forward through the grass. It was like forcing through a thicket of huge vegetation, as they struggled onward through the towering blades. The wall of the bungalow loomed slowly closer as they went on.

They halted once as a giant winged thing that seemed of airplane size went by just above them with a whir of wings. A bat or bird of some kind, Russell knew. He caught himself glancing at the stars as they fought on through the grass, wondering if ever before they had looked down on such a scene as this of their pigmy band and its progress.

There came suddenly from Johnson, at the side of their little band, a low, tense whisper, and he pointed to the right with his unbandaged arm. They all froze motionless, silent.

Russell, heart pounding, saw that to the right and ahead the towering grass blades were stirred by a nearing commotion, parting this way and that. There was a dry, slithering sound coming nearer. Then he saw what it was that approached. A snake. A huge snake that was to their eyes more than a score of feet in length, between one and two feet in thickness. It was gliding through the great grass slantwise across their path.

The starlight showed clear to Russell as it neared the enormous flexing and unflexing length of the snaky body, the triangular head and great jewel-like eyes. He strove to tell himself that the thing was but an ordinary snake made monstrous to them by their own pigmy size. He could only watch it with the others as it glided nearer. It did not see them, but glided past and vanished in the tall grass behind them. Russell was not aware of what horror was shaking him until he felt Wallace's steadying hand on his shoulder. He stumbled on with the others.

The great dark wall of the bungalow was closer, and as they went on through the great grass they changed their course, heading toward one of the building's corners. Beneath a thicket of shrubs near that corner they halted. A burrow-like opening in the earth yawned blackly beneath them.

Already Snelling and Lowerman were dropping into it. Russell followed with Wallace, heard the other two coming after them. They were in darkness until a match flared and spluttered to reveal another rat-runway like those beneath the laboratory. The candles were lit and

they started along it. To Russell, his brain already dazed, the earth walls around them made it seem that their minutes of progress through the towering grasses in the open air was but a dream-like interlude.

The tunnel twisted upward. They came to a great solid wood barrier over their heads, a round hole gnawed through it. When they had pulled themselves up through it they stood in the interior of a wall, a narrow and towering-walled corridor like that other laboratory wall whose interior Russell had come through. The little band went along this and then after a few moments turned into another narrow wall-corridor opening at right angles from the one they followed. They clambered over obstructions until they came to a place where wood and plaster alike had been hacked out and a tiny hole pierced through the thin surface of plaster remaining on the wall's other side. At once the candles were extinguished.

Wallace drew their heads close. "This is Garland's room," he whispered. "We've worked for days to dig through this wall, Russell. Don't make a sound now until we have a look."

He turned back to the tiny opening in the plaster and peered through it. He motioned then to Russell.

"He's asleep, all right," he whispered. "And the case—look!"

Russell peered through the opening. He saw a room like that which he had occupied in the bungalow on the preceding night—centuries before, it seemed—dimly lit by the thin starlight from the window, with a few chests and articles of furniture and a simple cot. On the cot stretched an unmoving figure, breathing regularly in sleep — the figure of Garland, gigantic to his eyes. And on a low table beside the cot—his heart bounded—the black case that held the two compounds!

"We'll try it now!" Wallace whispered. "If we can steal that case and get away before he wakes——"

"Enlarge the opening now?" Snelling asked, his spear poised.

Wallace nodded. "But quietly, for God's sake."

SNELLING and Hall began to dig silently at the plaster around the opening, chipping it away with their heavy spears. It seemed iron-hard, but bit by bit they broke loose little fragments of it, enlarging the opening. Once a fragment fell outside and rattled on the room's floor, a foot or two beneath the opening. They all were silent and unmoving, but the regular, loud breathing of Garland continued.

At last they had chipped away an opening large enough to permit their passage through it. Snelling went first, sliding down to the floor with spear in hand and catching and steadying the others as they too descended. Johnson was last, half falling. They stood upon the floor, a group of six pigmy figures but a third the height of the great wooden chest that loomed beside them.

They started silently across the room toward the low bedside table. Russell, his breathing strangely tight, found himself carrying his spear poised, his eyes on the sleeping, huge figure on the cot. The absurdity of it came home to him—the thought that with the tiny ten-inch spear he could kill that enormous figure. But they were almost beneath the low table now—his heart drumming with excitement—the eyes of the others brilliant

with hope—the table—the case—the case——

A cry from Snelling, and they leapt back, but too late! The huge motionless form of Garland on the cot had sprung into sudden activity, had leapt to the wall and with a single shove of his giant arm had pushed the great chest against the wall, covering the hole by which they had entered, blocking their retreat! Garland's hand found the switch and far overhead in the ceiling flared the sun-like lamps, flooding the room with light. And Garland, a forty-foot giant to their eyes, confronted the six pigmy figures, fully dressed, a gleaming pistol in his hand!

His laugh rumbled down to them like thunder. "So you came at last!" he jeered. "Wallace—Lowerman—all of you—and even you too, Russell, escaped, I see. I knew you would come—sooner or later!

"You thought your burrowing through the wall quite unobserved, eh? You dolts! You might have known that I was quite aware of it, and only let you go on because I knew that you would be coming in here to steal the compounds, and that I need only wait to trap you here!

"And trapped you are—trapped like rats to die the death of rats! Do you remember how we used to shoot at the rats with our pistols when we first came here? Well, the next few minutes ought to be just as amusing, with you six taking the place of the rats. I can get other and more tractable subjects for my experiments, I think. And as for you six, you can now——" His arm came up with the pistol.

Wallace cried to the others as their six pigmy figures sprang back beneath the table's shadow. "Snelling—Hall—get to his ankles—try to trip him—our only chance——!"

Snelling and Hall sprang beneath the shadow of the immense cot just as there came a terrific detonation across the great room, and a smashing and splintering of the floor beside them as the great bullet crashed into it. The gigantic Garland, laughing in crazy amusement and not noticing the running two figures beneath the cot, sent another bullet into the floor in front of them as they leapt to escape the first. Russell saw Johnson trip as they recoiled again beneath the table, and dragged him with him an instant before another great bullet dug the floor at that spot.

The scene was fantastic, out of nightmare! The vast room, the colossal shape of Garland with pistol in hand, the massive leaden missiles that crashed at them. They made for the shelter of the cot but threw themselves back only in time to escape another bullet which sent clouds of great splinters over them. Lowerman, struck by a flying splinter, was knocked flat, and Russell saw Garland's giant arm train the pistol on him. But he saw too the foot-high figures of Snelling and Hall racing out from the shadow beside Garland to stab furiously at his ankles with their spears! Garland stumbled, his fifth shot going wild. He started to whirl around to stamp upon the two pigmy figures beneath him but they had gripped his ankles and he tripped, fell, his body across the room with head near the other four pigmy men, pistol flying from his grasp as he struck the floor.

Instantly the four foot-high men were upon him, clambering toward his throat with spears fiercely outthrust. The battle of Gulliver and the Lilliputians re-enacted, it flashed through Russell's brain

as he drove forward with his spear. But Garland, a vast bellow of rage coming from him, was scrambling up, his flailing enormous arms knocking them this way and that. Russell felt himself whirling across the floor as a flailing arm struck him, saw Garland rising to his feet, his face crimson with rage. And Garland, his crazy amusement dissolved into mad fury now, was grasping a chair, whirling it over his head to send it crashing down on the scattered pigmy figures.

Russell, staggering to his feet even as Garland's chair swung up, felt rather than saw beside him a big metal shape, the pistol that had slid from Garland's hand as the giant fell. To the foot-high Russell the pistol was huge, but almost without conscious exertion he had grasped and lifted it, one arm encircling its great butt and his other hand on its trigger as he pointed it up like some clumsy big rifle toward the giant Garland's breast. He was not aware that he had pulled the trigger until the roar of the weapon knocked him backward. There was silence . . . .

Garland swayed as though in stupid surprize, the huge chair slipping from his upraised hands and crashing to the floor —swayed, a spreading red stain upon his breast, until he too slumped and crashed in thunderous fall to the floor.

Russell was dazedly aware of voices and running feet, of the others crowding about him, weeping, sobbing, helping him up. Wallace and Lowerman were climbing to the low table, bearing down from it the black case between them, the six pigmy figures crowding round it as it was opened with frantic haste. The tubes of red and green compound—Wallace was filling the big hypodermic needle, the others supporting tube and needle as the red compound filled the latter. They crouched down near the room's center but away from the prostrate giant figure of Garland—and then Wallace and the great needle—a stab of pain in Russell's neck as it penetrated — and then swift darkness—darkness—darkness . . . .

WHEN Russell awoke, sunlight was warm upon his face. He opened his eyes, stirred, sat weakly up, nausea and weariness infinite upon him. Around him others were stirring. He looked about him dazedly, then with swift remembrance and comprehension. Wallace and Lowerman and Snelling, Johnson and Hall, they all were stirring, waking like himself, in the crowded room that seemed now not gigantic but small. And beside them another figure that did not stir—Garland! Garland—his dead figure no larger in size than their own!

They staggered to their feet, dazed all by the transition from pigmy to human stature once more. They were all without clothing, and on the floor lay the little rough tunics that had been theirs as pigmies, and the absurdly little spears. They groped out of the room after unlocking the door, and groped into clothing in the other rooms, like men restored suddenly from insanity to sanity. They poured stumbling out of the bungalow into the light of still another sunset, their speech still incoherent.

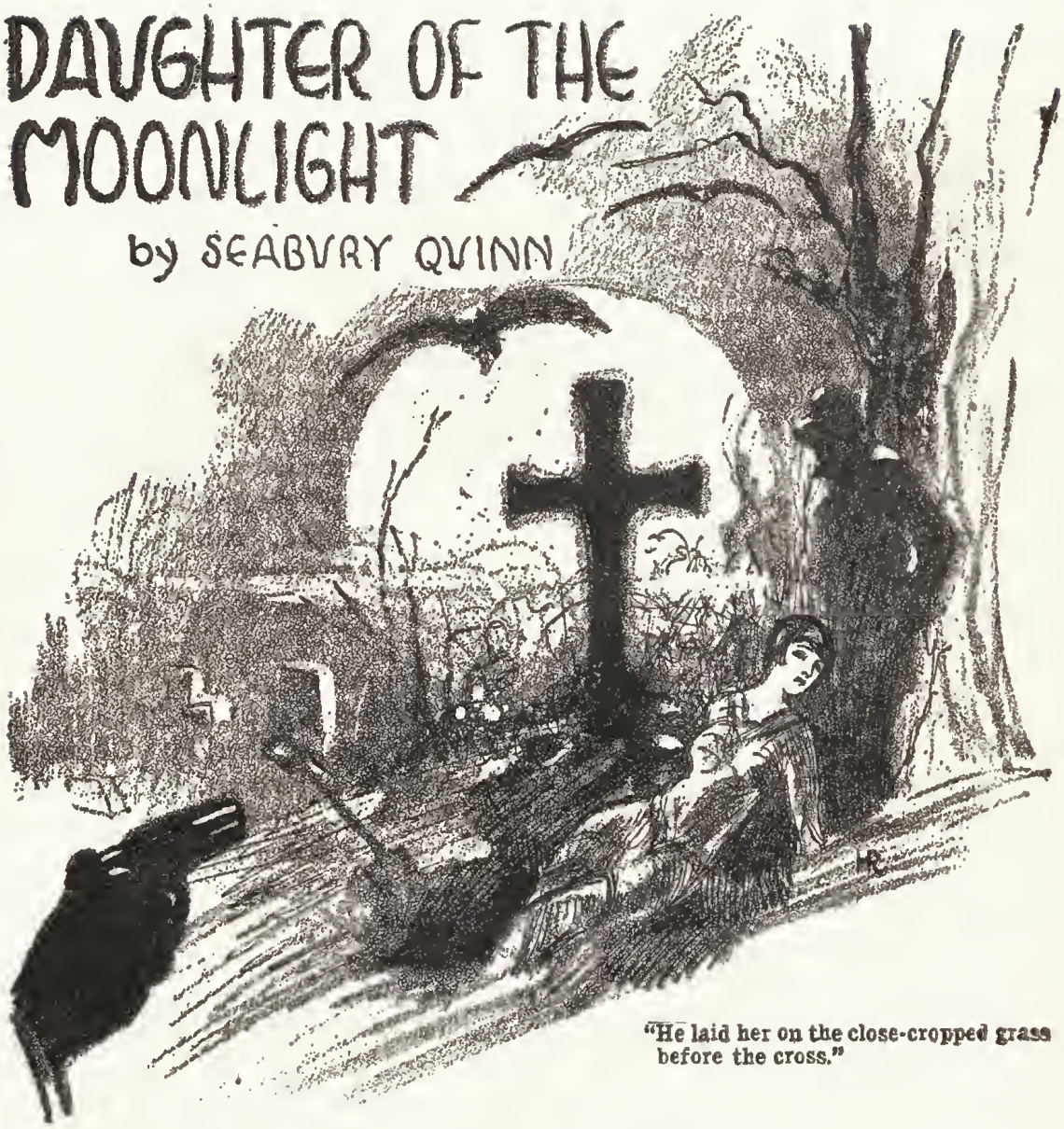
"The boat!" said Wallace thickly. "Let's get away—for God's sake let's get away!" He halted suddenly. "But first——"

He ran back into the bungalow, and when he emerged disappeared into the laboratory, then joined them. As they

(Continued on page 288)

DAUGHTER OF THE MOONLIGHT

by SEABURY QUINN



"He laid her on the close-cropped grass before the cross."

THE annual midsummer ladies' night at the Kobbskill Country Club proved a pretty party. The white walls of the clubhouse, reared in the severe style of architecture affected by the early Dutch settlers, shone like an illuminated monument in the dusky blue of the July night, lights blazed at every window, and colored bulbs decorated the overhanging roofs of the broad piazzas which stretched along the front and rear of the building. The artistically parked grounds near the house shone with Chinese lanterns which gleamed with rose, blue, violet, gold and jade, rivaling the brilliance of the summer stars. Jazz blared in the commodious ballroom and echoed from the big, yellow-and-red-striped marquee set up by the first green. Brilliant as the plumage of birds of paradise, the light silken dresses of the women made bright highlights in the night,

while the somber black and white of their escorts' costumes furnished a pleasing contrast and made the chiaroscuro of color the more vivid. Three of us—Jules de Grandin, our host, Colonel Patrick FitzPatrick, and I—sat on the front veranda and rocked comfortably in wide wicker chairs, the ice in our tall glasses tinkling pleasantly.

"*Mordieu, mes amis,*" the little Frenchman exclaimed enthusiastically, sucking appreciatively from the twin straws in his long glass, "*c'est une scène très charmante!* It is so—how do you say?—so—ah, *mort de ma vie, les belles créatures!*" His gaze rested on a pair of girls who paused momentarily beneath the luminous drops of the crystal chandelier hanging from the porch roof at the head of the stairs.

Limned in vivid silhouette against the background of smalt-blue sky and black-green evergreens, the girls were oddly alike, yet curiously unlike. Both were gowned in green, tall and slender with the modernly fleshless figure which simulates boyishness more than femininity; both had small, clear-carved features; both wore their hair cut close at the back, rather long and prettily waved at the front; both possessed complexions of milky whiteness, but one was yellow-haired and violet-eyed, while the short-shorn locks of the other were red as rose-gold alloyed with copper, and her eyes, long, black-fringed and obliquing slightly downward at their outer corners, were green as moss-agate.

"*Parbleu,*" the Frenchman swore delightedly, "they are like a *boutonnière*—she of the golden hair is like an *asphodèle*—a slender daffodil that sways and dances in the evening breeze; while she of the ruddy tresses, *morbleu,* she is a poppy, a glorious, glowing-red poppy to steal men's senses away, no less!"

"Humph," Colonel FitzPatrick returned, "you're nearer right than you think, old-timer. She's all of that, and then some."

"Ah, you know her?" de Grandin asked with interest.

"Ought to," FitzPatrick laughed. "The yellow-haired one's my daughter Josephine; the other's my niece, Dolores. She's lived with us since she was a kid of ten, and a queer lot she is, too."

"But certainly," the Frenchman agreed with a vigorous nod, "one with hair and eyes like hers could be no ordinary mortal. She is a *fée,* a pixy out of some story-book, a——"

"I'm not so sure of that," the other interrupted with a chuckle. "Sometimes I've thought her an imp out of quite a different place. She's been off to school—so has Josephine—for the past two years; but unless she's changed a lot, some one's in for a bad time before she goes back."

He paused a moment, drawing thoughtfully at his cigar, then: "They say Cleopatra and Helen of Troy, not to mention Helen of Tyre, had hair of that odd, metallic red; I'm inclined to credit the legends. Dolores is the sort who'd go to any lengths for a thrill. I can imagine her on the throne of an Eastern despot administering poison to her unsuspecting lovers just to see 'em squirm as they died, and having a few dozen assorted captives disemboweled to find out what made 'em tick. Pity, or even decent consideration for others' feelings just don't exist when her curiosity or convenience are concerned."

The girls seemed engaged in some sort of argument; the red-haired one striving to interest the blond in some plan, the

yellow-haired girl stubbornly refusing. At length, with a shrug betraying mingled annoyance and resignation, the blond girl gave in, and they passed toward the dancing marquee arm in arm.

"There you are," FitzPatrick grumbled, "never knew it to fail; Josephine's got plenty of will of her own where I'm concerned—where any one else is, for that matter—but Dolores can twist her round her finger any time she wishes."

We rocked, smoked and cooled ourselves with repeated orders from the club steward's stock, played several rubbers of bridge, then returned to the porch for refreshments. By two o'clock the cars began leaving the parking-lot, and by a quarter of three the house and grounds were all but deserted.

"Confound it," Colonel FitzPatrick grumbled, "where the deuce are those hare-brained girls? Don't they know I'd like to be home by daylight?"

Interrogation of several homeward-bound couples failed to elicit information concerning the girls' whereabouts, and our host at last lost his temper. "Let's go round 'em up," he proposed. "I'm betting we'll find 'em lallygagging with a pair of shiny-haired sheiks in one of those fool summer-houses!"

HOWEVER well the Colonel knew his women-folk, his prediction proved at least half-way wrong before we had walked a hundred yards from the club-house. From a shaded bower of honeysuckle, ideally adapted for the exchange of youthful vows of undying affection, the sound of a woman sobbing piteously attracted our attention; as we approached, the green gown and crocus-yellow hair of Josephine FitzPatrick told us half our quest was over.

"Why, Jo, what's the matter?" Colonel FitzPatrick asked as he paused beside his daughter. His assumed bruskness evaporated as he saw her abject misery, and real concern was in his voice as he continued: "Here all alone? Where's Martin? I thought I saw him here tonight."

"He was—he is—oh, I don't know where he is!" the girl returned with the inconsistency of overmastering grief. "He's somewhere with Dolores, and—oh, I wish I were dead!"

"There, daughter, there," FitzPatrick patted the girl's gleaming bare shoulder with awkward tenderness, "tell Dad about it. It can't be so very bad. Why, only last week Martin asked me for you, and——"

"That's just it," the girl interrupted with a high, half-hysterical wail. "Dolores knew he wanted me and I wanted him—she didn't want him, really; she just wanted to take him from me to show she could do it. It's always been so, Daddy. When we were little girls she always took the doll I loved the most, and broke it when she tired of it. She beat me for honors at school when she heard I was out for the history prize; I never had a beau she didn't take away from me; now she's taken Martin, and—oh, Dad, I never wanted anything in all my life as I want him. Make her give him back! She'll take him as she took my dolls, and—and she'll break him when she tires of him, too; she'll never, never give him back to me. Oh, I hate her, I *hate* her!"

"Now, Jo——" her father began awkwardly, but:

"I know what you're going to say!" she blazed. "You're going to tell me she's an orphan, hasn't any one to love or care for her but us, and I must give in to her—give her everything I prize most,

because her father and mother are dead! She got away with everything I wanted most on those grounds when we were children; but she shan't have Martin, I tell you; she *shan't!* I love him and I want him, and I won't let her have him. I'll kill her first!"

"Go get your things," FitzPatrick interrupted authoritatively. "I'll bring Dolores in—and Martin, too." He turned away with a stern, set face and tramped purposefully toward the deeper shadow of the evergreen grove.

"Everything she says is true," he confided as we marched along. "Dolores came to us when her parents were killed in a railway accident in Virginia. She was only ten then, and was the sole survivor of the wreck. Her father was my younger brother; her mother—humph, well, none of us knew much of her. Jim met her down South somewhere while he was heading a surveying crew. Wrote us all sorts of glowing letters about her, but I never met her—Dad absolutely forbade the match, you see, and when they were married in spite of him, refused to see either of them. Jim got it in his head I was opposed to it, too; so when Father died and cut him out of his will, he'd have nothing to do with me, wouldn't even answer my letters when I wrote and offered to share the estate half and half with him. Then he and Giatanas were killed, and I took Dolores to live with us. She's co-legatee in my will with Josephine, and I've tried to be a father to her, but—well, there have been times when I thought I'd underwritten too big an issue."

"Giatanas," de Grandin repeated softly. "An odd name for an American woman, is it not, *Monsieur?* What was her surname, if you recall?"

"She didn't have any, as far as I know," FitzPatrick returned. "That's where the difficulties arose. She wasn't an American. She was a Spanish Gipsy, the seventh daughter of the queen of the tribe, who claimed to be a seeress, and all that sort of tosh. Jim met her when his crew came on their camp, and simply went blotto over her at first glance. I don't know much about the Gipsies, but I've been told they're not Christians. At any rate, Giatanas and he were married by the tribal rite, not by a clergyman, and I suppose their marriage wasn't absolutely legal, but——"

A crashing, as of some heavy-footed animal, sounded in the undergrowth of a near-by pine copse.

"Who—what the devil's that?" Colonel FitzPatrick demanded, striding belligerently toward the disturbance. "Come out o' that, whoever you are, or I'll come in after you. Now, then, come on—good God, *look!*"

Parting the long-needled branches with blind, groping hands, a young man in evening dress stumbled and staggered into the pool of luminance shed by a Chinese lantern. His collar and tie were undone, his shirt broken loose from its studs, his clothing in utter disarray. Blood streamed over his chin in a steady spate, staining his linen and dripping on the pine needles at his feet. At first I thought his lips parted in a drunken grin, but as he reeled nearer I gave an exclamation of horror. The grimace I had thought voluntary resulted from dreadful mutilation. Where the scarf-skin and mucous membrane joined, his lips had been cut away in two semicircular sections, like a pair of parentheses laid horizontally, revealing the white, staring teeth beneath

and drenching his chin and breast with a spilth of ruby blood.

"Martin, boy, whatever is the matter—how did it happen?" FitzPatrick asked in a shrill, half-unbelieving whisper.

The young man gave a slavering, unintelligible answer, waving his arms wildly toward the clearing behind as his mutilated lips refused to form the words, and goggling at us with rolling, horrified eyes. His impotence and fright, his inability to speak and the wondering horror in his dazed eyes sickened me. It was like witnessing the agony of some gentle, dumb animal, tortured where it had thought to find kindness.

"Quick, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin cried as he snatched the handkerchief from his breast pocket and deftly folded it into a pack for the boy's maimed mouth, "help me get him to the house; we must take immediate measures, for his coronary vessels are cut—his hemorrhage is dangerous. Let Monsieur FitzPatrick seek his niece, here is work for us!"

WHILE we clawed through the meager supplies of the club's first-aid kit an attendant telephoned Harrisonville for an ambulance and reported that the big emergency car which Coroner Martin, in his private capacity of funeral director, kept available for service, was already on its way, for the city hospitals resolutely refused to send their cars beyond the limits of the municipality.

"Dieu de Dieu," the Frenchman swore feverishly, "if we could but obtain a styptic, we might make progress, but this gauze, this adhesive tape, these prepared bandages—what use are they? On the field of battle, yes; in such a case as this, where we must ever consider the coming operation which is to restore the young *monsieur's* countenance, *non.* Ah, *parbleu,* I have it! Quick, Friend Trowbridge, rush, run, hasten, fly to the so excellent chef and obtain from him some gelatin and a pan of boiling-hot water. Yes, that will do most nobly, I apprehend."

Working quickly, he made a paste of the gelatin and water, then applied the transparent mixture to young Faber's torn lips. To my surprize it acted almost as well as collodion, and in a few minutes the entire flow of blood was staunched. We had hardly finished when Martin's ambulance drew up before the door, its powerful eight-cylinder engine panting like a live thing with the strain to which it had been put in making the ten-mile run. Assisted by the genial mortician, who had dropped his other work to superintend the emergency trip, we bundled the injured man into a chair-cot and bore him to the car.

"Mon Dieu, my hat!" de Grandin wailed as I was about to leap into the ambulance and slam the door. "Quick, my friend, get it for me, if you please—it cost me fifty francs!"

I hustled to the check room to retrieve the missing headgear, and as I hurried out again I caught a glimpse of Josephine and Dolores FitzPatrick awaiting the colonel and his car.

Josephine, tear-scarred and tremulous, had evidently been upbraiding her cousin in no uncertain terms, but the red-haired maiden was calm beneath the reproaches.

"Martin?" I heard her exclaim in a cool, ironical voice. "Why, Jo, dear, I don't want him; you're welcome to him, I'm sure."

Something like a draft of winter air piercing through the sultry summer night seemed to chill my spine as I listened.

Was it just a crack-brained fancy that made me think her thin, red lips were colored with a smear less innocent than any brand of rouge obtainable at drug stores?

THE carelessness of a local fish-dealer in failing to provide adequate refrigeration for his finny stock occasioned a young epidemic of mild ptomaine poisonings, and I was kept busy prescribing Rochelle salt and administering hypodermic doses of morphine throughout the following day. By dinnertime I was in a state bordering on collapse, but Jules de Grandin was fresh as the newly starched linen he had donned for the evening meal.

"What have you been up to?" I asked as we enjoyed our coffee on the side veranda.

"*Eh bien,* three stories; no less." he answered with a chuckle.

"*What?*"

"Three stories, I did say," he returned. "Upon the third floor of Mercy Hospital, with the young Monsieur Faber. Jules de Grandin is clever. The wounds upon the young *monsieur's* face already make excellent progress, there is no infection, and all is prepared for me to graft flesh from his leg upon his mangled lips. When I have done, only a little, so small mustache will be needed to hide his scars from the world. Yes, it is an altogether satisfactory case."

"How the deuce did he receive that appalling hurt?" I wondered. "It looked almost as though some ferocious beast had worried him. But that's absurd, of course. There isn't any game more savage than a rabbit to be found in this section of Jersey."

"U'm," de Grandin sipped a mouthful of coffee slowly and beat a devil's tattoo on the arm of his chair with small, slender fingers. "One wonders."

"This one doesn't—not tonight, at any rate," I answered. "I'm too tired to think. It's been a hard day, and tomorrow looks like another; I'll turn in, if you don't mind."

"Happy dreams," he bade with a wave of his hand as I rose to go inside.

PERHAPS it was the salad I had eaten, perhaps the broiling heat of the July night which made me so thirsty; at any rate, I woke with parched tongue and paper-dry lips some time between midnight and dawn and reached sleepily for the carafe of chilled water on my bedside table. I upturned the chromium-plated bottle, but no cooling trickle of liquid reached my glass. "Hang it!" I muttered as I sought my slippers and started for the bathroom to replenish the exhausted water supply.

"*Dieu, non;* I shall make no treaty with such as you!" I heard de Grandin whisper as I shuffled past his door on my return trip. "Away, hell-spawn, I enter no engagements——"

I paused before his door, wondering whether it were better to waken him or let his nightmare pass, when a further sound came from beyond the panels—a queer, baffling sound, like something scratching and clawing at the stout copper screen at the window. I hesitated no longer.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed as I entered the bedroom. Jules de Grandin lay on his bed, his limbs taut and rigid, his fingers clutching at the linen. Beyond the screen, clawing at the copper mesh with the fury of a savage beast, was the biggest owl I had ever seen. With beak and talon it fought the woven wire, and in its glow-

ing, yellow eyes there blazed a steady glare of concentrated malignancy and hatred.

A moment I stared at the uncanny thing, completely taken aback; then, acting without conscious thought, I hurried to the window and dashed the contents of my water-bottle full in its evil face. "Be off!" I ordered sharply. The visitant's fiery eyes disappeared as though they had been two glowing coals extinguished by the flood of water, and with a scream of mingled rage and fright it flapped away in the surrounding shadows.

"Cordieu!" de Grandin woke with a start and sat bolt-upright. "I have had a most exceedingly evil dream, Friend Trowbridge. I dreamed a mighty owl, well-nigh as great as Uncle Sam's so glorious eagle, came clawing at the window, and bade me keep darkly secret a fact I discovered today. I refused its order, and it made at me with beak and claws, as if it were a devil-bird from hell's own subcellar!"

"H'm, the devil part of it was probably a dream," I answered, "but the owl was certainly real enough. The biggest one I ever saw was scratching at the screen like a thing possessed when I came down the hall a moment ago. I thought——"

"Ha, do you tell me? And where is it now?" he interrupted.

"Drying itself, I imagine."

"You mean——"

"I didn't know what else to do to discourage it, so I flung a quart or so of water on it."

"Oh, Trowbridge, my good, my incomparable Trowbridge!" he applauded. "You know not what you do; but always you do the right thing. Did you also address it?"

"Yes," I grinned sheepishly. "I said, 'Be off!' "

"Mort d'un rat mort!" he cried, leaping from the bed and flinging both arms about me. "You are priceless, my old one. You are perfection's own self, no less!"

"What the deuce——"

"You did perfectly. If it were a physical, natural bird, which I greatly doubt, the dousing you gave it was enough to discourage its ardor, beyond dispute; if it were what I damnation suspect, the baptism and your unequivocal command to take itself elsewhere were precisely what was required to rid us of its presence. Oh, my inestimable one, if I could be as sure of myself in my wisdom as you are in your ignorance, I should esteem Jules de Grandin more highly."

"Thank heaven you aren't, then," I countered with a laugh. "You're bad enough as it is; if you admired yourself any more there'd be no living with you!"

"Bête!" he cried. "I have killed for less than that; the least I should do is challenge you to mortal combat and——"

"Confound it!" I interrupted. "And at this unholy hour, too!" My bedroom telephone had commenced ringing with all the infernal insistence of which those instruments of torture are capable when we are blissfully asleep.

"Hullo, Dr. Trowbridge," came the challenge over the wire; "FitzPatrick speaking. Can you come over at once? It's Dolores—she's gone!"

"Gone?" I echoed. "Why, how do you mean? Have you notified the police——"

"Hell's fire, no! This is a case for a physician. She had some sort of seizure this afternoon and——"

"All right," I broke in, "we'll be right out."

Ten minutes later de Grandin and I were speeding toward Seven Pines, FitzPatrick's palatial country seat.

THE place was in a turmoil when we reached it. Lights blazed in the windows from top to bottom; the colonel, his daughter and the servants trod on each others' heels in aimless circling quests for the missing girl; everywhere was bustle, confusion and futility.

"Hanged if I know what it was," the colonel confessed as we shook hands. "Dolores had been acting queerly ever since last night when young Faber was injured. By the way, how is he, Doctor de Grandin?"

"Excellent, all things considered," the Frenchman replied. "But it is of Mademoiselle Dolores we were speaking. What of her?"

"Well, after we found Martin Faber last night I beat my way through the pines to look for her, and found her stretched out on the ground, unconscious. It gave me a shock—I thought she might be dead or injured, but just as I stooped to pick her up she came round, rose without assistance and walked to the house with me as coolly as though falling in a faint was an every-night occurrence with her."

"*Tiens,* and was it?" de Grandin asked.

"Not that I know," FitzPatrick answered shortly. "I asked her if she'd seen Martin, and she said she had.

" 'Was he all right?' I wanted to know, and:

" 'As right as usual—he's always something of an ass, isn't he, Uncle Pat?' she answered.

" 'Perhaps you'd be interested if I told you he's been terribly hurt, had both lips almost torn off,' I snapped.

" 'Perhaps I should, but I'm not,' she replied as cool as you please, and that's all I got from her.

" 'You're inhuman!' I accused.

" 'So I've been told,' she admitted.

"After that we didn't speak till we reached the clubhouse.

"I think she and Josephine had a pretty warm set-to later, for both of 'em seemed rather huffy when we drove home, and Dolores began acting queerly this morning."

"How, by example?" de Grandin asked.

"Oh, she seemed unduly depressed, even for one of her moody temperament, wouldn't eat anything, and seemed not to hear when any one spoke to her. Just before dinner she was sitting on the porch, looking down the lawn, but not seeming to see anything, when all of a sudden I noticed her left foot was twitching and shaking like——" He paused for an adequate illustration, then: "As though a galvanic current had been applied to it.

"I looked at her, wondering what the matter was, and within a moment the spasm seemed to spread all over her. She'd shake as though with a chill, then seem to relax, go limp as a damp cloth, then tremble more violently than ever. Before I could reach her she'd slipped from her chair to the floor and lay there, twitching and trembling like a mechanical figure when the clockwork is almost run down. Her eyes were partly opened, but the eyeballs were turned up under the upper lids so the pupils were invisible. She seemed wholly unconscious when I picked her up."

"Great heavens!" I exclaimed, "that has all the earmarks of an epilep——"

"Zut!" de Grandin cut me short. "What happened further, if you please, *Monsieur?"*

"That's all. We put her to bed, and she seemed to lapse into a natural sleep. I hadn't planned on calling you until tomorrow morning; but a few minutes ago when Josephine went in to see how she was, we found she'd gone. We've searched everywhere, but she seems to have evaporated. If we'd only thought to have somebody stay with her, we might——"

"Pardon me, sir," FitzPatrick's chauffeur suggested, pausing respectfully by his employer's elbow, "I've been thinking Bruno might be able to help us here; he's a hunter, and his scent is keen, even if he hasn't been trained to track people."

"Nonsense——" the colonel began, but:

"Excellent, my old one, your idea is entirely sound," de Grandin applauded. "Obtain from *Mademoiselle's* wardrobe a pair of shoes, and let the dog smell them thoroughly. Then, by happy chance, if the others have not already obscured her tracks with their fruitless searchings, we may be led to her."

THE dog, a long-legged, rangy hound, was brought from the stable, given the scent from a pair of Dolores' bedroom mules, and led out by the chauffeur. Slowly the man and beast walked round the house in ever-widening circles. The hound's nose was to the ground most of the time, but every now and then he would raise his muzzle and sniff the upper air as though to clear his nostrils of a confusing medley of scents. They had almost completed their twelfth circuit when the dog abruptly jerked forward against his leash, thrust his muzzle forward and gave a deep, belling bay. Next instant, dragging himself free, he set out toward a rise of ground behind FitzPatrick's grove, his gray-and-brown body extended, shoulders and hind-quarters moving rhythmically as he galloped.

"After him, Friend Trowbridge!" de Grandin cried. "He has the scent, he will assuredly take us to her."

Stumbling, scrambling over the uneven ground of the wood, we followed the dog, entered the deeper shadow of the grove, then paused irresolute, for all trace of our canine guide had vanished.

"Sacré bleu," de Grandin swore, "we are at fault. Here, *mon brave,* here, noble animal!" He put his fingers to his lips and sounded a shrill whistle.

Answer was almost immediate. From the farther side of the wood the hound came slinking, his ears and muzzle drooping, tail tucked pitifully between his legs. Like a frightened child the beast cowered by de Grandin's legs and whimpered in abject terror.

"Huh," exclaimed the chauffeur, "th' fool dawg's lost th' scent!"

The little Frenchman slipped his finger under the animal's collar and advanced slowly toward the clearing beyond. "What lies yonder?" he asked, turning to the chauffeur.

"Th' ol' graveyard," returned the other. "Colonel FitzPatrick tried to buy it when he took over th' estate, but th' heirs wouldn't sell. Our land stops at th' boundary o' th' woods, sir."

"Eh, do you tell me?" de Grandin answered absently, patting the whimpering hound's back gently. "It may well be our good beast has found the trail only too well, and returned to us for reasons of

prudence, *mon ami*. Look, what is that?" He pointed upward.

Clear-cut against the faint luminosity of the summer sky, a great, black-winged bird went sailing on outstretched, almost motionless pinions, circled slowly a moment, then swooped downward to the fenced-in close of the old, dismantled burying-ground which lay before us. Almost at once another spectral shape, and still another, followed the first in ghostly single file.

"H'm, they look like owls to me," the chauffeur returned, "but they're bigger than any owls I ever seen. Jimminy crickets, there's three of 'em! Never seen nothin' like it before."

"Let us hope you may not do so again," the little Frenchman answered. "Come, let us go."

"Not quittin', are yuh?" the chauffeur asked, half contemptuously.

The Frenchman made no reply as, the hound's collar still clutched in his hand, he strode toward the house.

Once inside the lighted hall, he swept the circle of servants with an appraising eye. "Is there a Catholic present?" he demanded.

"Sure, I'm one," volunteered the cook, on whose countenance appeared the map of County Kerry. "Wot ov it?"

"Very good. Will you be good enough to lend me your rosary, and a flask of holy water, as well, if you happen to possess it?" he returned.

"Sure, ye can have 'em, an' welcome," she answered, "but what ye're afther wantin' ov 'em is more'n I can see."

Two steps carried de Grandin to her side. "What is today, *Madame?*" he asked, staring her levelly in the eye.

"Why, sure, an' it's July thirty-first—no, 'tis August first," she answered wonderingly.

"*Précisément*. In France we call this day *la fête de saint Pierre-ès-Liens*. You know it as the feast of Saint Peter's Chains, or——"

"Glory be to God! 'Tis Lammas!" she cried, terrified understanding shining in her face. "Wuz it fer this th' pore young gur-rl wuz stole away?"

"I would not go so far," de Grandin answered, "but a moment since the hound came whimpering and trembling to my knee after he had been to the ancient graveyard which lies beyond *Monsieur le Colonel's* woodland, and we did see three monster owls, with yellow, sulfurous eyes, fly past the moon. May I have the blessèd articles?"

"Indade ye shall!" she told him heartily. "An' it's th' brave lad ye are to venture in that haunted place. Faith, Bridget O'Flaherty wouldn't do it if th' Howly Father stood at her elbow, wid th' whole College o' Cardinals behint 'im! Ouch, God an' th' Howly Saints preserve this house tonight!" She signed herself reverently with the cross as she hastened to procure the rosary and blessèd water.

ONCE more we forced our way through FitzPatrick's wood lot. Wrapped about his right wrist de Grandin wore the cook's rosary like a bracelet, in his left hand he bore a half-pint flask adorned with a label assuring the beholder that it contained "Golden Wedding Rye, 50 Years Old, Bottled in Bond," but which actually contained nothing more lawless than water from the font of St. Joseph's church. At the Frenchman's heels I marched, a double-barreled shotgun cocked and ready, that we might be pre-

pared to meet the foe on ghostly or terrestrial planes.

"Careful, Friend Trowbridge," he warned, "we do approach." Stepping cautiously from the shadow of the oak trees, he advanced stealthily toward the tumbledown wooden fence enclosing the disused cemetery.

Almost as we emerged from the wood there came a queer, high, piping sound, a sort of sustained whistle, so shrill as to be almost inaudible, yet so piercing in quality that it stabbed the ear as a dentist's whirling drill bites the tortured tooth. Up, wheeling blindly in ever-widening circles, then pouncing forward like birds of prey came a trio of great, sable bats, squeaking viciously as they swooped at our faces.

"Ha, evil ones, you find us not unprepared!" the little Frenchman whispered between drawn lips. "Behold this sign, ye minions of the dark—look, and be afraid!" He raised his bead-bound wrist, displaying the miniature crucifix which swung from the rosary, and at the same time thrust his left hand forward, sending a shower of holy water toward the flying things.

The bats were larger than any creatures of the kind I had ever seen; in my excitement it seemed to me they were as big as full-grown rats, with wing-spread of a yard or more, and their little, evil eyes glinted with a red and fiery malevolence as they swooped. I raised the gun and loosed both barrels at them, then broke the lock and jammed fresh cartridges feverishly into the smoking breech.

"Holà," de Grandin cried exultingly, "you or I, or both of us, have put them to rout, Friend Trowbridge; see, they are gone!"

They were. Look as I would, I could espy no sign of the uncouth things.

"Why, I must have literally blown them to pieces," I exclaimed.

"U'm, perhaps," he conceded. "Let us see what further we may see."

Dolores FitzPatrick lay supine upon a sunken grave, her head pressed tight against the weather-gnawed tombstone, her feet toward the lower end of the sepulcher. Stretched to utmost length diagonally from her shoulders, her arms extended up and outward, while her nether limbs were thrust out stiffly at acute angles from her hips, making the design of a white St. Andrew's cross upon the mossy graveyard turf. Briars and clutching undergrowth had ripped her flimsy silken nightrobe to tatters so that scarce a shred remained to clothe her; her slippers had been shed somewhere in her flight, and stones and brambles had bruised and torn her tender feet; more than one thorn-gash scarred her slim white body, and a wisp of short, ruddy hair lay across her forehead like a bleeding wound.

"Good heavens!" I cried, dropping to my knees and taking her wrist between my fingers. "She's"—I paused, put my ear to her still breast, then looked up at the Frenchman with dawning horror in my eyes—"she's gone, de Grandin; we're too late. The poor child must have wandered here in her delirium and fallen on this grave in a fresh seizure. See her thumbs!"

There was no mistaking the diagnostic sign; her thumbs were bent transversely across her palms and the fingers clutched them with all the avid tensity of rigor mortis.

"Epilepsy, no doubt of it," I diagnosed. "The history of her case as detailed by

FitzPatrick is absolutely unmistakable. The poor girl's lived beneath this shadow for years without suspecting it—that was the reason for her 'queerness and perversity' that made her hardly tolerable. She was at the dangerous age, and when the blow fell it crushed her, absolutely."

The Frenchman knelt beside her, felt her wrist and temples, and listened at her breast, then rose with what seemed to me a strangely callous indifference. "Give me the gun," he ordered as he shed his jacket and draped it over Dolores' all but nude remains. "Do you take her up and bear her to the house, my friend.

"Have you read your Bible much of late?" he asked apropos of nothing as I trudged in his wake with the lovely body in my arms.

"My Bible?"

"*Précisément.* That portion which deals with those possessed of devils?"

"No—why d'ye ask?"

"I hardly know myself," he answered almost absently, holding back a branch from my path; "it was but a thought which came to me; perhaps it is of little value, perhaps, again, it may have application here. If so, I shall explain when the time has come."

THE first faint sign came as I strode up the graveled walk toward FitzPatrick's house. Just as I was about to mount the lower step of the veranda I felt a slight stirring, the faintest suggestion of fluttering motion in my burden. I took the short flight in two giant leaps, and bent to examine her countenance in the porch light's glare. There was no doubt about it. She had relaxed her clutching hold upon her thumbs, and her lower jaw, which had fallen, had once more raised itself, closing the mouth and giving to the thin, pale face a look of natural sleep. Even as I gazed incredulously into her countenance her bosom trembled and a faint sigh escaped her.

"De Grandin!" I cried. "De Grandin, she's alive!"

He nodded shortly. "I thought as much," he said; then, his manner as professionally impersonal as though he were visiting physician at a charity hospital: "See that the blankets on her bed are well warmed, and that no disturbing noises are permitted near her room. I would suggest we administer the Brown-Séquard prescription; it is often efficacious."

HOWEVER much it lacked in sympathy, his advice was medically sound. Within a week Dolores FitzPatrick appeared quite normal. In ten days more, against my protests, she had renewed her febrile social life, driving at breakneck speed along the country roads, attending all-night dances, scattering a trail of badly damaged masculine hearts behind her, and, worst of all, indulging in the villainous poison which passed for whisky among the younger set.

The Frenchman's lack of interest in the case amazed me. Curious as a child, he was ordinarily wont to give my cases as close attention as though they were his own, and his weakness for a pretty face was a standing joke between us, yet in Dolores FitzPatrick, beautiful, heartless and fascinating as Circe's own seductive self, he seemed to take no interest.

"Well," I announced as I entered the study one scorching night some three weeks later, "perhaps you'll be interested now. She's gone. She died an hour ago with cardiac hypertrophy; I knew she'd burn herself out."

For the first time his mask of indifference slipped. "Who will have the funeral—Monsieur Martin?" he asked.

"Yes, I've already made out the death certificate for him."

He reached for the 'phone and called the coroner's number. "It is a most strange request I have to make, *Monsieur,*" he confessed when the connection had been made, "but you and I have been associated before. You will understand I do not act from idle curiosity. Will you permit that I be present while you embalm Mademoiselle FitzPatrick's body? You may consider it impertinent, but—*nom d'un chou-fleur,* do you tell me? But you will not honor it, surely? *Dieu de Dieu,* you will?"

"What now?" I asked as he put back the receiver and turned a blank face to me.

"A so strange testament has been found in Mademoiselle Dolores' room," he answered. "In it she does expressly request that she be not embalmed. You attended her, my friend, you have authority; will you not prevail on Monsieur FitzPatrick to have an autopsy performed?"

"I can't," I told him. "The cause of death was perfectly obvious; I've seen it coming for days, and warned FitzPatrick of it. He'd think me crazy."

"I shall think you worse, if you refuse."

"I'm sorry," I returned. "There's no earthly excuse for a post-mortem; I wouldn't think of asking one."

And there the matter rested.

THE last humming echo of the final gong-stroke spent itself in the still summer air, and like the faintest whisper of a breeze among half-dried leaves came the subdued rustle which betokened turning heads and craning necks—that gesture which even well-bred people make at such a time.

A momentary congestion at the church door while six frock-coated and perspiring gentlemen bent their backs to the unaccustomed task, then:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live . . ."

Dr. Bentley's resonant voice sounded as he marched slowly up the aisle before the flower-decked casket. "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth . . ."

The afternoon sun shone softly through the stained glass windows and glinted on the polished mahogany of the pews. Here and there it picked out spots of color, a flower, a woman's hat or a man's tie. Through a memorial panel to the right of the chancel a single beam of tinted light gleamed dully on the silver mountings of the casket. The majestic office for the burial of the dead proceeded to benediction, the choir's voices rose in "Lead, Kindly Light," drowning out the muffled boom of the traffic in the street beyond.

As the organ's final diminuendo vibrated to silence, the pallbearers rose to their appointed task and once more the solemn procession passed through the center aisle. A momentary lull came in the outside traffic as the suave mortician appeared on the church steps; then a motor purred to the curb, the hearse moved forward, and the procession was on its way.

Jules de Grandin tossed his burned-out cigarette from the window of Coroner Martin's limousine and gazed in undisguised admiration at the mortician. "You

are marvelous, no less, *Monsieur,*" he assured him. "In my own country, and anywhere in Europe, Mademoiselle Fitz-Patrick would have been consigned to the grave in four-and-twenty hours. We do not embalm there. Here, under similar conditions, you present her at the church three hot summer days after death as though she lay in natural sleep. Tell me," he leaned forward eagerly, "is it perhaps that you ignored the injunctions of her testament and embalmed her body after all?"

Martin shook his head. "Did you notice the casket?" he asked.

"It was a most beautiful piece of furniture," the Frenchman answered with non-committal politeness.

"I wasn't referring to its appearance, but to its construction," the other returned. "The outside case is mahogany, carefully glued and jointed, practically a water- and air-tight box. Inside is a shell technically known as an 'inner sealer,' a separate copper case with an hermetically sealed full-length top of plate glass. This, in turn, is lined with satin upholstery. Before we laid the young lady in this inner casket we put upward of a hundred briquettes of carbon dioxid snow—the 'dry ice' used by confectioners to keep ice cream hard for long periods—under the satin trimmings. Then we fastened down the glass top and made it airtight with rubber gaskets and liquid cement. The air space between the inner and outer caskets, and the hermetic sealing of the inner case insured the carbon dioxid against rapid evaporation, the result being that the temperature in the inner casket is, and will continue for a long time to be, several degrees below freezing. You see?"

"Perfectly," de Grandin agreed with a quick nod. "You have refrigerated her—she will remain in her present condition indefinitely!"

"Well," Coroner Martin smiled deprecatingly, "I'm sure there'll be no immediate change in her condition, or——" he broke off abruptly, for we had arrived at the cemetery, and he was once more the busy official, directing an undrilled personnel in the performance of unfamiliar duties with the precision of a detachment of trained soldiers.

I kept my gaze fixed demurely on the ground, as befitted a physician whose patient was being buried, but Jules de Grandin permitted no conventions to hamper him. About the grave he strolled, taking eye-measurements of the location, noting the character of the upturned soil, examining the approaches with the practised eye of one who had seen much military service."

"There is a new moon tonight, Friend Trowbridge," he whispered as we reentered Martin's car for the return trip; "be so good as to make no engagements, if you please."

"A new moon?" I echoed in amazement. "What the dickens are you drooling about? What has the new moon to do with us?"

"Nothing, I hope; much, I fear," he returned seriously.

His air of suppressed excitement told me he had some enterprise on foot, but his irritating habit of keeping his plans to himself was strong as ever. To all my questions he returned no more informative answer than a shrug of a lifted eyebrow. At length he turned his shoulder squarely on me, gazed out the window and fell to humming:

"Ma fille, pour pénitence,
Ron et ron, petit patapon,
Ma fille, pour pénitence,
Nous nous embrasserons!"

THE night air was heavy with dew and drenched with the perfume of honeysuckle as de Grandin and I let ourselves through the narrow door flanking the main entrance of the great Canterbury gate leading to Shadow Lawns Cemetery. Michaelson, the superintendent, was awaiting us in the office adjoining the graveyard's imposing Gothic chapel, and that he expected trouble of some sort was clearly evidenced by the heavy revolver swinging in a shoulder-holster beneath his left armpit. "Down, Hindenburg—charge!" he ordered gruffly as a monstrous police dog with baleful, green eyes half rose from its station before the fireless hearth and bared a set of awe-inspiring teeth.

"I've been on the lookout all evening," he told us as we shook hands, "but nothing's happened yet. Sure you got a straight tip, Doctor de Grandin?"

The Frenchman tweaked the carefully waxed ends of his tiny blond mustache. "My informant is one I have every reason to trust," he replied. "I am not surprized you have seen nothing thus far; but it might be well if we took our stations now, we know not when something may transpire."

"All right," Michaelson agreed, slipping on a dark jacket and snapping a woven-leather leash through the dog's collar. "Let's go."

As we walked along the winding, well kept roads beneath the arching trees toward the FitzPatrick family plot, "Mighty glad you got this information in time," the superintendent said. "Shadow Lawns has been operating more than fifty years, and we've never had a grave robbery, not even in the days when medical schools had to buy stolen bodies for their work. I'd hate to have our record broken now. Wonder if there'll be a gang of 'em?"

"I doubt it," de Grandin answered. "Indeed, I think this will be scarcely what could be called a grave robbery; it is more apt to be a violation."

"H'm, I don't think I quite follow you," Michaelson confessed as we took up our position in the shadow of an imposing bronze-and-granite monument. "What makes you so sure it will be tonight?"

"The moon—the new moon," the Frenchman replied.

"The mo—— well, I'll be damned!" rejoined the other.

OUR wait seemed interminable. The low, monotonous crooning of nocturnal insects in the grass, the occasional mournful cry of a night bird, the subdued echo of the traffic of the distant city —all blended into a continuous lullaby which more than once threatened to steal my consciousness. Michaelson yawned and stretched full length on the grass, Hindenburg lay with pointed nose between his outstretched paws in canine slumber, only Jules de Grandin remained watchful and alert.

I was on the point of pillowing my head upon my arm and snatching a nap when the sudden pressure of the Frenchman's fingers on my elbow roused me. "See, my friends," he whispered. "He comes!"

Stealthily as a shadow, a figure stole between the mounded graves toward the flower-decked hummock beneath which lay the body of Dolores FitzPatrick. The man was dressed in some sort of dark clothing, without a single highlight of white linen in his costume; consequently his visibility was low against the back-

ground of the night, but from the suppleness of his movements I realized he was young, and from the furtiveness of his manner I knew he was afraid.

"How the hell did that happen?" Michaelson demanded. "The main gate's the only one open, and Johnson's on guard there with a shotgun and orders not to let even the President of the United States by without a written pass from me."

"*Ah bah,*" de Grandin whispered, "there never yet was fence so high that desperate men could not swarm over it, my friend, and this one is most desperate; make no mistake concerning that."

Michaelson's hand stole toward his gun. "Shall I wing him?" he asked.

"*Mon Dieu,* no!" de Grandin forbade. "Wait till I give the word."

The great dog roused to his haunches, and opened his mouth in an almost noiseless snarl, but the Frenchman's small hand stroked his smooth head and patted his bristling neck soothingly. "Down, *mon brave,*" he whispered. "Our time is not yet." Children, dogs and women loved and trusted Jules de Grandin at sight. The savage brute rested its great head against his knee and seemed actually to nod understandingly in assent.

Meantime the figure at the grave had unslung a spade and pick-ax from the pack upon its back and commenced a furious attack on the soft, untamped earth. We watched in silence from our vantage-point, saw the parapet of defiled earth grow high and higher beside the grave, saw the digger descend lower and lower into the trench he made. From time to time the ghoul would pause, as though to measure the task yet incomplete, then renew his attack on the yielding loam with redoubled vigor.

It must have been an hour before he reached his grisly goal. We saw him cast aside his spade, bend forward in the excavation and fumble at the fastenings of the outer box which shielded the casket from the earth. Some fifteen minutes later he rose, took something from the sack which lay beside the opened grave and twisted it between his hands.

"*What* the hell?" Michaelson murmured wonderingly.

"A sheet, if I mistake not," de Grandin answered. "Watch carefully; his technique, it is good."

He was correct in his surmise. It was a sheet the resurrectionist twisted into a rope, then knotted into a sort of running noose and dropped into the grave.

Straddling the desecrated sepulcher, one foot on each lip, the despoiler seized the loose ends of the sheet, twisted them together and hauled upward, like a man dragging a bucket from a curbless well.

Hand over hand he drew the twisted linen in, at length his task was done, and the ravished body of Dolores FitzPatrick came once more into the outer world, the linen band knotted behind her shoulders and crossing her breast transversely from underneath the arms. Her little head, crowned with its diadem of ruddy hair, hung backward limply, and her long white arms trailed listlessly behind her as the robber drew her from the rifled grave and laid her on the grass.

A sharp, metallic click sounded at my elbow. Michaelson had cocked his pistol and trained it on the ghoul, but de Grandin's quick wrestler's-grip upon his wrist arrested the shot. "*Non,* stupid one!" he bade. "Have I not said I will say when to shoot?"

From the corner of my eye I saw this by-play, but my horrified attention was

riveted on the tableau at the grave. The robber had laid Dolores' body on the warm, dew-soaked turf, composed her limbs and folded her hands across her quiet bosom, then bent and rained a perfect torrent of kisses on the calm, dead face. "I'm here, dear love; I kept our compact!" he choked between ecstatic sobs. "I'll keep the promise to the end, and then you shall be mine, mine, *all mine!*" His voice rose almost to an hysterical shriek at the end, and before I realized what he did, he folded the dead form in his arms and pressed it to his breast as though it would respond to his mad caresses.

"Good heavens, a lunatic!" I whispered. "A necrophiliac; I've heard of such perverts, but——"

"Be still!" de Grandin's sharply whispered admonition cut me off. "Be quiet, great stupid-head, and watch what is to come!"

The madman raised the corpse in his arms as once I had borne her living body through the woods, gazed hurriedly about, then set off at a rapid pace toward the rising ground which marked the center of the cemetery.

Taking cover behind the intervening monuments, we followed, but our precautions were unnecessary, for so absorbed in his horrid task was the grave-robber that we might have walked at his heels, yet never been discovered.

A circular row of weeping willows crowned the hill toward which we moved, and in the center of the ring thus marked there stood a tall stone cross engraved with a five-word legend:

He Giveth His Beloved Sleep

To this monolith the grave-despoiler bore his prey and laid her on the close-cropped grass before the cross, then knelt beside the body and clasped the slim, cold hands in both of his, while leaning forward, he gazed into the quiet face as though he would melt death's chill by the very ardor of his glance.

"And now, my friends, I damn think we shall see what we shall see!" de Grandin whispered. "Observe, if you please; the new moon rises."

He pointed upward as he spoke. There, beyond the line of willow trees soared the crescent moon, slim as a shaving from a silversmith's lathe, sharp as a sickle from the fields of Demeter.

And even as I spied the moon I saw another thing. Clear-cut as an image in a shadowgraph against the moon's faint luminance came a great black-winged owl, another and still a third, flying straight for the morbid group beneath the cross.

"Good Lord, de Grandin, look!" I whispered, but he shook my admonition off with an impatient shrug.

"Do *you* look there, my friend, and tell me what it is you see!" he ordered.

I glanced in the direction he indicated, then shook my head as though to clear a film from before my eyes. Surely, I did but fancy it!

No, there was no mistaking. As the silver shafts of moonlight fell upon it, the body of Dolores FitzPatrick seemed to gather itself together, the long-limbed looseness of post-mortem flaccidity passed, and *the body was imbued with life*. Distinctly as I ever saw a living person rise, I saw the body of the girl which had been buried that very afternoon uprear its head, its shoulders, and rouse to a half-sitting posture. More, it turned a living, conscious face upon the man beside it, and smiled into his eyes!

A low, trembling whine, no louder than a cricket's squeak, sounded at my feet. Hindenburg, the great, fierce dog, crouched and groveled on the grass, the hair upon his back raised in a bristling ruff, his bushy, wolf-like tail held closely to his hocks, every nerve in his powerful body trembling with abject fright.

"*Now* you may fire, my friend," de Grandin ordered Michaelson, and at the same time drew an automatic pistol from his pocket and sent a bullet winging on its way. But as he fired he contrived to stumble against Michaelson so that the latter's aim was deflected.

Both weapons spoke together, and there was a startled cry of pain as the echo of the shots reverberated through the graveyard.

"Quick, my friends, on him—*chargez!*" the Frenchman cried, leaping toward the man and girl who huddled in the shadow of the cross. He was a step or two before us, and I observed what Michaelson did not. As he reached his goal, he brought the barrel of his pistol crashing down upon the robber's head, striking him unconscious.

"Did we get him?" the superintendent asked, pausing beside the prostrate man.

"I think so," de Grandin flung over his shoulder as he bent above the girl. "Examine him, if you please."

As Michaelson bent above the man, de Grandin took the woman's body in his arms.

"Great heavens——" I began, but a sharp kick from the Frenchman's boot against my shin silenced my ejaculation half uttered. Yet it was hard to restrain myself, for in the fraction of a second while he lifted her I had seen the tiny, blue-black hole drilled through the girl's left temple by the small-calibered automatic the Frenchman carried, and saw the warm, fresh blood gush from the wound! Dead she undoubtedly was, but newly dead. That bullet had crashed through living flesh and bone into a living brain!

"Say, this feller's alive!" the superintendent cried. "He's unconscious, but I can't find a wound on him, and——"

"He was most likely stunned by a glancing bullet," de Grandin cut in. "Our aim is often erratic in the dark. Tie him securely and take him to the office; Dr. Trowbridge and I will join you as soon as we have returned this poor one to her grave."

"You're—you're sure she's dead?" Michaelson asked diffidently. "I know it sounds crazy as hell, but I'd have sworn I saw her move a moment ago, and——"

"*Tiens,* my friend, our eyes play strange tricks on us in the moonlight," the Frenchman interrupted hastily. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, let us go."

We walked a little way in silence; then, as though he were replying to my spoken thoughts, de Grandin said: "Do not press me for an explanation now, my friend. At present let us say my aim was poor and my bullet found the wrong mark. Scandal will be avoided if we let the dead bury the dead. Anon I shall surely tell you all."

"I THINK there is little to be gained by questioning him further," de Grandin counseled some two hours later when Michaelson had at last decided it was useless to press our prisoner for an explanation and was on the point of calling the police. "The families of all involved are prominent, and only ugly scandal can result from an exposé, and that would do your cemetery little good, my friend. This young man's actions are undoubt-

lessly caused by mental derangement; Doctor Trowbridge and I will take charge of him, and see he is looked after. Meantime, Mademoiselle FitzPatrick's body is interred and none need be the wiser. It is best so, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

"H'm, guess you're right, sir," the superintendent agreed. "We'll just hush the whole rotten business up, eh?"

The little Frenchman nodded. "Come, Friend Trowbridge," he said, "let us be gone. *Monsieur,*" he bowed politely to the prisoner, "we wait on your convenience."

At his suggestion I drove directly to the house and helped him escort the captive to the study. Once inside, de Grandin dropped his air of captor and motioned our charge to a comfortable chair. "You will smoke, perhaps?" he asked, proffering his case, then holding a match while the other set his cigarette aglow.

"And now, *petit imbécile,* it may be you will be good enough to explain the reason for this evening's lunacy to us?" he continued, seating himself across the desk from the prisoner and fixing him with a level unwinking stare.

No answer.

"*Tiens,* this is no coin in which to repay our kindness, *Monsieur,*" he expostulated. "Consider how inconvenient we might have made things—may still make them, unless you choose to talk. Besides, we know so much already, you would be advised to tell us the rest."

"You don't know anything," the other answered sullenly.

"Ah, there is where you are most outrageously mistaken," de Grandin corrected. "We know, by example, that you are Robert Millington, son of Ralph Millington, cotton broker of New York and eminent church-member of Harrisonville, New Jersey. We know you were deeply —passionately to the point of insanity— in love with Mademoiselle Dolores; we know——"

"Leave her out of this!" the young man blazed. "I won't have——"

"*Mille pardons, Monsieur,*" the Frenchman corrected in a cold voice, "you will have whatever we choose to give; no more, no less. Your escapade tonight has brought you to the very gate of prison, perhaps of the asylum for the insane, and you can best serve yourself by telling what we wish to know. You will speak?"

"You wouldn't believe me," the boy responded sullenly.

"You greatly underestimate our credulity, *Monsieur.* We are most trusting. We shall believe whatever you may say— provided it be the truth."

Young Millington took a deep breath, like one about to dive in icy waters. "She made me promise," he replied.

"Ah? We do make progress. What was it you promised her?"

A flush suffused the lad's cheeks, then receded, leaving them pale as death. "I loved her," he murmured, almost breathlessly. "I loved her more than anything in the world—more than family or friends, or"—he paused a moment, then, in a sort of awestruck whisper—"more than the salvation of my soul!"

"*Eh bien,* love is like that in the springtime of life," the little Frenchman nodded understandingly. He tweaked the ends of his tightly waxed mustache and nodded once again. "Have not I felt the same in the years so long buried beneath the sod of time? But certainly. Ah, *la passion délicieuse!*" He put his joined thumb and forefinger to his lips

and wafted a kiss toward the ceiling. "Those moonlit evenings beside the river when we kissed and clung and shuddered in an ecstasy of exquisite torment! That matchless combination of humility and pride—that lunacy of adoration which made the adored one's heel-print in the dust more kissable than the lips of any other woman——"

"That's it—you understand!" the boy broke in hoarsely. "That's how I felt; so when she told me——"

The little Frenchman's sentimental mood vanished like the flame of a blown-out candle. *"Précisément,* when she told you——" he prompted sharply, his little round blue eyes holding the youth's gaze with an implacable, unwinking stare.

"She told me she was going to die—apparently," young Millington returned, as though the words were wrung from his unwilling lips. "She said she had an illness which only seeming death could cure, but that she wouldn't really die, and if I'd come to her grave and take her from it, and lay her where the first rays of the new moon could shine on her, she'd rise again, in perfect health, and we could go away——"

"Ah, poor besotted one!" de Grandin cried compassionately. "Truly, you would go away, for your chances of remaining in the world when once life had returned to those cruel jaws and force was once again behind those tiny, sharp teeth would have been less than that of the lamb attending a convention of famished wolves! No matter; go on. You believed her; like a silly fish you gobbled up her bait and did become her tool in this night's work. I see; I understand. Say no more, my poor foolish one. You may go, and we shall keep your secret securely in our breasts.

"Only"—he laid his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder at the door—"if you possess one single shred of gratitude, when next you go to church, thank God upon your knees that your scheme failed tonight."

"Thank God?" the boy retorted. "For what?"

"Tiens, for Jules de Grandin, if for nothing else," he answered. "Good night and much good luck to you, *petit Monsieur."*

"Now, perhaps, you'll condescend to tell me something?" I asked sarcastically as the echo of young Millington's footsteps died away.

"Exactement," he agreed, selecting a cigar from the humidor and snipping off its end with painstaking care. "To begin: I flout my citizenship of France like a banner proudly displayed before the enemy; but I am a citizen of the world, as well, my friend. The seven seas and five continents are no strangers to me. No, I have traveled, I have seen; I have observed. In the lazarets of a hundred places I have plied this gruesome trade of patching broken bodies which we follow, good friend, and the notebooks of my memory are full of entries. By example: in a stinking trading town of Java I was once called to treat a human wreck who had loved not wisely but altogether too well. The object of his passion was a savage she-tiger, a beast-cruel Sadist. She bit his lips away in the moment of embrace. He was a most unpleasant sight, one not to be forgotten, I do assure you.

"Very good. The other evening at the country club I did behold another poor one similarly maimed. Once seen, such injuries as that are not forgotten, and I needed no second glance at the poor

young Faber's lips to tell me he was even as that other one in Java.

" 'Now,' I asked me, 'who have so ruthlessly destroyed this young man's looks, and for what reason?'

"Reason there was none, but very lack of reason is often the best reason of all. This Mademoiselle Dolores, she has the history of taking all which is most precious to her cousin, not because it has a value of its own, but because her cousin prizes it. Therefore, I reason, she who once broke her cousin's dolls have now ravished away her fiancé and broken him, too. She did it from pure wantonness.

"And I am right, as usual. Next day, as I prepare to recondition the poor young Faber's lips I ask him certain questions, and he replied in writing. What does he tell me? *Parbleu,* you would be astonished!

"He says he accompanied Mademoiselle Dolores to the clearing where the moon shone, for she had said she wished to tell him something. Once there she tells him of her love and begs that he will desert her cousin Josephine and go away with her. But no, he is a young man of good principle. He will not do it; he repulses her. Ha, he spoke truly who first said hell has no fury like a scorned woman! Dolores asks that young Martin will give her one little kiss in token of farewell, and all men are weak where lovely women plead thus humbly. She lifts her face to his, and all suddenly he sees the flesh melt from off her bones, and it is in the bare-skulled face of a skeleton he looks as he is about to kiss her!

"He cries out and struggles to be free, but it are useless. Her slender arms are strong as steel, and her teeth—*mon Dieu* —her teeth are like shears of white-hot metal. They fasten on his yielding lips and clip them clear away! *Voilà,* it is done, and sick with pain and horror he staggers blindly through the trees until we find him.

"So much I learn, and I think deeply. 'Who, or what, are this so strange being called Dolores?' I ask me.

"The nighttime comes, I go to bed and anon there comes a great and dreadful bird which claws at my window and makes dire threats against me if I divulge what I have learned that day. You say it are an owl. Perhaps. But does an owl talk with human words, my friend? Not ordinarily, you will concede.

"All quickly comes the call from Monsieur FitzPatrick, and to his house we go to seek the lost Dolores. The dog leads us well, but he scents something—something evil which we can not see—and turns to run away. Long since I have learned to trust the animal instinct which warns of evil and unseen things, and so I take us back to the house and ask for spiritual ammunition with which to fight the danger which awaits us in the cemetery."

"Yes, I wanted to ask you about that," I interrupted. "Wouldn't anything except a rosary and bottle of holy water serve as protection that night?"

"Many things," he agreed, "but they were handiest. The Church of Rome has no exclusive patent on fighting with and conquering the evil ones, but her methods are always efficacious—she has waged the battle so long, and so successfully."

"But why should a cross, just because it *is* a cross, be valuable in such a case?" I persisted.

He paused in thought a moment; then: "Words much repeated, with a special significance, in time acquire power," he replied. "Witchcraft is one of the world's

oldest curses. Before Egypt was, the witch-cult flourished, and Babylonia and Assyria both understood the witch's awful power. Both had their charms against her, but they are gone, and their charms are gone with them. Then arose Christianity, and took up the battle with the witch-brood. Now, when a rosary is blessed and when holy water is dedicated, the priest says certain words—always the same, and always with the same intent. The formula has become invincible through centuries of repetition. Consider: You can not hear the music of your national anthem without a sudden tingling in your cheeks, a sudden contraction of the throat, a quick feeling of exaltation. Words, my friend, the power of words to conjure into sudden being a certain train of thought and a definite physical reaction. So it is with prayers oft repeated. Yes.

"Very well. With these spiritual weapons we returned to the old cemetery, and there we encounter and subdue three evil creatures which posed as bats. Perhaps they were such; perhaps, again, they were something else. At any rate, we routed them, and then we found Dolores apparently lying lifeless on a long-forgotten grave. *Morbleu,* the whole thing stank of witchery, my friend.

"Bethink you: It was the night of August first, the feast of St. Peter's Chains, or Lammas, as the English-speakers call it. That was one of the great gathering days of the witches of olden times, the others being Candlemas in February, Roodmass, or May Eve, and All Hallow Eve, or Halloween. And, my friend, in spite of all the learned fools tell us to the contrary, *witchcraft still lives!*

"Through the years and centuries it has given ground before the new religion, but in remote places it still survives. In Italy, despite repressive measures, 'the old religion' as they call it, *la vecchia religione,* still numbers many followers.

"And in other lands—in *every* land—who are better fitted to keep alive the old, unholy fires of witchcraft than the Gipsies? They are a race apart, they neither mingle nor intermarry with the people among whom they live. Their men may be thieves, but their women are open practisers of the black art. Do they not boast of second sight and 'dukkering' and charms to injure enemies or break the spells laid on by others? But yes.

"Nor have actual proven instances of acts more sinister been lacking. In Estremadura four Gipsy women were taken by the Spanish government and made to own they had killed and eaten a friar, a pilgrim and a woman of their own tribe. And remember, Dolores' mother was a woman of the Spanish Gipsies. That has much bearing on the case.

"You will recall I asked you if you'd read your Bible lately concerning those possessed of devils? For why? Because the learned numbskulls who write the 'higher criticism' have been at pains to tell us demoniacal possession was but epilepsy. Perhaps, but will the rule not work both ways? If epilepsy may simulate possession by fiends, why should not such possession mimic epilepsy?

" 'Nonsense,' you say? *Ah bah,* I damn think my hypothesis was proved when her you did think dead of epilepsy came suddenly to life in your very arms that night.

"I did foresee her second death. Yes. Her body was the dwelling-place of evil, and had been racked by its tenants. The sleep and rest of death was needed, and

to it she resorted. Such cases are not unknown.

"And so, when she had apparently died a 'natural' death, I besought that she be embalmed, or that you have her subjected to an autopsy, so that she might be forever rendered incapable of functioning as a living being again.

"But she was clever—almost as clever as I. She had outguessed modern mortuary science by leaving a testament expressly forbidding embalming, and you refused an autopsy.

"By Monsieur FitzPatrick's permission I went through all her correspondence. There she had been lax—she had not thought of Jules de Grandin, for he had simulated indifference in her case and had not called upon her once while his good friend Trowbridge was treating her to prevent the death she had already decided on.

"Among her papers I found but little that would guide me, but finally I came on that which I did seek, a little note from the young Millington in answer to one of hers, and in it he did renew his promise to take her from the grave, 'if she should die' (how well she had rehearsed him for his rôle!) and lay her body where the first faint rays of the new moon might rest upon it!

"That was the key, my friend. In Greece, where warlocks still make sport of science and religion, when members of the witch-cult desire to shift their scene of operations, or when discovery hovers close behind them, they take refuge in the tomb. They 'die' as this one did. But always their 'deaths' are due to some cause which leaves no outward wound upon their bodies—no injury which would prevent their future functioning. Then, if they be exhumed and placed beneath the new moon's rays, soon after burial, they rise again, as though refreshed by the nap taken in the grave—and wo betide the poor unfortunate who catches their first waking glance! With teeth and nails, like maddened brute beasts, they tear his throat away, and rip his heart from out his breast and eat it. It is their custom so to do; a most unpleasant one, I think.

"Accordingly, we watched beside her grave tonight; we saw the poor, infatuated Millington exhume her; we saw him bear her to the hilltop and lay her where the moon could shine upon her; we even saw the beginning of her return to life and wickedness. But Jules de Grandin nipped her resurrection in the bud by shooting her, and now her lovely body lies in the grave with shattered brain, and never more may evil spirits use it for their evil ends. No, she has said at last to the grave, "Thou art my father and my mother,' and to corruption, 'Thou art my lover and my bridegroom.' Her business in this world is finished."

"But," I began, "in the philosophy of witchcraft——"

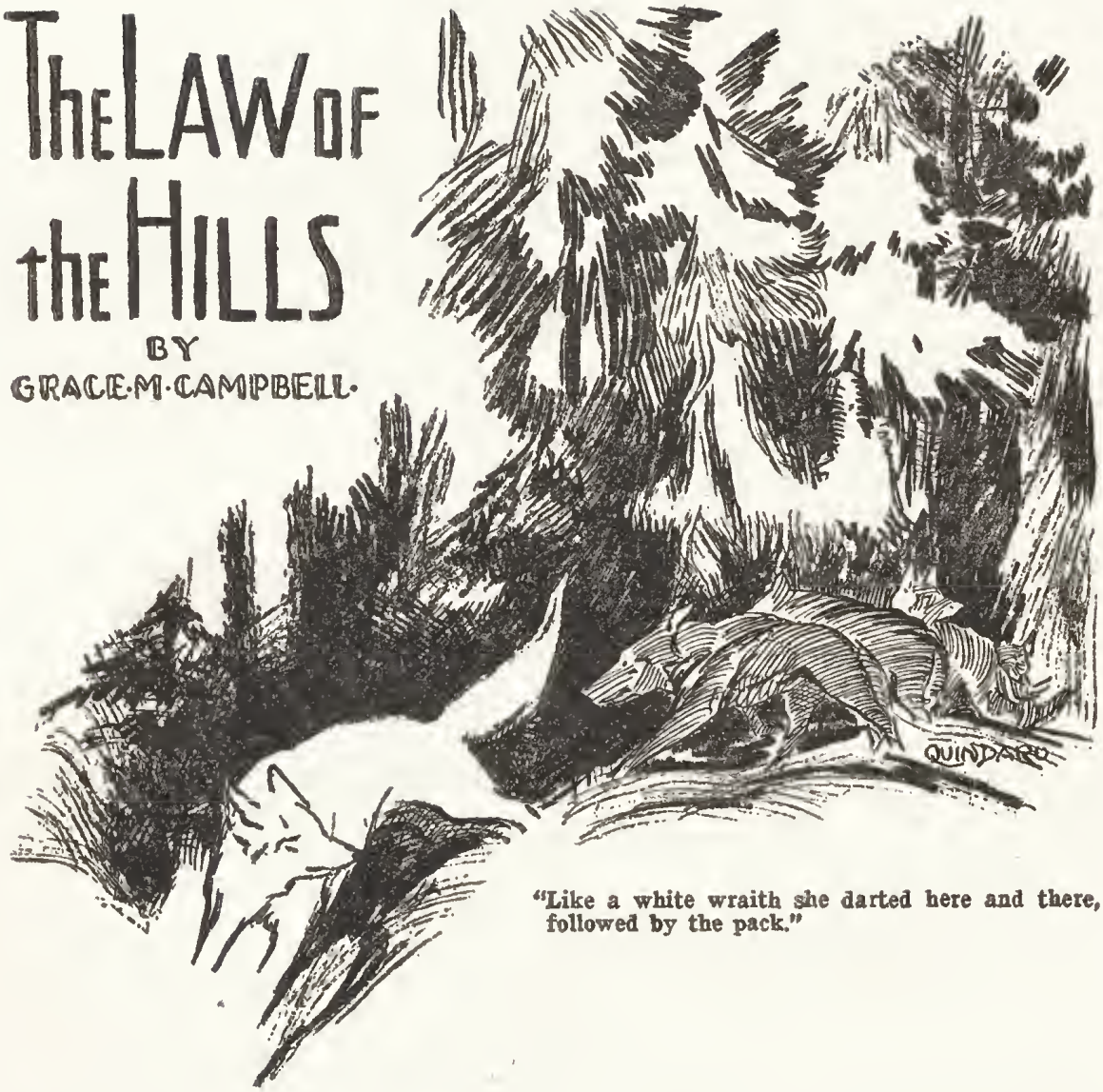
"Ho, you do remind me of another philosophy," he interrupted with a grin:

> "Who loves not woman, wine and song
> Remains a fool his whole life long.

"I sing most execrably; the love of woman is a gift denied me; but thanks be to kindly heaven my taste for wine is unabated. Come, let us drink and go to bed!"

The Law of the Hills

BY
GRACE·M·CAMPBELL·



"Like a white wraith she darted here and there, followed by the pack."

I HAVE grown old and credulous. Such a thing simply could not happen. Not in this country, and not in this day. But—believe me or not, as you please—I tell you I saw it.

Ever since Ken Graham first walked into my classroom, I have wished that I might have had such a son. And as the years went by, my fondness for him grew, and I began to dream that some day he should take my place, and complete the collection of minerals which has brought me and this old school fame.

Why not? After graduating with honors, the boy had two years of study in the best schools abroad, and then a year of practical work in the field. What else did he need? Only that I should pull the strings my own departmental Punch dances to, and have him designated assistant professor of mineralogy.

So I pulled the strings, and the appointment was made. But he answered with a strange, incoherent letter begging delay.

I could not understand it. Perhaps

that chit of a girl he had married in Norway preferred a director of mines with five thousand a year to an assistant professor with half that salary. Idiot! Couldn't she see that I meant to make him head of the department?

I took out of my desk the picture they had sent from Norway, and all my suspicions vanished.

Surely there was no stupid selfishness of that sort in the mate Ken Graham had chosen. A sweet, unspoiled young face, with a fine delicacy of feature. And yet —such a strange suggestion of wildness! That fluffy aureole of whitish hair! Those keen, deep-set eyes! Those sharply outlined features! She looked like a beautiful wild thing.

Hush! A jealous old man's imaginings.

In the end I decided that I would go to them. I would seek them out, and bring them back. This old stone house was big enough for all of us to be happy in, if happiness was possible. Old men are arrogant sometimes—and I had set my mind on spending the rest of my days near the boy I had learned to love as a son.

When I got off the train, they told me where I should find him. It was late, but he would still be in his office, the expressman said.

"A bear for work, that Graham. He's never stopped since his wife died. Too bad about his wife. The wolves got her and Louis Barjon one night, just a few weeks ago. A great pity—a great pity."

Oh, my boy! My poor, poor boy!

I could see him, as I came up the walk, his head bent over his hands before the uncurtained window.

I tapped on the door, and walked in.

"You, Professor? You? What brought you here?"

"Rocks, my boy," I lied. "Rocks. Specimens. Clarke at Ten Mile has unearthed a curious fossil—some sort of pig, he says. He claims it's Jurassic Permian. He's set it far too early, of course, but I came along to look at it. But there's time for that tomorrow. I wanted to have a chat with you."

"And no one could be more welcome," he returned. "Come inside. It's late, and you have had a long, hard trip in."

Of course I had—a damned hard trip in. I'm getting old, and thirty hours on a little, one-horse railroad is no joke to me. But I did not intend to be bundled off to bed until I had got to the bottom of this thing that was making my boy look like a man who had been through the Valley of Death.

"I'm sleeping here now," he explained, as he took me into a little room off his office. "I had this place built some weeks ago, after——"

He did not finish, but stooped, and set a match to the fire. The great pine knots flamed and roared in the open fireplace. He boiled water, and made tea, talking all the time of mines, and mine-management, and minerals.

We smoked in silence a long while after he had put the cups away. Then I leaned over and put my hand on his knee.

"Ken, my boy. Could you tell the old man?"

He started, and looked at me searchingly.

"You wouldn't believe me, Professor."

"I am not a scoffer, son," I answered.

He rose, and threw another knot of pine on the fire. I watched the flames

curl up and around it. The young man's face was lost in shadow.

"Do you believe in lycantrophy?"

"Of course not. There is no such thing."

"Of course not. There never was such a thing. And yet, I tell you, I have seen it happen."

Was the boy insane? Why, that was old English superstition. It belonged to the days of witchcraft and burnings. Never since the Sixteenth Century had intelligent men of any country in the world, save Russia, talked of such things seriously. Absurd!

"My wife," he went on, without looking up, "never knew much about her father. He was killed, it was said, in a hunting accident the second winter after his marriage. His wife died of shock the day the news reached her, and left a little daughter two hours old. That is all Hilde ever knew of her parents.

"She was brought up on the old estate, under the personal direction of her grandfather. He was passionately fond of her, but he watched with an eagle eye over all her study and her play. The old man was a constant contradiction to Hilde. He would never allow her living pets of any kind, for one thing. He took her to England, France, and Egypt, but never permitted her to holiday in the mountains of her own beloved Norway. Even when she went to Torghatten, her course of study was laid down by that inconsistent old man. He seemed to show his affection for her by suppressing all the instincts that were strongest.

"It was at Torghatten that I met her —and we loved each other.

"The old gentleman received me with great kindness, when I visited him. He had many questions to ask me about my parentage, and my work. I answered them all as I could, and did not wonder much at the seriousness with which he asked them, though I had the impression continually that there was something he wanted to say to me, something that preyed upon his mind. At times he seemed happy in our happiness, and planned with us the details of our marriage. Then, in the very midst of the planning, he would start up with fear in his face, and speak as if it all must stop.

"Once he started to say something about his son, Hilde's father, but stopped short before he had well begun.

"To the very day we sailed from Norway, he was a constant puzzle to us.

"When this offer came from Meakins & Company, I hesitated to bring my bride into a rough camp like this. But Hilde insisted she would love it. All her life she wanted to live in the solitary places, to climb hills, and be free. She begged me to accept at once.

"We came north a few days later, as you know. I built her a little bungalow on the hill yonder, just across the river. Before I had the foundation laid, she had flowers growing all about the place, native flowers which she had never seen before, but which she transplanted and tended with passionate care.

"She turned our little cabin into a very bower of beauty, and there was not in the world anyone more exultantly happy than she.

"Often she took long walks alone, while I was at the mill. I have come home many times to find a note on the table to say that we would have tea on the Baldman. She would be waiting there with a picnic supper. And all through the long summer days we were

happier by far than I had ever dreamed of being.

"Then came winter.

"All of a sudden it came. The cold set in overnight. A driving storm that lasted for three days buried the countryside in drifts. It was the northern winter at its worst.

"One night"—here the boy paused to breathe heavily, and his face was set—"one night we were sitting cozily by the fire reading, when suddenly a wolf howled quite near.

"Hilde went deathly white, and clutched my hand.

"I took her in my arms, and laughed at her, and told her there was no cause for alarm, and that his majesty would be bold indeed, and very hungry, before he would dare attack any human.

"But nothing that I could say really comforted her, and from that time on, she was in terror of being left alone, especially at night.

"A MONTH or so later, I was kept late at the mill, and it was nearly eleven before I started home. Going up the hill, I heard the wolves again. There is no mistaking the cry of the timber wolf, and I ran up the steps hoping that Hilde had not heard.

"There was no light in the house, and I tiptoed into her room, trying not to wake her till the sound had died away.

"The moon shone in the window, and there was my girl, crouched down on the floor, peering out into the night. She seemed in the grip of an agony of emotion dreadful to see, and did not know that I was there at all.

"I touched her on the shoulder. She turned like a flash, and looked at me for a moment with only fear in her face. Then she crumpled up in my arms, and sobbed hysterically until she fell asleep."

Ken drew a gusty sigh and paused, his pipe forgotten in his hand.

"I could not understand it at all," he went on. "She was not a coward. There's a little lake up in the hills where we used to swim, and I have seen her dive into the water from twenty feet up the cliff. So it was more than fear that troubled her. It was some deeper dread of which she could not speak.

"She was never her old self after that night when she cried herself to sleep. At times she would lavish passionate, tearful love on me. At other times, she was absent-minded and lost in somber reflections of her own.

"One night, when I came early home, she was not there. I was searching frantically for her when she came quietly up the path, bareheaded and alone. There was such a look in her eyes as I have seen in the eyes of the dead, and I followed her in silence into the house, fear clutching at my heart.

"The wolves were frequently to be heard in those days. The heavy snow had made them very bold. Once they came so close to the house that I reached for my rifle determined to teach at least one of them a lesson in restraint. But Hilde caught my arm, and stopped me.

"I knew her tenderness for wild things, and put my .22 away in the shed.

"When I came back into the room, she was not there. Vaguely uneasy, I searched for her in the bedroom. She was not there. But the window was open, and I saw among the trees a lithe, gray-white form that flashed across the shadows and was gone.

"I won't go into the details of that night. All sorts of horrors came to me—

old folk-tales of Norway that the people of the hills believed in, stories of the taint that ran in certain families and of the dread deeds done at night 'by the will of the Foul Fiend.' I kept wondering, too, about the death of Hilde's father, and asking over and over again whether I had gone out of my mind.

"Suddenly the door opened and there stood Hilde, her fair hair white with loose fluffs of snow. She looked tired and worn, and with only a furtive glance at me she hurried to her room and slept heavily till noon.

"She was frequently absent after that, and I never knew, when I came home at night, whether she would be there or not.

Again the boy paused, staring at the fire. And again he went on.

"One day, there was an explosion at the northern mine, and I went up to try and get things moving again. No train came out that night, so I decided to tramp the eleven miles back rather than leave Hilde alone.

"Just a few miles from home, I realized that I was being followed by wolves. I was not armed, and there was nothing for it but to climb a tree. A broken-off oak stump stood near the track. It offered no protection from the wind, but I knew that from it I should be able to hail the log train in the morning if necessary. So I scrambled up in some haste.

"Within two minutes there were fourteen timber wolves squatting in a circle about that stump. You know their method—a short wait to see if you're going to run for it, then a half turn to the left, and a steady circling march around their victim.

"I don't know what the end of that death-march would have been, for just as I was bending all my will-power to fight the hypnotism of it, there dashed down the railway track a slender white wolf. Like a mad thing she darted here and there about that circle, then flashed away among the trees, with the whole pack behind her.

"I waited till their cry had died away in the distance, then climbed stiffly down, and hurried home. Hilde was waiting for me at the door. There was a curious brightness in her eyes, and she listened with some tension, I thought, to the explanation of my lateness. But I said nothing at all of my adventure with the wolves.

"A FEW nights later, Louis Barjon dropped in after supper. For once Hilde was almost herself. She was reading by the fire, while Louis and I smoked.

" 'Never saw the wolves so bold as this year,' said Louis. 'Have you seen the white one? White as a snow-drift, she is, and swift as the wind. She seems to come out of nowhere to join the pack, and they're devils when she's with them. She's the most beautiful animal I've ever seen, but I bet she's as keen on the kill as any of the dirty crew.'

"Hilde dropped her book. 'The white wolf never kills,' she said.

"Louis turned and looked at her in astonishment. Was it merely girlish sentiment for a lovely wild thing? Evidently Louis thought so, for he laughed tolerantly and went on, 'Well, maybe. But folks is laying for her. It's hardly safe to go out at night, so keep your rifle handy, boy.'

"I remembered the one night when I did take my rifle down. I glanced at

Hilde. Her eyes were wide, and her nostrils dilated. What was the emotion that swayed her? My heart contracted.

" 'Did you ever see her?' demanded Louis again. I thought of the gray-white form I had seen flitting among the trees, and of the beautiful white beast that had saved me from the pack only a few nights before. But I shook my head in denial.

" 'I've seen her twice,' he went on. 'The other night I took a flying shot at her, and I caught her on the right front paw. But it was just a scratch, I guess, for there was only a bit of blood on the snow.'

"In spite of myself, I glanced at Hilde's right forearm. She had it tightly bandaged. I looked up at her face. Her eyes were fixed on the back of Louis' head as he picked a coal out of the fire for his pipe.

"Was it only fancy, or did her lips draw back from her white teeth?

"My heart seemed to stop beating. That picture is engraved on my mind forever. Old Louis, bluff and weather-beaten, leaning down over the fire; Hilde watching him with a sort of sinister ferocity; and I dumb with terror.

"In silence I let him rise, and wind his long scarf about his neck, and go out into the night.

"I shut the door behind him, and turned hastily to Hilde. I was too late. She was gone. I went to her bedroom. She was not there, nor in any other room in the house.

"A sense of black tragedy engulfed me. I clung with all my might to my love for her, and I prayed to know the secret the old man in Norway would have told me before we came away.

"My whole soul revolted at the conclusions that were forcing themselves on me, and I waited in horror for what the morning would bring. I don't think I thought much after a while. My mind seemed numbed. I just sat and waited, with a curious sense of waiting for more than her coming home.

"Toward morning it started to snow heavily. I built up the fire, and put the kettle on to boil.

"Then I heard a sound outside, a whining and a heavy scratching sound. I flung open the door.

"Call me mad, if you will—but there in the snow was the white wolf. She was staggering and covered with blood, and scarcely able to drag her hindquarters into the room. The beautiful animal crawled weakly to my feet, and rubbed her head against my knee like a dog.

"I took her head between my hands, and she looked up with those pleading eyes I knew, licked my hand once or twice, and sank on the floor—dead.

"I knew my girl would never come home again.

"I knew—God! that such things should be!—that the old law of the hills had held, that ancient, dreadful law that said there was no return for the were-wolf that once had spilled the blood of human kind.

"I knew, too, what they would tell me that day—that old Louis was dead, that he had accounted for half the pack before they had got him, but that they had got him in the end.

"And then I told them that my wife had gone with Louis, that she had gone to spend a day with his wife, to help her with the quilting. They were deeply distressed, and searched everywhere. But they found no trace or sign of her at all.

"I buried the white wolf that night, under the pine trees. And the wolves howled about the place till dawn.

"Since then I have waited, hoping against hope that some day I will wake and find that I have only been insane.

"I have not the courage to sleep at the cottage now, but I go there every day to see if perhaps she has come home. But I know, as there is a God in heaven, that all that is mortal of my girl lies buried there under the pine trees, where her garden was last year."

FOR an hour he sat there, his head bowed in suffering, till from sheer weariness he slept in his chair.

I threw a coat around him, and built up the fire, and sat there thinking, thinking, thinking in amazement and dread.

The thing could not be, of course. Yet, I had lived near enough to Mother Earth to know that there are more things under heaven than science has ever dreamed of.

But the proof of it? I had to have some proof.

I sat there till daylight. Then I made strong coffee for the lad, and we had breakfast when he woke. I told him all that was going on around the old halls, confessed that I had lied to him about Clarke's fossilized pig, and saw a hint of the old twinkle return to his eyes.

Then I slipped away.

Now I should test this thing. Within the hour I should know whether the lad had dreamed an ugly dream or had been the victim of devil's work.

The cottage door was unlocked, waiting Hilde's return. Things were just as she had left them, no doubt—her work-bag in the corner, the book she had been reading open on the table. But I did not pause there. I went on through to the garden.

The grave was clearly marked by a blazed cross on the giant pine. Frantically I began to dig, and as I turned out the loose sand I prayed that I might prove that the boy had only dreamed.

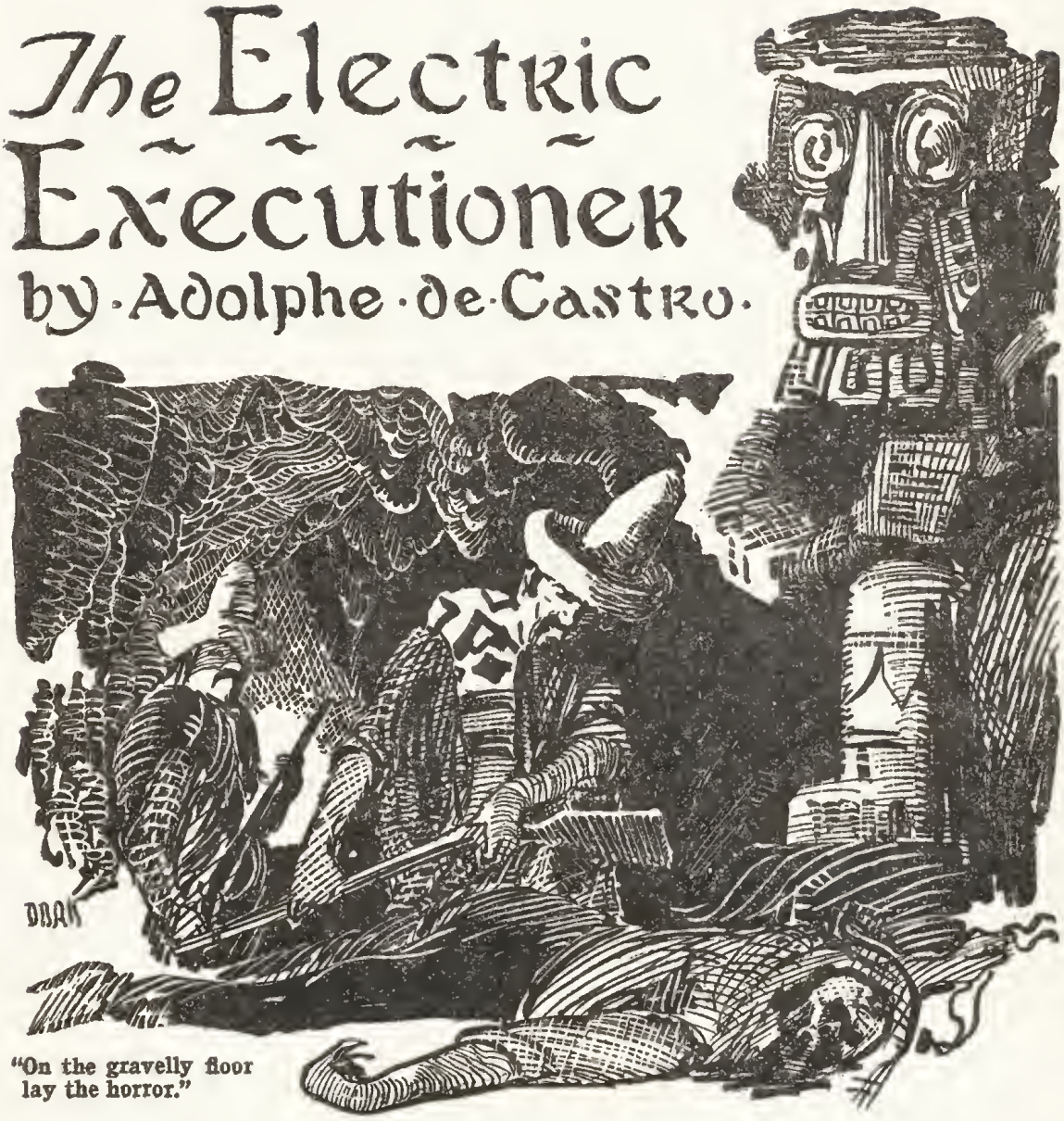
I made my gruesome find. With my hands I scraped away the earth that covered the bare skull and the bony paws. With my fingers I pried the long rows of teeth apart, and looked.

God! Was I too gone mad?

In the sharp canines were little pits of yellow, and one large molar had a solid cap of gold.

The Electric Executioner

by Adolphe de Castro



"On the gravelly floor lay the horror."

FOR one who has never faced the danger of legal execution, I have a rather queer horror of the electric chair as a subject. Indeed, I think the topic gives me more of a shudder than it gives many a man who has been on trial for his life. The reason is that I associate the thing with an incident of forty years ago — a very strange incident which brought me close to the edge of the unknown's black abyss.

In 1889 I was an auditor and investigator connected with the Tlaxcala Mining Company of San Francisco, which operated several small silver and copper properties in the San Mateo Mountains in Mexico. There had been some trouble at Mine No. 3, which had a surly, furtive assistant superintendent named Arthur Feldon; and on August 6th the firm received a telegram saying that Feldon had decamped, taking with him all the stock rec-

ords, securities, and private papers, and leaving the whole clerical and financial situation in dire confusion.

This development was a severe blow to the company, and late in the afternoon President McComb called me into his office to give orders for the recovery of the papers at any cost. There were, he knew, grave drawbacks. I had never seen Feldon, and there were only very indifferent photographs to go by. Moreover, my own wedding was set for Thursday of the following week—only nine days ahead—so that I was naturally not eager to be hurried off to Mexico on a man-hunt of indefinite length. The need, however, was so great that McComb felt justified in asking me to go at once; and I for my part decided that the effect on my status with the company would make ready acquiescence eminently worth while.

I was to start that night, using the president's private car as far as Mexico City, after which I would have to take a narrow-gage railway to the mines. Jackson, the superintendent of No. 3, would give me all details and any possible clues upon my arrival; and then the search would begin in earnest — through the mountains, down to the coast, or among the byways of Mexico City, as the case might be. I set out with a grim determination to get the matter done—and successfully done—as swiftly as possible; and tempered my discontent with pictures of an early return with papers and culprit, and of a wedding which would be almost a triumphal ceremony.

Having notified my family, fiancée, and principal friends, and made hasty preparations for the trip, I met President McComb at eight p. m. at the Southern Pacific depot, received from him some written instructions and a check-book, and left in his car attached to the eight-fifteen eastbound transcontinental train. The journey that followed seemed destined for uneventfulness, and after a good night's sleep I revelled in the ease of the private car so thoughtfully assigned me; reading my instructions with care, and formulating plans for the capture of Feldon and the recovery of the documents. I knew the Tlaxcala country quite well — probably much better than the missing man—hence had a certain amount of advantage in my search unless he had already used the railway.

According to the instructions, Feldon had been a subject of worry to Superintendent Jackson for some time; acting secretively, and working unaccountably in the company's laboratory at odd hours. That he was implicated with a Mexican boss and several peons in some thefts of ore was strongly suspected; but though the natives had been discharged, there was not enough evidence to warrant any positive step regarding the subtle official. Indeed, despite his furtiveness, there seemed to be more of defiance than of guilt in the man's bearing. He wore a chip on his shoulder, and talked as if the company were cheating him instead of his cheating the company. The obvious surveillance of his colleagues, Jackson wrote, appeared to irritate him increasingly; and now he had gone with everything of importance in the office. Of his possible whereabouts no guess could be made; though Jackson's final telegram suggested the wild slopes of the Sierra de Malinche, that tall, myth-surrounded peak with the corpse-shaped silhouette, from whose neighborhood the thieving natives were said to have come.

At El Paso, which we reached at two a. m. of the night following our start, my private car was detached from the transcontinental train and joined to an engine specially ordered by telegraph to take it

southward to Mexico City. I continued to drowse till dawn, and all the next day grew bored on the flat, desert Chihuahua landscape. The crew had told me we were due in Mexico City at noon Friday, but I soon saw that countless delays were wasting precious hours. There were waits on sidings all along the single-tracked route, and now and then a hot-box or other difficulty would further complicate the schedule.

At Torreón we were six hours late, and it was almost eight o'clock on Friday evening—fully twelve hours behind schedule—when the conductor consented to do some speeding in an effort to make up time. My nerves were on edge, and I could do nothing but pace the car in desperation. In the end I found that the speeding had been purchased at a high cost indeed, for within a half-hour the symptoms of a hot-box had developed in my car itself; so that after a maddening wait the crew decided that all the bearings would have to be overhauled after a quarter-speed limp ahead to the next station with shops—the factory town of Queretaro. This was the last straw, and I almost stamped like a child. Actually I sometimes caught myself pushing at my chair-arm as if trying to urge the train forward at a less snail-like pace.

It was almost ten in the evening when we drew into Queretaro, and I spent a fretful hour on the station platform while my car was sidetracked and tinkered at by a dozen native mechanics. At last they told me the job was too much for them, since the forward truck needed new parts which could not be obtained nearer than Mexico City. Everything indeed seemed against me, and I gritted my teeth when I thought of Feldon getting farther and farther away—perhaps to the easy cover of Vera Cruz with its shipping or Mexico City with its varied rail facilities—while fresh delays kept me tied and helpless. Of course Jackson had notified the police in all the cities around, but I knew with sorrow what their efficiency amounted to.

The best I could do, I soon found out, was to take the regular night express for Mexico City, which ran from Aguas Calientes and made a five-minute stop at Queretaro. It would be along at one a. m. if on time, and was due in Mexico City at five o'clock Saturday morning. When I purchased my ticket I found that the train would be made up of European compartment carriages instead of long American cars with rows of two-seat chairs. These had been much used in the early days of Mexican railroading, owing to the European construction interests back of the first lines; and in 1889 the Mexican Central was still running a fair number of them on its shorter trips. Ordinarily I prefer the American coaches, since I hate to have people facing me; but for this once I was glad of the foreign carriage. At such a time of night I stood a good chance of having a whole compartment to myself, and in my tired, nervously hypersensitive state I welcomed the solitude—as well as the comfortably upholstered seat with soft arm-rests and head-cushion, running the whole width of the vehicle. I bought a first class ticket, obtained my valise from the sidetracked private car, telegraphed both President McComb and Jackson of what had happened, and settled down in the station to wait for the night express as patiently as my strained nerves would let me.

For a wonder, the train was only half an hour late; though even so, the solitary station vigil had about finished my endurance. The conductor, showing me into a compartment, told me he expected

to make up the delay and reach the capital on time; and I stretched myself comfortably on the forward-facing seat in the expectation of a quiet three-and-a-half hour run. The light from the overhead oil lamp was soothingly dim, and I wondered whether I could snatch some much-needed sleep in spite of my anxiety and nerve-tension. It seemed, as the train jolted into motion, that I was alone; and I was heartily glad of it. My thoughts leaped ahead to my quest, and I nodded with the accelerating rhythm of the speeding string of carriages.

Then suddenly I perceived that I was not alone after all. In the corner diagonally opposite me, slumped down so that his face was invisible, sat a roughly clad man of unusual size, whom the feeble light had failed to reveal before. Beside him on the seat was a huge valise, battered and bulging, and tightly gripped even in his sleep by one of his incongruously slender hands. As the engine whistled sharply at some curve or crossing, the sleeper started nervously into a kind of watchful half-awakening; raising his head and disclosing a handsome face, bearded and clearly Anglo-Saxon, with dark, lustrous eyes. At sight of me his wakefulness became complete, and I wondered at the rather hostile wildness of his glance. No doubt, I thought, he resented my presence when he had hoped to have the compartment alone all the way; just as I was myself disappointed to find strange company in the half-lighted carriage. The best we could do, however, was to accept the situation gracefully; so I began apologizing to the man for my intrusion. He seemed to be a fellow-American, and we would both feel more at ease after a few civilities. Then we could leave each other in peace for the balance of the journey.

To my surprize, the stranger did not respond to my courtesies with so much as a word. Instead, he kept staring at me fiercely and almost appraisingly, and brushed aside my embarrassed proffer of a cigar with a nervous lateral movement of his disengaged hand. His other hand still tensely clutched the great, worn valise, and his whole person seemed to radiate some obscure malignity. After a time he abruptly turned his face toward the window, though there was nothing to see in the dense blackness outside. Oddly, he appeared to be looking at something as intently as if there really were something to look at. I decided to leave him to his own curious devices and meditations without further annoyance; so settled back in my seat, drew the brim of my soft hat over my face, and closed my eyes in an effort to snatch the sleep I had half-counted on.

I could not have dozed very long or very fully when my eyes fell open as if in response to some external force. Closing them again with some determination, I renewed my quest of a nap, yet wholly without avail. An intangible influence seemed bent on keeping me awake; so raising my head, I looked about the dimly lighted compartment to see if anything were amiss. All appeared normal, but I noticed that the stranger in the opposite corner was looking at me very intently—intently, though without any of the geniality or friendliness which would have implied a change from his former surly attitude. I did not attempt conversation this time, but leaned back in my previous sleepy posture; half closing my eyes as if I had dozed off once more, yet continuing to watch him curiously from beneath my down-turned hat brim.

As the train rattled onward through the night I saw a subtle and gradual metamorphosis come over the expression of the

staring man. Evidently satisfied that I was asleep, he allowed his face to reflect a curious jumble of emotions, the nature of which seemed anything but reassuring. Hatred, fear, triumph, and fanaticism flickered compositely over the lines of his lips and the angles of his eyes, while his gaze became a glare of really alarming greed and ferocity. Suddenly it dawned upon me that this man was mad, and dangerously so.

I will not pretend that I was anything but deeply and thoroughly frightened when I saw how things stood. Perspiration started out all over me, and I had hard work to maintain my attitude of relaxation and slumber. Life had many attractions for me just then, and the thought of dealing with a homicidal maniac—possibly armed and certainly powerful to a marvelous degree—was a dismaying and terrifying one. My disadvantage in any sort of struggle was enormous; for the man was a virtual giant; evidently in the best of athletic trim, while I have always been rather frail, and was then almost worn out with anxiety, sleeplessness, and nervous tension. It was undeniably a bad moment for me, and I felt pretty close to a horrible death as I recognized the fury of madness in the stranger's eyes. Events from the past came up into my consciousness as if for a farewell—just as a drowning man's whole life is said to resurrect itself before him at the last moment.

Of course I had my revolver in my coat pocket, but any motion of mine to reach and draw it would be instantly obvious. Moreover, if I did secure it, there was no telling what effect it would have on the maniac. Even if I shot him once or twice he might have enough remaining strength to get the gun from me and deal with me in his own way; or if he were armed himself he might shoot or stab without trying to disarm me. One can cow a sane man by covering him with a pistol, but an insane man's complete indifference to consequences gives him a strength and menace quite superhuman for the time being. Even in those pre-Freudian days I had a common-sense realization of the dangerous power of a person without normal inhibitions. That the stranger in the corner was indeed about to start some murderous action, his burning eyes and twitching facial muscles did not permit me to doubt for a moment.

Suddenly I heard his breath begin to come in excited gasps, and saw his chest heaving with mounting excitement. The time for a showdown was close, and I tried desperately to think of the best thing to do. Without interrupting my pretense of sleep, I began to slide my right hand gradually and inconspicuously toward the pocket containing my pistol; watching the madman closely as I did so, to see if he would detect any move. Unfortunately he did—almost before he had time to register the fact in his expression. With a bound so agile and abrupt as to be almost incredible in a man of his size, he was upon me before I knew what had happened; looming up and swaying forward like a giant ogre of legend, and pinioning me with one powerful hand while with the other he forestalled me in reaching the revolver. Taking it from my pocket and placing it in his own, he released me contemptuously, well knowing how fully his physique placed me at his mercy. Then he stood up at his full height—his head almost touching the roof of the carriage—and stared down at me with eyes whose fury had quickly turned to a look of pitying scorn and ghoulish calculation.

I DID not move, and after a moment the man resumed his seat opposite me; smiling a ghastly smile as he opened his great bulging valise and extracted an article of peculiar appearance—a rather large cage of semi-flexible wire, woven somewhat like a baseball catcher's mask, but shaped more like the helmet of a diving-suit. Its top was connected with a cord whose other end remained in the valise. This device he fondled with obvious affection, cradling it in his lap as he looked at me afresh and licked his bearded lips with an almost feline motion of the tongue. Then, for the first time, he spoke—in a deep, mellow voice of a softness and cultivation startlingly at variance with his rough corduroy clothes and unkempt aspect.

"You are fortunate, sir. I shall use you first of all. You shall go into history as the first fruits of a remarkable invention. Vast sociological consequences—I shall let my light shine, as it were. I'm radiating all the time, but nobody knows it. Now you shall know. Intelligent guinea-pig. Cats and burros—it worked even with a burro. . . ."

He paused, while his bearded features underwent a convulsive motion closely synchronized with a vigorous gyratory shaking of the whole head. It was as though he were shaking clear of some nebulous obstructing medium, for the gesture was followed by a clarification or subtilization of expression which hid the more obvious madness in a look of suave composure through which the craftiness gleamed only dimly. I glimpsed the difference at once, and put in a word to see if I could lead his mind into harmless channels.

"You seem to have a marvelously fine instrument, if I'm any judge. Won't you tell me how you came to invent it?"

He nodded.

"Mere logical reflection, dear sir. I consulted the needs of the age and acted upon them. Others might have done the same had their minds been as powerful—that is, as capable of sustained concentration—as mine. I had the sense of conviction—the available will-power—that is all. I realized, as no one else has yet realized, how imperative it is to remove everybody from the earth before Quetzalcoatl comes back, and realized also that it must be done elegantly. I hate butchery of any kind, and hanging is barbarously crude. You know last year the New York legislature voted to adopt electric execution for condemned men—but all the apparatus they have in mind is as primitive as Stephenson's 'Rocket' or Davenport's first electric engine. I knew of a better way, and told them so, but they paid no attention to me. God, the fools! As if I didn't know all there is to know about men and death and electricity—student, man and boy—technologist and engineer—soldier of fortune. . . ."

He leaned back and narrowed his eyes.

"I was in Maximilian's army twenty years and more ago. They were going to make me a nobleman. Then those damned greasers killed him and I had to go home. But I came back—back and forth, back and forth. I live in Rochester, N. Y. . . ."

His eyes grew deeply crafty, and he leaned forward, touching me on the knee with the fingers of a paradoxically delicate hand.

"I came back, I say, and I went deeper than any of them. I hate greasers, but I like Mexicans! A puzzle? Listen to me, young fellow—you don't think Mexico is really Spanish, do you? God, if you knew the tribes I know! In the moun-

tains—in the mountains—Anahuac—Tenochtitlan—the old ones. . . ."

His voice changed to a chanting and not unmelodious howl.

"Iä! Huitzilopotchli! . . . Nahuatlacatl! Seven, seven, seven . . . Xochimilca, Chalca, Tepaneca, Acolhua, Tlahuica, Tlascalteca, Azteca! . . . Iä! Iä! I have been to the Seven Caves of Chicomoztoc, but no one shall ever know! I tell you *because you will never repeat it. . . .*"

He subsided, and resumed a conversational tone.

"It would surprize you to know what things are told in the mountains. Huitzilopotchli is coming back . . . of that there can be no doubt. Any peon south of Mexico City can tell you that. But I meant to do nothing about it. I went home, as I tell you, again and again, and was going to benefit society with my electric executioner when that cursed Albany legislature adopted the other way. A joke, sir, a joke! Grandfather's chair—sit by the fireside—Hawthorne——"

The man was chuckling with a morbid parody of good nature.

"Why, sir, I'd like to be the first man to sit in their damned chair and feel their little two-bit battery current! It wouldn't make a frog's legs dance! And they expect to kill murderers with it—reward of merit—everything! But then, young man, I saw the uselessness—the pointless illogicality, as it were—of killing just a few. Everybody is a murderer—they murder ideas—steal inventions—stole mine by watching, and watching, and watching——"

The man choked and paused, and I spoke soothingly.

"I'm sure your invention was much the better, and probably they'll come to use it in the end."

Evidently my tact was not great enough, for his response showed fresh irritation.

"'Sure,' are you? Nice, mild, conservative assurance! Cursed lot you care *—but you'll soon know!* Why, damn you, all the good there ever will be in that electric chair will have been stolen from me. The ghost of Nezahualpilli told me that on the sacred mountain. They watched, and watched, and watched——"

He choked again, then gave another of those gestures in which he seemed to shake both his head and his facial expression. That seemed temporarily to steady him.

"What my invention needs is testing. This is it—here. The wire hood or head-net is flexible, and slips on easily. Neckpiece binds but doesn't choke. Electrodes touch forehead and base of cerebellum—all that's necessary. Stop the head, and what else can go? The fools up at Albany, with their carved oak easy-chair, think they've got to make it a head-to-foot affair. Idiots!—don't they know that you don't need to shoot a man through the body after you've plugged him through the brain? I've seen men die in battle—I know better. And then their silly high-power circuit—dynamos—all that. Why didn't they see what I've done with the storage-battery? Not a hearing—nobody knows—I alone have the secret—that's why I and Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopotchli will rule the world alone—I and they, if I choose to let them. . . . But I must have experimental subjects—subjects—*do you know whom I've chosen for the first?*"

I tried jocoseness, quickly merging into friendly seriousness, as a sedative. Quick thought and apt words might save me yet.

"Well, there are lots of fine subjects

among the politicians of San Francisco, where I come from! They need your treatment, and I'd like to help you introduce it! But really, I think I can help you in all truth. I have some influence in Sacramento, and if you'll go back to the States with me after I'm through with my business in Mexico, I'll see that you get a hearing."

He answered soberly and civilly.

"No—I can't go back. I swore not to when those criminals at Albany turned down my invention and set spies to watch me and steal from me. But I must have American subjects. Those greasers are under a curse, and would be too easy; and the full-blood Indians—the real children of the feathered serpent—are sacred and inviolate except for proper sacrificial victims . . . and even those must be slain according to ceremony. I must have Americans without going back—and the first man I choose will be signally honored. Do you know who he is?"

I temporized desperately.

"Oh, if that's all the trouble, I'll find you a dozen first-rate Yankee specimens as soon as we get to Mexico City! I know where there are lots of small mining men who wouldn't be missed for days——"

But he cut me short with a new and sudden air of authority which had a touch of real dignity in it.

"That'll do—we've trifled long enough. Get up and stand erect like a man. You're the subject I've chosen, and you'll thank me for the honor in the other world, just as the sacrificial victim thanks the priest for transferring him to eternal glory. A new principle—no other man alive has dreamed of such a battery, and it might never again be hit on if the world experimented a thousand years. Do you know that atoms aren't what they seem? Fools! A century after this some dolt would be guessing if I were to let the world live!"

As I arose at his command, he drew additional feet of cord from the valise and stood erect beside me; the wire helmet outstretched toward me in both hands, and a look of real exaltation on his tanned and bearded face. For an instant he seemed like a radiant Hellenic mystagogue or hierophant.

"Here, O Youth—a libation! Wine of the cosmos—nectar of the starry spaces—Linos — Iacchus — Ialemus—Zagreus—Dionysos—Atys—Hylas — sprung from Apollo and slain by the hounds of Argos —seed of Psamathë—child of the sun—Evoë! Evoë!"

He was chanting again, and this time his mind seemed far back amongst the classic memories of his college days. In my erect posture I noticed the nearness of the signal cord overhead, and wondered whether I could reach it through some gesture of ostensible response to his ceremonial mood. It was worth trying, so with an antiphonal cry of "Evoë!" I put my arms forward and upward toward him in a ritualistic fashion, hoping to give the cord a tug before he could notice the act. But it was useless. He saw my purpose, and moved one hand toward the right-hand coat pocket where my revolver lay. No words were needed, and we stood for a moment like carven figures. Then he quietly said, "Make haste!"

Again my mind rushed frantically about seeking avenues of escape. The doors, I knew, were not locked on Mexican trains; but my companion could easily forestall me if I tried to unlatch one and jump out. Besides, our speed was so great that success in that direction would

probably be as fatal as failure. The only thing to do was to play for time. Of the three-and-a-half-hour trip a good slice was already worn away, and once we got to Mexico City the guards and police in the station would provide instant safety.

There would, I thought, be two distinct times for diplomatic stalling. If I could get him to postpone the slipping on of the hood, that much time would be gained. Of course I had no belief that the thing was really deadly; but I knew enough of madmen to understand what would happen when it failed to work. To his disappointment would be added a mad sense of my responsibility for the failure, and the result would be a red chaos of murderous rage. Therefore the experiment must be postponed as long as possible. Yet the second opportunity did exist, for if I planned cleverly I might devise explanations for the failure which would hold his attention and lead him into more or less extended searches for corrective influences. I wondered just how far his credulity went, and whether I could prepare in advance a prophecy of failure which would make the failure itself stamp me as a seer or initiate, or perhaps a god. I had enough of a smattering of Mexican mythology to make it worth trying; though I would try other delaying influences first and let the prophecy come as a sudden revelation. Would he spare me in the end if I could make him think me a prophet or divinity? Could I "get by" as Quetzalcoatl or Huitzilopotchli? Anything to drag matters out till five o'clock, when we were due in Mexico City.

But my opening "stall" was the veteran will-making ruse. As the maniac repeated his command for haste, I told him of my family and intended marriage, and asked for the privilege of leaving a message and disposing of my money and effects. If, I said, he would lend me some paper and agree to mail what I should write, I could die more peacefully and willingly. After some cogitation he gave a favorable verdict and fished in his valise for a pad, which he handed me solemnly as I resumed my seat. I produced a pencil, artfully breaking the point at the outset and causing some delay while he searched for one of his own. When he gave me this, he took my broken pencil and proceeded to sharpen it with a large, horn-handled knife which had been in his belt under his coat. Evidently a second pencil-breaking would not profit me greatly.

What I wrote, I can hardly recall at this date. It was largely gibberish, and composed of random scraps of memorized literature when I could think of nothing else to set down. I made my handwriting as illegible as I could without destroying its nature as writing; for I knew he would be likely to look at the result before commencing his experiment, and realized how he would react to the sight of obvious nonsense. The ordeal was a terrible one, and I chafed each second at the slowness of the train. In the past I had often whistled a brisk gallop to the sprightly "tac" of wheels on rails, but now the tempo seemed slowed down to that of a funeral march—my funeral march, I grimly reflected.

My ruse worked till I had covered over four pages, six by nine; when at last the madman drew out his watch and told me I could have but five minutes more. What should I do next? I was hastily going through the form of concluding the will when a new idea struck me. Ending with a flourish and handing him the fi-

ished sheets, which he thrust carelessly into his left-hand coat pocket, I reminded him of my influential Sacramento friends who would be so much interested in his invention.

"Oughtn't I to give you a letter of introduction to them?" I said. "Oughtn't I to make a signed sketch and description of your executioner so that they'll grant you a cordial hearing? They can make you famous, you know—and there's no question at all but that they'll adopt your method for the state of California if they hear of it through someone like me, whom they know and trust."

I was taking this tack on the chance that his thoughts as a disappointed inventor would let him forget the Aztec-religious side of his mania for a while. When he veered to the latter again, I reflected, I would spring the "revelation" and "prophecy." The scheme worked, for his eyes glowed an eager assent, though he bruskly told me to be quick. He further emptied the valise, lifting out a queer-looking congeries of glass cells and coils to which the wire from the helmet was attached, and delivering a fire of running comment too technical for me to follow yet apparently quite plausible and straightforward. I pretended to note down all he said, wondering as I did so whether the queer apparatus was really a battery after all. Would I get a slight shock when he applied the device? The man surely talked as if he were a genuine electrician. Description of his own invention was clearly a congenial task for him, and I saw he was not as impatient as before. The hopeful gray of dawn glimmered through the windows before he wound up, and I felt at last that my chance of escape had really become tangible.

But he, too, saw the dawn, and began glaring wildly again. He knew the train was due in Mexico City at five, and would certainly force quick action unless I could override all his judgment with engrossing ideas. As he rose with a determined air, setting the battery on the seat beside the open valise, I reminded him that I had not made the needed sketch; and asked him to hold the headpiece so that I could draw it near the battery. He complied and resumed his seat, but with many admonitions to me to hurry. After another moment I paused for some information, asking him how the victim was placed for execution, and how his presumable struggles were overcome.

"Why," he replied, "the criminal is securely strapped to a post. It does not matter how much he tosses his head, for the helmet fits tightly and draws even closer when the current comes on. We turn the switch gradually—you see it here, a carefully arranged affair with a rheostat."

A new idea for delay occurred to me as the tilled fields and increasingly frequent houses in the dawnlight outside told of our approach to the capital at last.

"But," I said, "I must draw the helmet in place on a human head as well as beside the battery. Can't you slip it on yourself a moment so that I can sketch you with it? The papers as well as the officials will want all this, and they are strong on completeness."

I had, by chance, made a better shot than I had planned; for at my mention of the press the madman's eyes lit up afresh.

"The papers? Yes—damn them, you can make even the papers give me a hearing! They all laughed at me and wouldn't print a word—Here, you, hurry up! We've not a second to lose!"

He had slipped the headpiece on and was watching my flying pencil avidly. The wire mask gave him a grotesque, comic look as he sat there with nervously twitching hands.

"Now, curse 'em, they'll print pictures! I'll revise your sketch if you make any blunders—must be accurate at any cost. Police will find you afterward—they'll tell how it works. Associated Press item—back up your letter—immortal fame. . . . Hurry, I say—hurry, confound you!"

THE train was lurching over the poorer roadbed near the city, and we swayed disconcertingly now and then. With this excuse I managed to break the pencil again, but of course the maniac at once handed me my own which he had sharpened. My first batch of ruses was about used up, and I felt that I should have to submit to the headpiece in a moment. We were still a good quarter-hour from the terminal, and it was about time for me to divert my companion to his religious side and spring the divine prophecy.

Mustering up my scraps of Nahuan-Aztec mythology, I suddenly threw down pencil and paper and commenced to chant.

"Iä! Iä! Tloquenahuaque, Thou Who Art All In Thyself! Thou, too, Ipalnemoan, By Whom We Live! I hear, I hear! I see, I see! Serpent-bearing Eagle, hail! A message! A message! Huitzilopotchli, in my soul echoes thy thunder!"

At my intonations the maniac stared incredulously through his odd mask, his handsome face shown in a surprize and perplexity which quickly changed to alarm. His mind seemed to go blank a moment, and then to recrystallize in another pattern. Raising his hands aloft, he chanted as if in a dream.

"Mictlanteuctli, Great Lord, a sign! A sign from within thy black cave! Iä! Tonatiuh-Metztli! Cthulhutl! Command, and I serve!"

Now in all this responsive gibberish there was one word which struck an odd cord in my memory. Odd, because it never occurs in any printed account of Mexican mythology, yet had been overheard by me more than once as an awe-struck whisper amongst the peons in my own firm's Tlaxcala mines. It seemed to be part of an exceedingly secret and ancient ritual; for there were characteristic whispered responses which I had caught now and then, and which were as unknown as itself to academic scholarship. This maniac must have spent considerable time with the hill peons and Indians, just as he had said; for surely such unrecorded lore could have come from no mere book-learning. Realizing the importance he must attach to this doubly esoteric jargon, I determined to strike at his most vulnerable spot and give him the gibberish responses the natives used.

"Ya-R'lyeh! Ya-R'lyeh!" I shouted. "Cthulhutl fhtaghn! Niguratl-Yig! Yog-Sototl——"

But I never had a chance to finish. Galvanized into a religious epilepsy by the exact response which his subconscious mind had probably not really expected, the madman scrambled down to a kneeling posture on the floor, bowing his wire-helmeted head again and again, and turning it to right and left as he did so. With each turn his obeisances became more profound, and I could hear his foaming lips repeating the syllable "kill, kill, kill," in a rapidly swelling monotone. It occurred to me that I had overreached

myself, and that my response had unloosed a mounting mania which would rouse him to the slaying-point before the train reached the station.

As the arc of the madman's turnings gradually increased, the slack in the cord from his headpiece to the battery had naturally been taken up more and more. Now, in an all-forgetting delirium of ecstasy, he began to magnify his turns to complete circles, so that the cord wound round his neck and began to tug at its moorings to the battery on the seat. I wondered what he would do when the inevitable would happen, and the battery would be dragged to presumable destruction on the floor.

Then came the sudden cataclysm. The battery, yanked over the seat's edge by the maniac's last gesture of orgiastic frenzy, did indeed fall; but it does not seem to have wholly broken. Instead, as my eye caught the spectacle in one too-fleeting instant, the actual impact was borne by the rheostat, so that the switch was jerked over instantly to full current. And the marvelous thing is that there *was* a current. The invention was no mere dream of insanity.

I saw a blinding blue auroral coruscation, heard an ululating shriek more hideous than any of the previous cries of that mad, horrible journey, and smelled the nauseous odor of burning flesh. That was all my overwrought consciousness could bear, and I sank instantly into oblivion.

WHEN the train guard at Mexico City revived me, I found a crowd on the station platform around my compartment door. At my involuntary cry the pressing faces became curious and dubious, and I was glad when the guard shut out all but the trim doctor who had pushed his way through to me. My cry was a very natural thing, but it had been prompted by something more than the shocking sight on the carriage floor which I had expected to see. Or I should say, by something *less,* because in truth there was not anything on the floor at all.

Nor, said the guard, had there been when he opened the door and found me unconscious within. My ticket was the only one sold for that compartment, and I was the only person found within it. Just myself and my valise, nothing more. I had been alone all the way from Queretaro. Guard, doctor, and spectators alike tapped their foreheads significantly at my frantic and insistent questions.

Had it all been a dream, or was I indeed mad? I recalled my anxiety and overwrought nerves, and shuddered. Thanking the guard and doctor, and shaking free of the curious crowd, I staggered into a cab and was taken to the Fonda Nacional, where, after telegraphing Jackson at the mine, I slept till afternoon in an effort to get a fresh grip on myself. I had myself called at one o'clock, in time to catch the narrow-gage for the mining country, but when I got up I found a telegram under the door. It was from Jackson, and said that Feldon had been found dead in the mountains that morning, the news reaching the mine about ten o'clock. The papers were all safe, and the San Francisco office had been duly notified. So the whole trip, with its nervous haste and harrowing mental ordeal, had been for nothing!

Knowing that McComb would expect a personal report despite the course of events, I sent another wire ahead and took the narrow-gage after all. Four hours later I was rattled and jolted into the station of Mine No. 3, where Jackson was

waiting to give a cordial greeting. He was so full of the affair at the mine that he did not notice my still shaken and seedy appearance.

The superintendent's story was brief, and he told me it as he led me toward the shack up the hillside above the *arrastre*, where Feldon's body lay. Feldon, he said, had always been a queer, sullen character, ever since he was hired the year before; working at some secret mechanical device and complaining of constant espionage, and being disgustingly familiar with the native workmen. But he certainly knew the work, the country, and the people. He used to make long trips into the hills where the peons lived, and even to take part in some of their ancient, heathenish ceremonies. He hinted at odd secrets and strange powers as often as he boasted of his mechanical skill. Of late he had disintegrated rapidly; growing morbidly suspicious of his colleagues, and undoubtedly joining his native friends in ore-thieving after his cash got low. He needed unholy amounts of money for something or other—was always having boxes come from laboratories and machine shops in Mexico City or the States.

As for the final absconding with all the papers—it was only a crazy gesture of revenge for what he called "spying". He was certainly stark mad, for he had gone across country to a hidden cave on the wild slope of the haunted Sierra de Malinche, where no white men live, and had done some amazingly queer things. The cave, which would never have been found but for the final tragedy, was full of hideous old Aztec idols and altars; the latter covered with the charred bones of recent burnt-offerings of doubtful nature. The natives would tell nothing—indeed, they swore they knew nothing—but it was easy to see that the cave was an old rendezvous of theirs, and that Feldon had shared their practices to the fullest extent.

The searchers had found the place only because of the chanting and the final cry. It had been close to five that morning, and after an all-night encampment the party had begun to pack up for its empty-handed return to the mines. Then somebody had heard faint rhythms in the distance, and knew that one of the noxious old native rituals was being howled from some lonely spot up the slope of the corpse-shaped mountain. They heard the same old names—Mictlanteuctli, Tonatiuh-Metzli, Cthulhutl, Ya-R'lyeh, and all the rest—but the queer thing was that some English words were mixed with them. Real white man's English, and no greaser patter. Guided by the sound, they had hastened up the weed-entangled mountainside toward it, when after a spell of quiet the shriek had burst upon them. It was a terrible thing—a worse thing than any of them had ever heard before. There seemed to be some smoke, too, and a morbid acrid smell.

Then they stumbled on the cave, its entrance screened by scrub mesquites, but now emitting clouds of foetid smoke. It was lighted within, the horrible altars and grotesque images revealed flickeringly by candles which must have been changed less than a half-hour before; and on the gravelly floor lay the horror that made all the crowd reel backward. It was Feldon, head burned to a crisp by some odd device he had slipped over it—a kind of wire cage connected with a rather shaken-up battery which had evidently fallen to the floor from a nearby altar-pot. When the men saw it they exchanged glances, thinking of the "electric executioner" Feldon had always boasted of inventing—the thing which

everyone had rejected, but had tried to steal and copy. The papers were safe in Feldon's open portmanteau which stood close by, and an hour later the column of searchers started back for No. 3 with a grisly burden on an improvised stretcher.

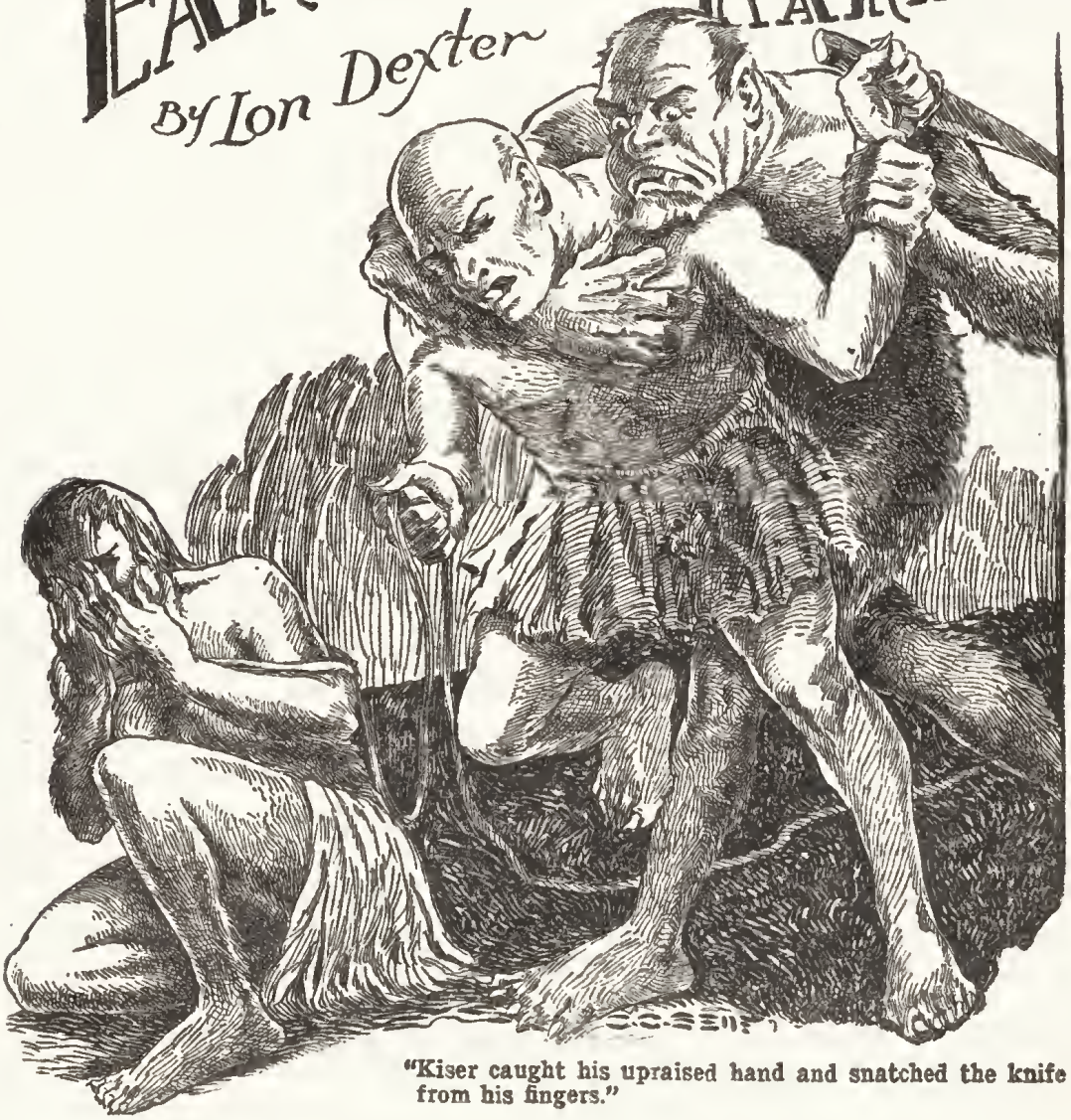
That was all, but it was enough to make me turn pale and falter as Jackson led me up past the arrastre to the shed where he said the body lay. For I was not without imagination, and knew only too well into what hellish nightmare this tragedy somehow supernaturally dovetailed. I knew what I should see inside that gaping door around which the curious miners clustered, and did not flinch when my eyes took in the giant form, the rough corduroy clothes, the oddly delicate hands, the wisps of burnt beard, and the hellish machine itself—battery slightly broken, and headpiece blackened by the charring of what was inside. The great, bulging portmanteau did not surprise me, and I quailed only at two things—the folded sheets of paper sticking out of the left-hand pocket, and the queer sagging of the corresponding right-hand pocket. In a moment when no one was looking I reached out and seized the too familiar sheets, crushing them in my hand without daring to look at their penmanship. I ought to be sorry now that a kind of panic fear made me burn them that night with averted eyes. They would have been a positive proof or disproof of something—but for that matter I could still have had proof by asking about the revolver the coroner afterward took from that sagging right-hand coat pocket. I never had the courage to ask about that—because my own revolver was missing after the night on the train. My pocket pencil, too, shewed signs of a crude and hasty sharpening unlike the precise pointing I had given it Friday afternoon on the machine in President McComb's private car. So in the end I went home still puzzled—mercifully puzzled, perhaps. The private car was repaired when I got back to Querétaro, but my greatest relief was crossing the Rio Grande into El Paso and the States. By the next Friday I was in San Francisco again, and the postponed wedding came off the following week.

As to what really happened that night—as I've said, I simply don't dare to speculate. That chap Feldon was insane to start with, and on top of his insanity he had piled a lot of prehistoric Aztec witch-lore that nobody has any right to know. He was really an inventive genius, and that battery must have been the genuine stuff. I heard later how he had been brushed aside in former years by press, public, and potentates alike. Too much disappointment isn't good for men of a certain kind. Anyhow, some unholy combination of influences was at work. He had really, by the way, been a soldier of Maximilian's.

When I tell my story most people call me a plain liar. Others lay it to abnormal psychology—and heaven knows I was overwrought—while still others talk of "astral projection" of some sort. My zeal to catch Feldon certainly sent my thoughts ahead toward him, and with all his Indian magic he'd be about the first one to recognise and meet them. Was he in the railway carriage or was I in the cave on the corpse-shaped haunted mountain? What would have happened to me, had I not delayed him as I did? I'll confess I don't know, and I'm not sure that I want to know. I've never been in Mexico since—and as I said at the start, I don't enjoy hearing about electric executions.

EARTHWORMS of KARMA

By Lon Dexter



"Kiser caught his upraised hand and snatched the knife from his fingers."

The Story Thus Far

LANDING safely on the planet Mars after a voyage from Earth, Professor Hervy and his daughter Ruth send Joseph Kiser, the third member of the party, to reconnoiter the Martian city which lies across the canal. He is met by one of the Martian scientists, whose niece, Delam Oblene, warns him that he is in danger. He does not return to the space-ship, but Hervy and his daughter are hospitably received by the Martians and taken to the city in a "kandike," or small airship. They learn that the Martians are all reincarnated Earthlings, retaining a knowledge of their last life on Earth. After weeks of search, Kiser is seen, apparently out of his mind, and he seizes Ruth and runs off with her into the forest, which is inhabited by a race of sub-men known as "marbs."

8. A Warning and a Fight

"I AM very grateful to you for your warning, Delam Oblene. I have sensed that things are not just right here; would you mind telling me the nature of the danger which threatens me?" Kiser's voice showed no trace of fear as he spoke, although his voice was subdued lest it might carry to the acute ears of the sentinel Crobe.

"I, too, sensed a flaw in my uncle's hospitality when he was so annoyed at my own unexpected appearance upon the scene. Afterward, quite by accident, I overheard him discussing with his assistant, Anhul Pilluth, a plan to dispose of you permanently."

"Dispose of me! Why should he wish to dispose of me?"

"For the most part to further his insane desire for scientific knowledge, and secondarily for patriotic reasons. He considers you and your discovery a menace to Masovada if you should be allowed to return to Earth and announce the success of your voyage."

"And how does he plan to dispose of me?"

"He has perfected an operation by means of which he transfers the intelligence of one being to the physical body of another, and he plans to interchange your personality with that of Nebond, a young marb which has but recently been domesticated. Furthermore, he has set Crobe, another marb, to watch you, and were he to learn that you had escaped your room he would probably become violently angry and run amuck. Crobe has the strength of many men and if he should run amuck he would undoubtedly kill you before anything could be done to stop him."

Ignoring her reference to Crobe, Kiser asked: "Just what would it mean to me if he performed such an operation?"

"It would mean that your mind and your intelligence would occupy the body of Nebond, the marb. Nebond will possess your body and you his. You will have your own memory, your own mentality—inasmuch as it can function through the brain of a marb, which you will have in place of your own.

"Of course you will be unable to use the brain of a marb as you would use your own. The brute will be able to use yours better than he did his own once he gets accustomed to it, will do things which you would loathe to see your physical body do, and eat things at which you would rebel if you knew. He will reason only as a marb, or slightly better due to the fact that he has a human brain at his disposal."

"I am indeed grateful to you, Delam Oblene, for having warned me. I shall take French leave of Kabo and let him look elsewhere for his experimental material."

"Yes, you must go at once, but pray do not mention that Kabo has entertained you; for should it be known that he had done so without reporting the matter to the Legislative Council he would incur the disfavor of all Masovada. It would humiliate him very much and would profit you nothing."

"But how was he to communicate with the authorities so soon?"

"He has but to attune his mind to a certain vibration to send his thoughts wheresoever he wills."

"Ah, telepathy!"

"No, not telepathy. In the Masovadan brain there is a concentration center and in the nostrils of the Masovadan there are certain cells sensitized to receive all thought vibration which is attuned in harmony with them. Thus we are able to project our thoughts to anyone whose vibratory rate we know and concentrate upon."

"Indeed I shall say nothing of having met with Kabo. But where had I best go?"

"I shall conduct you by kandike back to your craft, and tomorrow I shall provide for your being found by the proper person. Please do not judge Masovadan hospitality by that of my poor deluded uncle, who would sacrifice his honor to his mania for scientific achievement and his desire to solve one of the mooted questions of the age. Remain well hidden here in the shadows and I will return with the kandike presently."

"But might you not encounter Crobe upon your way to the landing-terrace?"

"I have nothing to fear from Crobe so long as he doesn't suspect that you have escaped him. I shall——"

Just what she had intended to say Kiser never knew, for just at that moment there was a coarse growl behind them, and, turning suddenly, they stood face to face with the giant Crobe; his eyes protruding to the extreme limit of their telescoping pedicles and glowing ominously, his huge teeth bared like those of an angry dog, and his whole attitude threatening as he stood poised as though ready to spring forward and annihilate everything in his path.

True to Delam Oblene's prediction Crobe had flown into a rage at sight of the Earthman in the garden. He growled and stamped his foot in anger, and as Kiser watched he saw white froth appear upon his lips.

Delam Oblene addressed the beast in the strange musical language of the Martians; her tone was emphatic and she pointed toward the house but the marb appeared not to have heard. She stepped forward and repeated her command with yet more emphasis, but by this time the beast was in a frenzy of rage, and as she approached him, he stooped and snapped viciously, barely missing her outstretched hand.

Then it was that Delam Oblene did a very Earth-like feminine thing. She sprang back with a scream — and fainted.

Knowing his own superior strength, Kiser had first planned merely to evade the beast and hold his attention until Delam Oblene should have had time to get her kandike and return, but when he saw the enraged animal attempt violence to the girl he changed his plan—or rather, the plan changed itself, and he leapt forward, covering the distance between them at a single bound. Striking with all his strength behind the blow, he landed squarely upon the receding chin of his antagonist just as the beast bent his long neck forward to resume the quarrel at the point where Delam Oblene had interrupted it.

There was a loud snap like the crack of a whip and Crobe was flung far backward, to land upon his shoulders limp and inert, his neck broken and his face crushed as though he had been struck by a ten-ton truck! Kiser's blow had been delivered with all the strength of muscles developed upon a planet whose gravitational pull was much greater than Mars, and the Martian creatures were not so constructed as to enable them to withstand such violence.

The growls of Crobe and the girl's scream had aroused Kabo, and suddenly, as if by magic, the garden was brilliantly illuminated, showing Crobe lying mangled and dead and Kiser kneeling beside the prostrate form of Delam Oblene.

"A nice guest you are, indeed!" said Kabo with biting sarcasm.

Kiser turned his head slightly to face Kabo, but did not rise. He was unwilling to accuse the Martian of the perfidy which the girl had attributed to him and thus betray that she had warned him.

"No harm meant, I assure you," he said. "I strolled out into the garden to enjoy the moonlight and your niece followed me here to warn me about some supposed danger from Crobe. True to her fears, he attacked me and I fear that I have killed him, for which I am very sorry; it seems that I am much stronger upon Mars than I was upon Earth."

"A pretty story indeed!" snarled Kabo. "You *Earthworm!* Is there yet no decency upon your filthy planet? I shall not await the morrow to settle with you!"

Kiser rose hastily and started to voice an angry protest, when he noticed for the first time a small box which Kabo carried under his arm. Could this be a weapon? As he opened his mouth to speak, his tongue was very thick, his knees sagged, his vision blurred, and there seemed a

faint, far-away ringing in his ears; he then seemed to be falling through untold millions of miles of space and into—oblivion!

9. *Transformation*

JOSEPH KISER awoke with a feeling of intense drowsiness. His lids seemed heavy and he was unable to see well or control the direction of his vision for some moments after he had succeeded in opening his eyes.

At length he glanced about him. A white-uniformed nurse sat beside the bed upon which he lay and he tried to speak to her, but his tongue was thick and the best he did was an unintelligible grunt.

His mouth seemed much too large and he controlled his facial muscles with difficulty. When he attempted to raise a hand to his face he noted with wonder that he was in a strait-jacket, and his wrists were lean and hairy!

Again he essayed to speak to the nurse, but his tone startled him into silence, for it was coarse and rasping like the growl of an animal and he was quite unable to control his tone or inflection.

"Where am I?" he asked at last in a voice that was utterly unrecognizable.

The nurse gave him a perplexed stare. She spoke some words in the Martian tongue and Kiser thought she appeared to be somewhat mystified at this patient who appeared to be fully awake and yet who had attempted to converse in an altogether unintelligible tongue. She pushed a button which was fastened upon the wall, and after a lapse of some moments, Kabo stepped into the room.

At sight of Kabo the memory of the experience of the last evening came vaguely back into Kiser's mind. He remembered his stroll about Kabo's gardens, his being warned of some seemingly remote danger by a wonderful Martian girl, his fight with Crobe—but why was he thus invalided and bound? "What has happened to me?" he roared in his strange gruff voice, turning his head the better to see the Martian, for, although it may have been mere fancy begot of his recent surroundings, his eyes seemed to be protruding, telescoping and unwieldy.

There was a triumphant gleam in Kabo's eye, and Kiser went cold as he suddenly recalled the text of Delam Oblene's warning and the Martian's threat just as he had lost consciousness. This, together with the recollection of the appearance of his arm upon awakening, sent a thrill of intense horror through him and he strove with desperation to loosen the thongs which held his wrists.

"You must lie still," remarked Kabo calmly, although his tone was not unkind. "Above all things you must not worry and struggle like this; you may do yourself great injury if you continue to do so."

Kiser calmed himself with an effort. "Did you carry out your dastardly design upon me? Did you exchange my physical body for that of a beast as you planned?"

Kabo showed his surprize. "How did you happen to suspect that I might have had designs upon you?" he asked.

When Kiser did not answer but began again to pull and tug frantically in another effort to free himself, the Martian gave some instructions to the nurse, who at once administered a hypodermic.

"You must desist in your efforts to free yourself lest you injure your chance of recovery. I shall see you again when you are stronger." With this Kabo turned and left the room.

KISER saw no more of Kabo for several days, saw no one, in fact, except the nurse, and he was unable to converse with her; but since his talk with the Martian he had been kept under the influence of some

powerful narcotic, either in a deep sleep or so benumbed that he took no interest in himself or his surroundings.

Just how long he was kept under the influence of drugs Kiser never knew, but it must have been for several days; for, when again he gained control of his sensibilities, most of his soreness was gone and he had regained his strength to a marked degree. He could pull and wrench at the straps which bound him without pain or discomfort, but he could not break them. For some moments he strove desperately to free himself, and when quite exhausted he turned his head to look for the nurse. She had left the room, but in his efforts he had uncovered his chest and he noted with horror that it was not his own chest at all! Instead it was very broad and sloped upward at a grotesque and unsightly angle, and was thickly covered with long reddish-black hair!

Then it was that realization of the truth came to him. Kabo had exchanged his intelligence for that of a huge marb! Here was he, his soul, his intelligence, his individuality, occupying the physical body of a filthy beast!

Stunned and horrified by the realization of this terrible truth, he ground his huge strong teeth in impotent rage. He longed to strike Kabo just such a blow as he had struck Crobe; he could picture the large but comparatively frail Martian crumpling before the force of his mighty muscles and he strove with renewed energy to free himself. Surely no Martian bond could hold him; him whose mighty blow had crushed in the skull of a marb! But, alas!—and the thought came to him with sickening horror—he no longer possessed the sinews of an Earthman! Physically he was a marb although he possessed the mentality of a man! Was ever any poor creature treated with such fearful injustice? His mind writhed in an agony of wrath and he struggled with desperation at the bonds which held his wrists and ankles. They held, but surely they could not withstand such violence for long! Some day they would break and then he would rend Kabo limb from limb. This was such an exceptional case as to make murder a virtue! And Kiser raged on, tugging, wrenching, snarling, and foaming at the mouth until forced to desist from sheer exhaustion.

The nurse re-entered the room, and at sight of her he again flew into a convulsive rage, swearing, biting, and struggling against the straitjacket. The nurse drew back in fright but secured a long pointed strap from her handbag and approaching the bed struck Kiser a stinging lash across his thighs.

Surprized and outraged, Kiser desisted for the moment to stare with wonder and resentment at the Martian girl. Apparently she was not overjoyed at being special nurse to a marb and she intended to enforce a certain degree of discipline even if it required coercive measures to do so. Evidently she had been chosen for this duty because she did not speak English, and undoubtedly she was ignorant of the fact that the creature before her was other than the beastly marb he appeared to be.

She seemed more frightened than relieved, however, at the expression in Kiser's eye as he looked at her now, and running quickly across the room, she again pushed the button with which she had previously summoned Kabo.

At sight of his malefactor as he entered the room accompanied by his assistant, Anhul Pilluth, Kiser was so overcome with rage that he could not speak. For a moment he lay and glared with intense hatred at the two of them, and then with all his strength he pulled and twisted at the restraining straitjacket. The leather-like straps creaked and stretched un-

der his efforts, but they held fast. At length he recovered his voice and hurled at Kabo a most violent imprecation, stating in no uncertain terms just what he intended to do when he should succeed in making his escape.

"You certainly have worked yourself up to a most frightful amuck," said Kabo calmly after he had dismissed the nurse. "The marb brain and the Earthly temperament work beautifully together, I see, to say nothing of the beautiful body I have given you; a wonderful improvement over your former self, I call it. Go ahead and struggle if you must; you could not release yourself in a dozen years and it will do you no harm now. I am sure it would be useless to tell you to desist, for you are now equipped with the brain of a marb and you will find it more difficult to control yourself than formerly, if that is possible."

"You are a liar! I have my own brain, although you devils have given me a marb's body!"

"Oh, no. You have Nebond's brain. Only the pineal glands and a portion of the solar plexus were transplanted. It was your *mind* which I interchanged; not your brains. The brain is but the medium of contact of the mind with the physical body. The more important seat of the ego or consciousness is in the solar plexus, through which functions the so-called subconscious mind. By means of the pineal body we are enabled to remember past events, but we recall them through the functioning of the physical brain; therefore I transferred that organ so that you could remember your past rather than that of Nebond as would have been the case had I not done this interchange."

"You are a fiend! What right have you to tamper with my soul, or that of the beast if he has one? I came here from another planet and you take me in under the pretense of hospitality merely to take advantage of my confidence to perpetrate upon me a crime ten thousand times more heinous than murder! You introduced me into a world in which you say crime has been abolished, and at that very moment you were formulating a crime unprecedented in its horror! What do you hope to gain by this? What benefit can you or your planet possibly derive from such a gruesome experiment as this?"

"Alas, what you say is only too true, and I regret very much to have betrayed your confidence; but the end justifies the means. I have sacrificed you to science and you should feel honored. I owe you an apology, however, for having misjudged your motive with reference to my niece."

"You owe me far more than an apology! What has happened to my body? The marb who possesses my body had better be guarded carefully, for I shall hold you responsible for any mishap which may occur to him and in any way injure my physical body."

"Why should you worry about what may or may not happen to that which was yours but is now the body of a marb? The body which you have here is now yours; the other one is his."

Kiser was fast losing control of his temper. "I shall not suffer this state to continue. You have had your experiment at my expense, and now I demand that you restore me to my rightful body!"

"And destroy an experiment of which I have dreamed all of my life? Hardly! Surely, Earthman, you do not consider your puny little physical body of more importance than the scientific knowledge to be derived from the furtherance of this experiment! I was not surprized that the marb objected to the thing, and by the way, he was even more bitter than you; when he awoke and learned the truth his lamentations were most terrible to behold. He has been kept under the influence of the Strotan

Ray until the present, because we have no straitjacket strong enough to hold him. Perhaps in my old age, when I have watched the progress of the experiment to my heart's content, I shall restore you to your Earth form if you can sustain yourself and if Nebond can sustain your Earth-body for that long. At present, however, I shall make no such change; I have started and I shall see this interesting experiment through to the end, however wicked you may think me for so doing."

"You are not only a scoundrel but a coward!" roared Kiser in a rage. "If you do not undo this thing you have done to me, neither you nor I will live to be old; you may rest assured of that!"

Anhul Pilluth had stood all the while, his face expressionless, apparently desiring to take no further part in the tragic drama which was being enacted at the expense of the Earthling. Kiser imagined that he saw the stamp of disapproval at the jeering remarks of Kabo as he watched the face of the younger Martian, but he could not be certain.

Pilluth was a much larger man than Kabo and his face was very intellectual, if an Earthling might judge rightly; his eyes seemed milder and less domineering than Kabo's, and Kiser involuntarily wondered if this man did not already regret his part in the ghastly affair.

"Nothing would please me more," said Kiser as the two Martians left the room, "than to see your assistant, who appears much more intelligent than you—than to watch him while he transfers your soul to the body of—of an earthworm!"

He felt, however, that nothing could be more wasted than efforts to taunt Kabo; he appeared to have no resentment, no emotion whatsoever but his insatiable desire to perfect his scientific supremacy and—oh yes! his hatred of Earth and all things Earthly.

Kiser regretted his hasty remark, which had betrayed the fact that he foreknew Kabo's intentions with regard to him, lest it might have caused him to suspect Delam Oblene's real mission in the garden; for he felt that otherwise Kabo was ignorant of the fact that his niece knew of his plans or suspected the fate to which he had subjected the Earthling.

If only Delam Oblene might find him her influence might be brought to bear upon Kabo and prevail upon him to right the wrong he had done.

He wondered what had become of his sweetheart and her father but dared not inquire of them to Kabo for fear that the Martian might subject them also to a fate like his own. If only he might escape and go to them! But no, he could not bear the thought of Ruth's seeing him in this state! Perhaps she was even now awaiting his return in an agony of suspense, wondering, hoping, praying; yet not dreaming the dreadful fate that had befallen him.

And yet it must be remembered that Kiser's intelligence was functioning through the sluggish brain of Nebond, the marb, and therefore he was incapable of the extremes of emotion which he might have suffered had he had a human brain; that is probably the reason that the next few weeks of mental anguish, humiliation, and despair did not drive him mad.

Had Delam Oblene forgotten her promise or had Kabo told her that Kiser had escaped and returned to Earth? Perhaps she suspected the fate that had befallen him but had been unable to find him. For some twenty days now he had not seen Kabo and all of this time he had lain bound as he had found himself upon awakening, but he managed to exercise his muscles somewhat each day. The nurse had left him now and only came to bring his meals and feed him twice each day.

One evening just at twilight the door of his room opened softly and

someone entered. Thinking it was the nurse returning to perform some unfinished duty Kiser did not turn for some moments, but when, after a time, he heard no further sound he opened his eyes suddenly to see Delam Oblene gazing sorrowfully down upon him. At first the sight of the Martian girl caused him a distinct thrill of hopeful joy, but this was immediately supplanted by a sense of shame that she should behold the grotesqueness of his appearance and witness the evidence of his complete defeat at the hands of Kabo.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" whispered Delam Oblene, her voice trembling with emotion, her eyes tearful and sympathetic. "This is a terrible outrage! I shall demand that you be liberated at once! If the council should learn of this outrage, Kabo would be severely punished; he will not dare defy me."

"I can not express, Delam Oblene, how glad I am to see you!" faltered Kiser. "For days and days you have been the only ray of hope that I have dared hold on to. But beware! do not put yourself in Kabo's power; he is the vilest demon in the universe! He will stop at nothing, and it is unsafe to threaten him. He does not know that you are aware of his perfidy; would it not be safer to go at once to the council with the news of his crime than to risk an argument with him? Heaven knows what he might do to you if you antagonize him."

"Oh, no, that would not be fair. We must give him a chance. He will not harm me; such things are not done upon Mars. He would not have dared to injure you had he known that there were others in your party. Just now they are making exhaustive search for you and Kabo is greatly worried. He told me that Crobe injured you very severely in the garden and that he feared your reason might be permanently impaired when you recovered, but enjoined me to say nothing about your having been here lest we be blamed for allowing harm to come to you. I do not know what disposition he intends to make of your body, but I rather fear he intends to kill Nebond so that your body may be found and accounted for as soon as the scars of the operation have disappeared under his treatment. That is, in his judgment, necessary, since I chanced to see you, which was contrary to his plans. To kill Nebond, you see, would not be murder, for Nebond is only a marb. Had I not accidentally come upon the two of you in the garden archway and had there not been others from Earth to tell of your disappearance, Kabo could have kept both bodies and observed the results of his art to his heart's content."

"But my friends — what of them? Are they safe? Are they not in Kabo's power?"

"They are quite safe. They are the guests of Frambrozo Himnun, whose father in his Earth life was none other than your own Benjamin Franklin."

"Thank heaven for that! I have been in an agony of suspense for them. But what do you mean by his Earth life? Have others come from Earth to Mars?"

"In spirit only. Your party is the only exception. Do you not remember what was told you regarding the reincarnation upon Masovada?"

"Yes indeed! I remember clearly now, but my marb brain functions but slowly."

"I must not tarry longer. I shall go at once to Kabo and demand that you be released from your horrible predicament."

"Whatever else you may do, Delam Oblene, be careful. Why not go away and broadcast your challenge to him from a distance? Is there not some way in which you may insure yourself against harm?"

"I do not fear my uncle. I shall go to him in person with my ultimatum. There is naught to fear."

Less than an hour after Delam Oblene had taken her leave Kabo entered Kiser's room. Under his arm was that same instrument he had used so effectually upon that memorable night in the garden and upon his lips was a smile that might have meant menace or chagrin.

"It is unfortunate," he said, "that in our stroll about my garden on the evening of your arrival we chanced to meet my niece and still more unfortunate that she chanced to overhear the discussion of our plans."

Kiser attempted to smile, but as the mouth of a marb is not made to accommodate the effort to smile, it is to be feared that the thing he really did was to grimace horribly.

"I can not understand," he said, "how you are able to construe that as a misfortune. Delam Oblene has demanded my release at your hands and you dare not refuse that demand for obvious reasons."

"Remarkable reasoning that! And with the brain of a marb too! Well it *is* most unfortunate from *her* standpoint. She shall be punished for her insubordination and my experiment shall proceed as I have planned it. I shall not desist until I shall have mated you with a female marb and made the necessary observations regarding the mentality of the offspring."

"Then your experiment will fail!" roared Kiser in a rage. "Whatever you may do to my body, my soul is that of a man and a gentleman; I will remain as I am forever rather than consort with beasts!"

He strained again at the thongs which bound him to the bed. If only one of them would yield he could quickly free himself and then he would avenge himself upon this demon in a very gratifying manner. He felt his face go hot and he knew that it had attained that fiery red which he had twice seen in a marb running amuck. He continued to struggle until his reason began to return, when he gave up the effort and lay quite still.

Kabo smiled approvingly. "Wonderful self-control for a marb! You can run amuck and recover your reason rather more quickly than the average marb. Now I must move you; I shall give you only enough of the Ray to benumb your senses, for you must walk and do my bidding; it would be far too difficult to move you otherwise, for now I must work alone."

There was a slight buzzing sound as the tiny motor of the Strotan Ray machine was started, and Kiser experienced the same sensation as that which had overcome him in Kabo's garden. There was a whirring and buzzing in his ears and he seemed to be traveling through space, until at length he found himself standing upright, clinging for support to an ill-kept suspended bed in an almost barren room with one barred window and a stone floor.

Beyond the window and well out of his reach stood Kabo, and upon the wall just a few inches from the opening—the window had no glass—was a large mirror. One glance at the reflection of himself in this mirror and Kiser uttered a cry of horror. For weeks he had known he had the physical body of a marb, but when he saw his reflection in the mirror the horror of the situation struck him with such force that he was terrified by the gravity of his fearful predicament. He stared impotently at his reflection and then, with a scream of anguish, flung himself against the bars in an effort to reach his malefactor. These bars were very strong, however, and he only received several cuts and bruises for his trouble.

Recoiling from the rebound impetus given him by his contact with the barred window, he staggered back a few paces, but recovered his equilibrium and advanced upon his enemy again, when he chanced to see upon one of the panels a long wriggling vermin which he had injured; it looked

for all the world like an earthworm and, having a natural loathing for such things, Kiser stopped short, desisting in his efforts to reach his enemy rather than touch it again.

Kabo laughed. "Oh, you need not shudder at such creatures as that! It is the lowest form of animal life we have upon Masovada, but, at that, he doesn't have as far to go to reach your stage in evolution as you must yet go to reach perfection. He isn't so far behind you as you might fancy, but if your friend Nebond should chance to see him he would eat him with great relish!"

10. Nebond

For some weeks Nebond had been allowed the freedom of a small, well-constructed enclosure in the central and isolated portion of Kabo's estate. No one except the scientist himself ever went near this part of the grounds, as the privacy he had always maintained was respected by all and there was little likelihood that this part of the estate would be trespassed upon.

Nebond did not know what had been done to him—he had been horribly mistreated; his beautiful and shapely body had been transformed into this grotesque, white, naked, slender one. Perhaps he had been very sick during the time which he so vaguely remembered, during which Kabo had ministered to him; for his features were fearfully distorted and his eyes drawn back into his forehead and fixed there! When he viewed himself in the water basin which Kabo had provided for him inside the hovel where he slept he would fly into a rage and pound himself violently upon the chest with growling lamentations.

Gradually, however, he became somewhat reconciled to this objectionable state of affairs, but his enforced solitude was making him very ill-tempered. He was becoming a cross, lazy, slothful marb—a marb with the physical body of an Earth-being, but a marb nevertheless.

One day, quite by accident, Nebond discovered that he possessed far greater physical strength than he had formerly had. Inside the enclosure where he was imprisoned grew a small tree, perhaps three inches in diameter at the ground and about three feet tall, and this he chanced to grapple with while at the height of one of his frenzied outbursts; and to his surprize and delight it came up by the roots!

The muscles of Joseph Kiser, developed upon Earth where much more physical strength is necessary than upon Mars, had potentialities little dreamed of by their erstwhile owner, and having received this hint of his unsuspected prowess, he next tackled the hydrant, which likewise yielded to his efforts and came away from its anchorage, with resultant inundation.

With his scant clothing thoroughly wet and his efforts to stop the flow of water unsuccessful, Nebond's mild frenzy became a raging amuck and in utter abandon he flung himself against the wall of his enclosure, crushing it as though it were an eggshell, and the infuriated marb stepped out—free!

Thus encouraged, he proceeded to vent his wrath upon everything within his reach. The walls about the grounds he laid low, uprooting other small trees and shrubbery, destroying the stalls or enclosures for protection of many of the other animals, and striking boldly out at length across the suburban district of Sendos, destroying everything which would yield to his strength, until he came to the canal. There his frenzy of rage passed off quite as suddenly as it had appeared, and here he was discovered by Himnun, Ruth and Professor Hervy.

Vaguely and without a great deal of interest Nebond wondered who these creatures were and why they

had approached him. Perhaps they were representatives of the Council coming to reckon with him for his recent dreadful amuck? Should he submit to the authorities as he had always done heretofore? No; there was a spark of something in him now that bade him defy the authorities. Now that his amuck was ended he would not harm them unless they attempted to harm him, but if they did that—well, they would have to take the consequences!

The three creatures had drawn nearer now and were conversing in some strange dialect. They seemed to be addressing him—but no, perhaps not, for he could not understand them. He noted casually that two of them were horrid hollow-eyed beings like himself; and yes—he was quite certain now that they were addressing him, but what could they be saying?

He condescended now to give them some of his coveted attention. He saw or sensed that the smaller of the three was a girl. Ah! Kabo had promised him a mate; perhaps this was the one. He would have much preferred one such as he had had in the forest before his capture, but this one had features like his own as reflected in the drinking-bowl inside his hovel, and perhaps Kabo had captured her for him. At any rate there was no other to be had and this one would do.

Nebond was convinced of the truth of his surmise when the girl approached him without fear and began stroking his hand caressingly, although he could understand no word of what she was saying; perhaps she was even now begging to be allowed to accompany him back to his hovel!

Ruth was somewhat frightened when this mad creature snatched her up in his arms and ran away from the spot, but even yet she could not bring herself to believe that Joseph Kiser would harm her. For several years she had known and trusted him; she recalled his gentleness, his gallantry, his great love for her, and, although she realized that he was now quite mad, she could not associate him with any degree of villainy despite the evidence to the contrary. She talked to him, pleaded with him, begged him to answer and say that he had not forgotten her—little realizing that this, the physical body of her lover, now housed the soul of a vile and savage beast whose physical brain, though in itself a human brain, could no more respond to Kiser's love for her than that of a dead person can respond.

The comparatively slight Martian gravitation offered but little antagonism to the creature's Earth-developed sinews, and soon they arrived at Kabo's garden. Here Nebond stopped short — his hovel and the enclosure which encircled it were demolished. Nebond had forgotten that he had destroyed these walls which had held him prisoner, and now that he was returning with a mate for himself there was no place for him to take her!

He stood Ruth upon the ground and stood for a moment viewing the ruins all about him. What was he to do? Should he attempt to rebuild the hovel? Oh no! He would not do that! Should he dare to defy the authorities and return to the forest from which he had been taken? Yes, perhaps he should, but just here his planning was interrupted by the sight of food—and Nebond was hungry.

Ruth smiled bravely up at him. "Joseph, dear, why did you take me from my friends? Why, oh why, do you not speak to me, Joseph?" Then she uttered a scream of horror and fell in a dead faint, for even as she spoke Nebond had reached far upward, seized a long wriggling vermin between his fingers and was eating it before her eyes!

Nebond surveyed the still form of the girl without interest. When he

finished his scant repast, he picked her up again none too gently and bolted away toward the canal, instinctively bound for the forest where he had been captured some months previously.

11. Transported

For many days Joseph Kiser had resided in one of the several small hovels which stood in the central isolated portion of Kabo's estate, his mind a maze of agonizing doubt regarding the probable fate of Delam Oblene, and his hope of deliverance at her hands dwindling as day succeeded day and began to number themselves as weeks and yet there came no evidence of the success of her intervention in his behalf.

One morning he awoke with a feeling of intense drowsiness beguiling him to further slumber. A groan, however, from somewhere near caused him to open his eyes listlessly, expecting to see the roof and four walls of his hut but he was surprized into full wakefulness, as a vision of clean blue sky met his gaze. It was not the murky, almost black Martian sky, and his first thought was that all of those harrowing Martian experiences had been but dreams and that he was yet upon the Earth, but one glance at his own hairy, huge-chested body sufficed to quell this suspicion; and then came the groan again.

He looked about him to discern the source of this noise and was elated to find himself lying upon the ground amidst a rather dense growth of shrubbery which waved gently with the motion of the damp, heavy, rather oppressive atmosphere.

Attempting to spring to his feet he was surprized to find that his limbs were numb and sluggish and his body seemed very heavy, as though a great weight were tied about his waist.

He arose with some difficulty. There was that characteristic ringing in his ears which revealed the fact that once again the Strotan Ray had been employed to subdue his consciousness, and the atmosphere seemed almost as though it would strangle or even drown him; his head swam, the scenery spun around, and he clutched for support at a tall bush.

When he had secured a firm hold all his giddiness suddenly left him and he emitted a cry of agony as there shot through the hand with which he held the bush a paroxysm of pain! He quickly released his hold and staggered backward, then recovered his equilibrium and stood for some moments silently regarding his aching palm. The weed which he had clutched appeared innocent enough, being some four feet tall with a stalk about three inches thick at the ground, where it was pink but gradually blended into the husky green color of the branches and foliage, the latter being a five-pronged leaf somewhat resembling the human hand, and as it waved in the gentle breeze it seemed to beckon with mock hospitality.

Again came the groan he had heard before, and turning quickly, he beheld the inert bulk of another huge marb lying in the shrubbery behind him and only about ten paces distant.

Standing there aghast, his mind but barely recovered from the effect of the Strotan Ray with which he had been anesthetized and transported to this spot, he was for the moment bewildered; then he recalled Kabo's threat to mate him with a female marb in order to observe the manner of offspring such a pair would beget. Undoubtedly this threat had been executed and now he was here—wheresoever that might be—in company with a potential mate to abide upon some unfrequented land and propagate a race of beings which would satisfy the Martian's craving for scientific observation!

Kiser stood for some moments gazing in half stupefaction at the inert animal, and as he stood she began to arouse. She raised herself upon one

elbow and looked dazedly about; at sight of Kiser she uttered a growl of fear and made an effort to get upon her feet with the evident intention of retreat, but she lost her footing and slumped helplessly to the ground again.

She lay there gasping and trembling, her protruding eyes dilated with fear, and Kiser thought that she looked remarkably like the one he had seen in Kabo's garden; but that was not strange, as he had seen but one female marb—she might even be the same and perhaps she feared him because he had slain her mate, if indeed she had intelligence enough to know so much.

At any rate she was only a female marb and he was not interested in any further speculation regarding her; so he turned about at once and walked deliberately away.

For some distance he went through shrubbery such as that amongst which he had awakened; then he came suddenly to the border of a dense forest, the trees of which were very large and grew somewhat higher than those in the forest east of Keto. The foliage, too, was not nearly so large, although somewhat larger than any he had seen upon the Earth.

Kiser wondered what remote part of Mars this could be, where the vegetation was so luxuriant and the atmosphere so much less rare, and where as yet there had been no evidence of a canal. The planetary magnetism, too, seemed much greater than at Keto, for even now Kiser was quite exhausted and found it necessary to stop and rest.

There was a distinct line of demarcation between the forest and the area of shrubbery, and Kiser wondered vaguely why that should be so. There was no evidence of there ever having been a forest fire, and yet the forest ended abruptly where the shrubbery began.

Although Kiser knew that this could not be the forest near the city of Keto, yet he felt elated at being free, and should Kabo attempt to return and observe the result of his experiment he would now be in position to offer him a warm reception.

Having rested, Kiser plunged on into the forest, half expecting to come at any moment upon one of the large Martian canals. He had walked perhaps a mile when again the forest ended almost as abruptly as it had done upon the other side, but it did not end at the shore of a canal nor yet another area of shrubbery, but instead there stretched out before him a vast expanse of barren sand-covered surface which glittered almost as white as snow in the sunlight.

The heat had grown oppressive as he neared this barren area, and as he was again much fatigued, he again sat down to rest himself before venturing farther upon his tour of exploration. He had not noticed the heat before and wondered that it should be so much more intense here than in the depth of the forest; yet the fact remained and he found his rest so unrefreshing that he remained longer than previously.

JUST as he was upon the point of arising he saw the huge marb whom he had left behind approach the sand ocean at some distance from him. She did not see him and he deferred his advance, intending to allow her to proceed without knowledge of his presence.

She had evidently arrived before him, for she showed no evidence of fatigue as she advanced and strode firmly out upon the sand-covered area apparently quite as intent as himself upon exploration of the land upon which Kabo had marooned them.

For ten—perhaps twenty—paces she advanced without mishap; then she seemed to pause, but thinking better of it again went forward. Just two more steps she took, then stopped dead-still for an instant, turned and attempted to retrace her steps, but

before she could even so much as regain her equilibrium she began to sink in the loose sand about her feet! She attempted to throw herself forward upon her face, but the sand upon which she stood seemed to sway like the waves upon a ropy, viscid fluid with encrusted top. She made repeated attempts to withdraw her feet from the sand but could not do so.

Seeing that she was sinking deeper and deeper and was quite unable to escape, Kiser hastened toward her, but before he had reached the spot another creature appeared from the depths of the forest and, tossing a long rope, dexterously lassoed the sinking marb and was pulling with all his strength in an effort to rescue her when Kiser reached his side.

Kiser caught up the end of the rope and assisted in the towing in, the task being one which taxed the strength of both.

The creature which had come to the rescue of the marb was about six feet tall, walked upright like a human being and his physical build was indeed much more human-like than that of either of the others. His legs and arms were long and muscular and clothed with the well-tanned skin of some animal; his skin was copper-colored and quite bare, with chest and body shaped quite like that of an Earth-man, though the face and head were covered with long red hair which hung down to his shoulders; he had eyes that did not protrude, and a large sneering mouth equipped with strong yellow teeth. One glance sufficed to convince one that he was of some savage human species.

So intent was he upon his duties of rescue that he was not aware of Kiser's presence behind him and when the huge marb had been dragged to the more solid sand nearer the edge of the forest the creature drew a long knife from his belt and with a savage growl sprang toward her.

The marb evaded her rescuer with surprizing agility, but he braced himself for another rush, when Kiser caught his upraised hand from behind and snatched the knife from his fingers.

Taken completely by surprize, the savage creature turned to face this new enemy, but the sight of Kiser brandishing the knife and the other marb approaching him from the side, both much larger than and quite as fierce-looking as himself, discouraged his making a renewed attack, although had he but known it he might easily have vanquished both; and he slunk away into the forest, leaving both knife and rope in the possession of his enemies.

When the beast had gone the marb backed away from Kiser in evident fear and distrust.

"You need not fear me," he said, forgetful that she could not understand his English; "I shall not harm you in the least."

When he had spoken, the marb stopped and gasped in astonishment.

"Joseph Kiser!" she said, as if pronouncing the words with much difficulty.

Now it was Kiser's turn to be astonished. He remembered suddenly that marbs can not speak any of the Earth languages—how did it happen that this one knew his name?

"Yes, I am Joseph Kiser, but how do you happen to know my name? Can you speak English?"

The marb answered him in the Martian tongue, of which he could understand no word. He shook his head and tried to grin, but he must have bared his teeth instead, for the creature stepped back in evident fright.

She soon recovered herself, however, and seemed to be pondering; she essayed to speak several times as if groping for words, speaking each time in the Martian language, although she appeared to be trying to recall another.

After several such attempts at speech this creature bent upon Kiser

a gaze more appealing than savage and said: "Delam Oblene."

"What is that?" he asked, his interest quickening. "Do you have a message for me from Delam Oblene?"

But again the marb was stumped. She appeared to be able to say only those two things which Kiser could understand—pronounce his own name and that of Delam Oblene.

Of a sudden Kiser understood. This was indeed Juak and she was trying to denounce him for having killed her mate. Perhaps her mention of Delam Oblene was to impart that that young lady had informed her regarding the manner of Crobe's death.

SEEING that conversation with this creature was impossible, Kiser turned and strode back into the forest. And when he again became exhausted and stopped, he noted that the air was quite cold. He had noted ofttimes before the very marked difference in temperature between the Martian day and night, but here was a vast difference brought about by only a few moments' walk! Oh well, it was useless to wonder where Kabo had marooned him, for even if he knew, yet he would be none the wiser, since he knew nothing of any part of Mars save Keto—and very little of that. This marked change in temperature, however, puzzled him considerably; how was such a change possible? And why had the innocent-appearing sand proved to be a treacherous mire?

At length his sluggish marb brain reached the correct solution: the sand-covered area was a great lava lake which had cooled somewhat upon the surface and near the margin of the forest, the heat underneath causing the surface to crumble into a sand-like powder, while underneath the surface and farther out there was only molten liquid lava or some similar substance. This would account for the phenomenon he had witnessed and also for the intense heat at the forest's edge.

The sun had sunk quite low and Kiser began to look about him for some place to spend the night. He found nothing which might suffice for a shelter, and the cold was becoming more and more noticeable; so, after perhaps a half-hour of futile search, he retraced his steps to the margin of the lava lake.

Upon several occasions he had surprized a number of small animals as they fed, which gave him a very valuable clue as to the edible fruits, and, being hungry, he ate freely of a certain variety resembling the apple.

It was quite palatable, and when he had eaten his fill he felt as much refreshed as though he had had beefsteak or eggs.

Darkness came with a startling suddenness—or, more correctly, the sun disappeared quickly and without twilight—for even after the sun had set there was a most brilliant moonlight.

Looking upward to discover the source of this light, Kiser gasped in astonishment, for directly overhead there was an enormous satellite. It was large—much too large to be Phobus; in fact, it seemed many hundreds of times larger than Phobus had appeared upon that memorable night in Kabo's garden!

So! He had been transported to some other planet? Indeed, Kabo had taken no chances whatsoever upon his victim's escaping! Well, since this was most certainly not Mars, what planet was it? Could he be upon Venus? No, for Venus had no such satellite, and, too, he had been led to believe that Venus was shrouded in clouds. The day had been so short that he was sure this was a very small planet; yet what planet it might be he could not guess.

This was the most severe blow of all. Upon Mars he might always have some hope for his ultimate deliverance from the horrible curse which

had been placed upon him, but since Kabo had taken the precaution to maroon him upon some other planet the situation was hopeless indeed.

He had chosen a spot comfortably near the lava lake, where he lay down and tried to sleep, but his mind was so filled with despair that for more than an hour sleep did not come; so he lay staring upward in almost unthinking agony, the enormous satellite hanging mockingly directly above him as if for no other purpose than to remind him of his misery and despair. And directly overhead it remained. The sun had moved rapidly across the horizon and yet this satellite continued to hang directly overhead.

At length the center of the immense satellite appeared to have opened and a broad stairway descended to within a few feet of his outstretched hands but yet quite beyond his reach. He sprang for it with a mighty effort, clutched the lower rung with the tips of his fingers, swayed for a moment, making herculean efforts to hold fast, and then fell.

Kiser awoke with a start to find the sun peeping from the horizon where it had just risen. He glanced quickly upward and—yes, there was still the huge satellite or planet in exactly the same position as when he had first seen it!

Since this planet had not changed its position and remained always directly overhead, then it was clear that the sphere upon which he stood did not rotate upon an axis, but instead it revolved about that other, larger planet with always the same surface toward the planet about which it revolved.

Thus it was that Kiser reasoned he had been marooned upon a satellite of some one of the primary planets; and, since the period of sunshine had been but a few hours, he knew that he must be upon Phobus, the larger and rapid-moving satellite of Mars.

How Kabo had contrived to get him upon Phobus he did not know. Perhaps he had stolen the *Arrogant;* he might easily have done so in case the craft had been left unguarded. At any rate Kiser was here and now he must find food and some manner of abode to protect him from the chill of the heavy, damp atmosphere and from the ferocious beasts which peopled the planet.

He still had the long sharp knife which he had taken from the "Rescue-man," as he had named the creature whom he encountered at the lava lake, but the animal's rope he had left with the marb; he hoped she had had intelligence enough to make use of it.

With this knife he began hewing down such of the smaller forest trees as would best suit his purpose and fashioned them into a rude cabin, stopping the cracks with mud from a small forest stream near by.

To complete this shelter required many of the short days and some of the nights. During this time he had seen nothing further of the marb nor of the Rescue-man. He subsisted upon the forest fruits and such of the small animals as he was able to catch, the stream near his cabin furnished an ample quantity of icy cold water, and withal he was near enough to the lava lake to make artificial heat unnecessary.

KISER finished the roof of his cabin none too soon, for no sooner had he added the last bit of mud and thatch than there began a slow cold precipitation of mist which was to continue for many days. His rude roof held quite well, however, and inside his one-room cabin it was quite cozy, although the rain had prevented his attempting to make even so much as a bed or a chair in the way of household furniture.

Being kept thus indoors was very irksome, for he had nothing to read, and he wondered if he could read if he did have; the marb's brain not

being equipped with a center controlling the ability to recognize printed characters. He could only lie upon the leaf-covered floor and long for the coming of the sunshine.

For three of the short days and as many nights he had been kept inside by the rain. He was lying half asleep upon the floor of his cabin when suddenly there came a knock at his door. Surprized into full wakefulness he sprang to his feet, drew his knife as a precautionary measure, and carefully opened the door. Juak, the female marb, was standing upon his doorstep!

Angered at this brazen effrontery, Kiser was upon the verge of slamming the door shut in her face, but she was gesticulating frantically and speaking with a great deal of emphasis in an effort to impart some seemingly important information, and although he could not understand her words, he could at least attempt an investigation of that part of the forest she was indicating in an effort to learn what it was which distressed her; so he stepped out and closed the door behind him.

Kiser having signaled his readiness to follow, the marb set out in the direction she had indicated as holding something of rare interest, using the greatest caution to avoid detection by some unseen foe by moving with the greatest stealth—peering from behind trees and moving from one tree to another with great caution.

Seeing that she had had the presence of mind to acquire the Rescueman's rope, which she slung across her shoulder, Kiser respected her attitude of vigilance and did likewise. From tree to tree and from bush to bush they advanced, never more than a few steps apart, until presently the marb halted, assumed an attitude of listening, and put a hand upon Kiser's arm, beckoning him to extreme caution.

For just a moment they waited thus; then Kiser saw one of the Rescue-men emerge from behind a tree trunk and advance to another point of vantage. Soon he saw another and still another; and they were moving stealthily toward his cabin, each carrying an armful of large yellow fruit resembling the tomato!

There were four of them and they were slinking upon his domain presumably to poison him! Kiser's first thought was to let them try in vain, but he feared that they might destroy his cabin, which was none too strongly built; so he impulsively stepped out from his hiding-place and confronted them with drawn knife.

Taken completely by surprize, the four creatures turned in their tracks as one and beat an inglorious retreat, leaving four small heaps of the tomato-like fruit lying upon the ground. Kiser stooped and picked up one of these and examined it critically. There was certainly nothing wrong with its appearance and it looked as though it might taste delicious. Perhaps, after all, the Rescue-men were trying to be friendly and had only intended to secure his good-will by an offering of rare food.

The marb, however, appeared to think otherwise; for when she saw him handling this fruit she uttered a hoarse screech and motioned for him to drop it.

He could see no reason for haste in disposing of the fruit, but when she continued to protest he drew back his long arm and dashed it against a near-by tree.

When he had done this, the marb uttered a cry of alarm and fled, beckoning him to follow. Thinking her fears quite probably due to superstition, however, he did not hasten away, and when he had stood his ground but a moment his eyes closed with a severe paroxysm of pain, while his nose and throat began burning as though a red-hot iron had been thrust into his nostrils.

He staggered, coughing and gasp-

ing, away from the spot, at a loss to account for the extreme pain in his eyes, throat, and lungs. He tried to open his eyes in order to see some avenue of escape, but they were tightly closed by muscle spasm and it was impossible to see at all. However, he soon felt the guiding hand of the marb upon his arm and he walked beside her in an agony of pain, which was not so great but that he pondered upon the magnanimity of this beast who was thus aiding the slayer of her mate—or was it brazen grossness prompting her to actually court the marb who had vanquished her husband?

She guided him to the door of his cabin and assisted him inside, but when, after some moments, he succeeded in opening his eyes she was gone.

She had not been courting his attention then, after all? What manner of marb was this which would go to such length to rescue a stranger—an enemy—and then quietly slink away when the danger no longer threatened? The idea which Kabo and Delam Oblene had given him regarding these animals, as well as his own experience with two of them, was indicative of their viciousness and vileness of temper rather than of any gentleness or amiability. He could not understand any such action upon the part of the mate of the slain Crobe, unless——

Heavens! Could it be possible that Kabo had been so vile as to perform his horrid operation upon someone else—and had he sent some Martian girl here to mate with Kiser after having transplanted her soul into the body of Juak, the marb?

But no; if she were a Martian she could probably speak some Earth language, since all Martians had lived on Earth in a previous incarnation and could remember the incidents of their Earth life. Yet there was the case of his nurse who could speak neither English, French, nor German.

And yet, reflected Kiser, the Martians remembered their previous incarnations by virtue of a certain brain center which served as a special medium of contact between the ego and the conscious mind, enabling them to recall their pre-natal experiences, and if a Martian were given the physical brain of a marb which has no such center, then most certainly such a person could not recall his terrestrial experiences nor could he speak any other language than Martian.

Again, this creature had known and spoken his name as well as that of—of——

"By God!" Kiser sprang to his feet in great agitation. "That is Delam Oblene!"

12. Abandoned

RUTH HERVY regained consciousness with a start. She gasped with amazement and shock as she was suddenly immersed in icy cold water!

She opened her eyes to find that her abductor had plunged boldly into the canal and was swimming toward the opposite shore with her upon his shoulder. And her remonstration made not the slightest impression upon him. She begged, pleaded, scolded and threatened, but he continued on his way with apparent unconcern until they reached the bank, where he placed her upon her feet while he shook himself and squeezed some of the water from his clothing, then lightly swung her across his shoulder again and entered the forest.

By this time Ruth was trembling from fright as well as cold. She struggled to free herself from this madman by swinging her feet downward, disturbing the equilibrium with which he had balanced her. He overcame this movement with a slight effort and held her more firmly. She continued her struggles with renewed energy and at length succeeded in freeing one of her arms from his embrace; then with a frenzy of fear and

anger she slapped his face with all her strength.

Angered at this evidence of insubordination, Nebond quickly stood the girl upon her feet and faced her with bared teeth and an animal-like growl, and then as she recoiled from him in horror and dismay, he seized her by the throat and shook her until she again lost consciousness!

When again she opened her eyes it was at the sound of voices. Strange voices they were and in the Martian tongue. That language being strictly phonetic and very simple and easy to speak, she had learned to understand it quite well, although she spoke it very poorly.

Nebond placed her upon her feet again, but she was too weak to stand. She staggered weakly and fell to a sitting posture, staring with renewed horror at the sight before her.

More than a dozen ferocious-looking marbs stood surveying the pair with their pointed ears extended forward and their eyes telescoping back and forth in an attitude of hostile inquiry.

"You should remember me!" roared her abductor. "I am Nebond. I lived among you for years! One day Kabo had me captured and carried away; now I have come back. I have came back to stay. I do not fear Kabo! Do you hear me? Harken: Nebond does not fear Kabo! Let Kabo come and try again to capture me and I shall rend him limb from limb! Nebond is very strong, stronger than the strongest among you; even stronger than you, Pleck, and I have come back to the forest to rule as your king! If Pleck resists my ascension to supremacy Nebond will kill Pleck. Pleck must now abdicate, for Nebond is going to be your king!"

There was a hoarse growl from the largest among the marbs and he stepped forward fearlessly. "You are both a liar and a fool!" he screeched. "You are not Nebond and you are not stronger than I; neither are you going to cause me to abdicate in your favor! You are some strange creature of absurd appearance whom we never saw before; you are not one of us! Go away or I shall kill you even as I have killed Klegg and Beon and Huff and Kibe and Jamon and Ruel and Himbo and Jutt and Herb and Parlo! Go away before I run amuck!"

"Yes, many of these I remember," replied Nebond; "some you may have killed since my departure. And you have failed to mention Lamo. Lamo was my father and though I hated him and was glad when you killed him, it placed a stigma upon my family name which I am going to wipe out this day by killing you. I shall not only kill you but all your mates and your children as well!"

"Beware! Pleck is about to run amuck; and when Pleck runs amuck Pleck never maims nor cripples—Pleck always kills!"

"Nebond does not fear your amuck! This day Pleck shall die!"

Ruth was astonished at hearing the creature who she thought was Joseph Kiser speaking in the Martian tongue, without hesitancy or brogue, just as though he had never spoken any other language. At first she had surmised that Kiser must have lived among these marbs and learned the language from them, but now it seemed that he was both unknown and unwelcome here. His reference to Kabo escaped her quite because the name sounded so much like those of the marbs mentioned that she surmised the reference was applied to a marb, and no thought of the scientist entered her mind.

Pleck was beginning to foam at the mouth. "I shall now show you who is going to be king of the marbs!" he roared and bounded forward, his huge form a great mass of fury and hatred.

Nebond nimbly side-stepped this attack and sprang forward in an attempt to obtain a hold upon the

other's throat. He missed, however, and as his shoulder came in contact with the body of the huge marb the beast closed his strong teeth upon his shoulder, having missed his throat by the narrowest margin.

Again and again Nebond tried to obtain a hold upon his antagonist's throat and as many times he was foiled in the attempt. He evaded the brute's efforts to sever his jugular vein by his superior strength alone, and he was fast becoming exhausted by his strenuous efforts in this atmosphere which did not contain enough oxygen to supply his needs on account of his very limited lung capacity, while his antagonist seemed as fresh and sturdy as at their first moment of encounter.

Nebond was beginning to realize that his present physique was not built for fighting as the marbs fight; his mouth was too small and his neck too short to use his teeth to advantage, and too, the other marb had an added advantage in his greater reach and ability as well as his huge chest and consequent greater lung capacity.

Nebond's head began to grow dizzy —not from any injury Pleck had been able to inflict but from lack of oxygen. His breath came in quick frothy gasps and his knees sagged. At length Pleck secured a hold upon his throat and the scenery spun round, his vision blurred, his lungs ached and had Pleck released his hold just then Nebond would have begged for mercy; but Pleck did not desist: his hold tightened and all went black for Nebond.

Ruth watched this battle spellbound. Why did Kiser not use his fists? Why did he not grasp the animal's arm as he had done upon that previous occasion and wrench it joint from joint with his superior strength? She saw him fight a losing fight because he was attempting to use the same fighting tactics as the marb and was unable to do so. She saw that his wind was going fast and at length she saw him limp and inert in the grasp of the murderous brute.

With this sight something seemed to snap in her mind and with the heritage of several generations of fighting Hervys predominating she sprang to her feet and assailed the huge beast with her fists, striking blows straight from the shoulders as her father had taught her; for he had often admonished her that "every woman should be able to defend herself in case it might become necessary to do so."

That Pleck thought but little of the prowess of this new adversary was evident. He did not release his hold upon Nebond's throat but he was prevented from ripping open his jugular, as he attempted to ward off Ruth's blows.

Recalling the fight Kiser had had with the marb on the day of their landing, she suddenly caught the huge beast's arm in both hands and twisted with all her strength. With a howl of pain Pleck released Nebond and turned with renewed energy upon the girl.

Pleck was astounded and his rage was redoubled, but regardless of how fiercely he fought, those blows which she drove against his comparatively fragile facial structures inflicted such punishment as he had never endured before, and time after time he was forced to desist in his efforts to reach her throat. And, too, the arm which she had twisted was all but useless and consequently he fought under an added disadvantage.

NEBOND was beginning to regain consciousness now, and as he rose to his feet a shower of derisive sarcasm was cast at him from the other marbs congregated about but who had offered no interference with the combatants.

"See! See!" they shouted. "The strong man is beginning to revive! The very strong man who would be

king of the marbs! The strong man who lets his mate do his fighting! The strong man who is not half so strong as his *she!*"

Nebond stood gasping, glaring first at the taunting throng and then at the combat between Ruth and Pleck. If he was astonished at seeing the weak creature whom he had so easily fetched into the forest thus besting the mighty king of the marbs he did not comment upon his surprize.

Ruth's composure was going fast. She was gasping for breath now and her vision was beginning to blur. She made another attempt to twist her adversary's arm and failed.

All things considered, Pleck probably desired least to have his arm wrenched as she had wrenched the other one; he stepped back, waving her to truce.

"I dislike to fight with females," he said. "Your man has recovered himself, I see, and I prefer to combat with him. You stand aside and see to it that you do not interfere again! If you do I shall have the entire tribe upon you; if you do not they will not interfere."

Nebond had recovered his wind to an extent and now he rushed upon Pleck, and using the tactics he had seen Ruth use, he grabbed the long slender neck of the marb between his two hands and pushed with all his strength in opposite directions. The animal's vertebræ snapped and he fell to the ground dead almost instantly. Nebond had learned to use his great strength effectively!

He then turned upon the others and with great gusto proceeded to run amuck. The three marbs nearest him were struck down with his mighty fists, another was maimed for life by having his arm twisted until it was broken and badly crushed, and Nebond with the Earth-developed muscles of Joseph Kiser stood among the other marbs loudly proclaiming himself their king and demanding that Pleck's mates and offspring be pointed out to him.

This was very readily done, for the marbs had felt his prowess and they had no wish to antagonize him. The three wives and four young which comprised Pleck's family were ruthlessly murdered while Ruth looked on in horror, protesting as best she could, speaking brokenly in the Martian tongue, pleading with Nebond to stop his wholesale and useless carnage. But Nebond paid not the slightest attention to her pleas. He kept on until he had finished his gruesome task and then his amuck left him quite suddenly and he was calm. But eight marbs had died at his hands and as many others were injured.

"Now I want Pike. Go and fetch Pike to me!" commanded Nebond to one of the marbs who stood trembling near by. This animal hastened to do his bidding and soon returned accompanied by another marb, a female and somewhat smaller than himself.

"Pike," said Nebond, "I have come back to you. I am Nebond returned from captivity to be the king of the marbs; I have just killed Pleck and all his shes and all his offspring; I am the king now and you shall be my favorite queen."

"You are not Nebond!" retorted the female marb. "You are not even a marb; you are that terrible creature who came from the sky in an iron craft and who so cruelly attacked Beck many small moons ago. You are a devil and the marbs do not want you for their king. Go away with the *she* you have with you and let the marbs alone!"

"Do not dare to say to me that I am not Nebond! If you say that again I shall kill you! I am Nebond and you are Pike, my mate, even as you were my mate before I was captured by the Masovadans. Come to me!" He held out his hand toward her, and not daring to refuse, she came and stood in his embrace.

"But Nebond was a marb," she

protested. "Nebond would not dare return from captivity to the forest even if he might; therefore shortly after Nebond was captured I mated with Beck. I love Beck and I do not wish to leave him, not even if the real Nebond should return."

"I tell you I am Nebond and I told you not to say I am not!" He caught the poor creature by the neck and twisted until she screeched with pain, to the delight of the onlookers, save for Ruth, who watched with a feeling of horror and disgust; but, even yet, she could not associate any such action with the Joseph Kiser she had known, and she felt that this experience must be a horrid and unreal nightmare—surely she would awake presently, for it seemed that she could not endure it much longer.

"Yes, Nebond," Pike was saying, "I will be your queen if you say I must. I dare not run amuck for I know you would kill me. I will be your favorite queen, but what are you going to do with your other she? She is much more like you in appearance—will she not be your favorite?"

"I shall give her to Beck in exchange for you. You are much more beautiful and I do not care to mate with her. I shall forage upon the domains of other tribes to obtain my other mates, but always you shall be my favorite queen."

The weird climax of this story provides a fascinating feast of reading for the concluding chapters in next month's WEIRD TALES.

DREAM STRIFE

By BILLY CROSBY

Still-born upon the dewy morning air,
A vision stretched before me: fairyland
It seemed to be, for lakes and trees and sand
Were not of earthly hue; so strangely fair
The tufted towers girt with jewels rare,
The curving spires whereon the gnome-guards stand
To give swift warning for the fays to band
And march in dread array; oh man, beware!

The faint sun dimmed; forth from a black-capped cloud
Twelve monsters sprang to keep their savage tryst:
Then rose the roar of conflict fierce and loud,
Of elfin shouting and of beasts that hissed;
The heavens blazoned forth a flaming shroud—
And all dissolved into the morning mist.

The Hound of Duncardin

by ARLTON EADIE

"Take that knowledge to hell with you!"

THE Fates which preside over the destinies of mankind must have been sitting up and taking notice during the five minutes that I stood hesitating at the junction of the two paths which ran in divergent directions over the heather-clad Scottish moor.

I had been fairly late in setting out from Gairloch, where I had spent the previous night, but I thought I had allowed myself ample time in which to cover the fifteen or so miles which lay between that little town and the coast village of Melvaig where, so I had been informed, I could obtain comfortable lodgings. But the proposed itinerary of a solitary walking-tour, such as I was then enjoying, is liable to be somewhat elastic. I had dawdled away most of the day, stopping now and again to admire the glorious

scenery of the Ross coast and to indulge in a quiet smoke while lying on the fragrant heather, and when the twilight began to close in unusually early by reason of the dark and threatening clouds overhead, I discovered that I was still a good many miles from my destination.

Such was the situation when I halted at the crossroads in the gathering dusk, undecided which to pursue. The path to my left ran along the coast, and by following it I would ultimately arrive at Melvaig, but the one which slanted off at an angle to my right seemed to lead direct to a very cheerful cluster of lights about a mile distant across the purple moor.

It was, I concluded, a village of some sort; a village would probably mean an inn, and an inn would mean shelter of a more or less comfortable description. I felt sorely tempted to forego the assured comforts of Melvaig in favor of the nearer entertainment which the winking lights to my right seemed to promise.

A sudden spatter of heavy raindrops on my face decided me. I turned away from the sea and headed across the moor at my best pace.

I soon discovered, however, that the lights were not so near as I had first supposed them to be. Moreover, the path I was following did not seem to lead directly to them; it twisted and turned in different directions, until I lost all patience with its devious windings. By this time the rain had settled into a steady driving downpour, and wreaths of white mist were beginning to settle among the hollows of the moor. I knew that the folk who lived thereabouts kept early hours; any moment they might take it into their heads to extinguish the lights and go to bed, in which case I might spend the rest of the night in wandering about that desolate stretch of moorland. Finally I found that the path I was treading seemed to be branching off at right angles to the place I was now desperately anxious to reach. It was this last straw that snapped my already overtaxed patience.

"Here goes!" I cried, as I left the guidance of the path and struck across country in the direction of the beckoning lights.

After I had been walking ten minutes I began to notice that the ground was getting very soft underfoot. At first I did not attach much importance to this, setting it down to the heavy rain, but I soon found myself ankle-deep.

I backed away from this muddy patch and walked a few dozen yards to the right, in order to avoid it. The next minute I was immersed to the knees in the treacherous morass.

Too late I understood the reason for the zigzag windings of the road I had so rashly quitted. I turned and waded back through the clinging slime, only too eager to regain the road. But it was very difficult to judge my sense of direction once I had lost sight of the distant lights. I floundered on almost at random, at every step sinking deeper in the sucking ooze. Yet I knew I must keep moving, for the moment I attempted to stand still I began to sink.

On I struggled, blindly, desperately, trusting to chance to lead me out of that quivering death-trap. Then of a sudden the ground seemed to open, engulfing me waist-deep in the marsh.

Then did the icy hand of despair clutch my heart in real earnest. I knew not which way to turn; yet it meant death to stand still. But whichever way I turned I seemed only to sink deeper in the mire.

In vain I tried to gain a firmer foothold—the yielding slime encompassed me on every side.

"Help! Help!" I shouted at the top of my voice.

But the only answer was the sough of the wind and the bubbling of the ooze around me. Far away across the dismal expanse the cheery lights that had lured me to my doom seemed to mock me with their unchanging stare.

In my frenzy I cursed them—cursed my own folly in leaving the path—the clinging mud—the darkness. . . .

"Help!" I shouted with the full force of my panting lungs.

The echoes of my voice died away. My strength was exhausted; I could struggle no more. It was the end. But even as I steeled myself to meet the inevitable, I heard a deep-throated baying near at hand, and a moment later a huge, shaggy form loomed dimly through the darkness.

Thus did I make my first acquaintance with the Hound of Duncardin.

A GREAT wave of returning hope surged through my heart at the coming of this four-footed friend in need. Where such an animal could tread a man could follow without being engulfed. I turned and struggled in the direction of the dog, and he, on his part, seemed to encourage my efforts by a series of loud but friendly barks. Soon I had the satisfaction of feeling the ground becoming firmer, and presently I was able to drag myself, panting but elated, on to a grassy hillock. The unerring instinct of the animal had saved me from the fate which my own reason had been powerless to avert.

After a few minutes I rose to my feet, whereupon the dog trotted on a yard or so ahead, giving a low whine now and again as though inviting me to follow him. And I was only too pleased to avail myself of his friendly guidance. I purposely refrained from attempting to make friends with him, thinking that I might distract his attention and cause him to follow me, instead of allowing me to follow him. I trudged on in silence until I heard my boots crunching on the hard gravel of the highroad.

"Good dog," I called out coaxingly. "Wise old boy! I'll buy you the finest feed of meat you ever tasted, as soon as I can. Home, boy, home! Show me where you live, like a wise old doggie." He gave a short bark and wagged his tail as if he understood my words, then trotted on ahead as before. I quickened my steps in order to get a nearer look at him.

Until then I had naturally assumed it to be one of the sheep-dogs belonging to an adjacent croft, but now, even in the darkness, I came to the conclusion that the dog was much too large to belong to that breed. Little as I felt inclined to criticize its appearance, I could not help thinking what a weird-looking creature it was. It seemed to be built on somewhat similar lines to a greyhound, but it was much larger and its coat, instead of being smooth, was of long rough hair, in hue a peculiar shade of pallid gray. My impression was necessarily vague, for it was gleaned by the flickering flame of a match as I paused to light my pipe. It appeared to me, however, that the dog was an unusually large specimen of the Scottish deerhound.

But had he been the sorriest-looking mongrel breathing, I should have been quite content to follow my four-footed

rescuer wherever he might lead. Truth to tell, I was beginning to grow quite fond of his company, and I determined that if his owner was disposed to part with him for a reasonable sum, he would find a good home with me for the rest of his days.

As things turned out, however, I never had the chance of speaking to his owner, for we had no sooner arrived in the immediate neighborhood of the lighted windows which had been the initial cause of my trouble, than he gave vent to a long, mournful howl and raced across the moor until he was swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

I called after him and whistled for several minutes, but he did not return; so I turned again to the welcoming lights—only to utter a gasp of sheer amazement and remain staring at what I saw.

I HAD fully expected to find myself confronted with a tiny crofter's cottage, or at most with a fair-sized sheep farm. Instead, I saw before me a massive, iron-studded gate, defended by portcullis and numerous machicolations overhead, and flanked by turrets bearing the extinguisher-shaped roofs so commonly seen in Scottish mediæval architecture. Beyond the outer walls I caught a dim impression of the sheer towers and lofty battlements of a central keep.

This was certainly a very different ending from what I had anticipated. For a while I stood there, overawed by the imposing majesty of the mighty building I had stumbled upon all unawares. The very walls seemed to look down in frowning disdain upon my weary and mud-bedraggled figure, as though daring me to invade their haughty precincts. To use the expressive Scotch idiom, the place looked "unco ghaistly," and I found myself wishing more heartily than ever that I had kept to my original intention of making for Melvaig.

Presently my eyes caught the glint of brass upon the ancient timbers of the gate. It was a very modern-looking bell-button, and on the outer rim it bore the prosaic invitation, "Push."

I placed my finger on the ivory knob and pushed accordingly, and presently, in response to the distant whirring of an electric bell, footsteps sounded on the stone flags on the other side and the door swung silently open.

Although my appearance at that lonely spot might well have occasioned some surprize, there was no sign of such an emotion on the sedate features of the elderly, liveried man-servant who appeared. In a few words I explained that I had lost my way on the moors and asked if he could direct me to the nearest inn. The latter request brought a ghost of a smile to his shaven lips.

"The *nearest,* said ye?" he repeated with peculiar emphasis. "Wheest, man! Do ye no ken that this is Duncardin Castle, and the nearest hoose o' call is a matter o' eight miles awa'?"

As he mentioned the name of the castle something seemed to stir faintly in the depths of my memory. When and where had I heard that name before? For a moment I stood vainly trying to fix the half-forgotten associations; then, like a flash of light streaming into a darkened room, recollection came—Alan Duncardin, the young "one-pip" who had joined our battalion when we were holding the water-logged ditches which went by the name of trenches to the west of Armen-

tières. Could it be possible that there was some connection between the two?

The subject of the various nationalities of the men who formed the Scottish regiments was something of a standing joke in the British army, for it was asserted that they came from anywhere except north of the Tweed. But the traditional gibe had no point in the case of Second-Lieutenant Duncardin. A tall, lanky, raw-boned youth, with sandy hair and a serious freckled face, he was every inch a true highlander—"Ye micht almaist see the heather grawin' betwix his taes," as our old pipe-major once declared solemnly. All this passed through my mind so quickly that there was scarcely a noticeable pause before I again addressed the man.

"Does Mr. Alan Duncardin live here?"

"Nae doot ye mean *Sir* Alan Duncarlin?"

"Yes," I returned, hoping that I was speaking the truth. "Will you give him my card?"

The man ushered me into the lofty, antler-hung hall and disappeared in quest of his master. A few moments later the door opened and I saw that my chance shot had indeed hit the mark. The man who came eagerly forward with outstretched hand was the young subaltern whom I had last seen being carried down the communication trench, badly gassed.

No sooner did he learn of my misadventures of the night than he dragged me upstairs and insisted on my donning one of his spare suits while my own soaking clothes were drying. After a hearty supper and a stiff glass of whisky I felt more comfortable than I had ever hoped to feel that night.

"You had a close call on the marsh," said Alan. "If you had passed it by daylight you would have seen the notices which I've had put up, warning travelers to keep to the road."

"I have to thank your dog that I am here at all," I rejoined, but my host shook his head.

"It wasn't my dog. The only dog we have is a toy spaniel belonging to Lady Annabel, my stepmother. The dog you saw must have been a stray sheep-dog from somewhere or other. The intelligence of such animals is marvelous. I have seen one of them, without any supervision, bring in a herd of thirty cows, one by one, to the milking-house without ever fetching a second time a cow which has been milked."

I shook my head. "I'm positive that the dog that guided me here was a deerhound," I said.

"Impossible. The only dog of that breed about here died over a year since," Alan said impatiently, and abruptly changed the subject.

We sat yarning and smoking and fighting our battles over again until late in the night. He told me that he had come into the title and estates some eighteen months previously, when his elder brother had died after a brief illness. His father, Sir James Duncardin, had married a second time, and his widow, the present Lady-Dowager Annabel, occupied a separate suite of rooms in the great rambling castle, together with her son, Ian, who was Alan's half-brother and next in succession. Most of the older portions of the feudal stronghold were shut up and unoccupied.

"It's a very interesting old place," said Alan. "You must let me take you over it in the morning—for of course you're going to make this your headquarters for

the next week or so. I've already ordered your room to be got ready. By the way," he added with a smile, "I hope you're not scared of ghosts?"

"Why? Have you got a family specter or two on the premises?" I laughingly inquired.

"So they say," he answered carelessly, and proceeded to lead the way up a winding stone staircase to my bedroom.

I GOT something of a surprize when I entered the breakfast room the following morning. My mind, in response to Alan's description of his stepmother as the "Lady-Dowager," had conjured up a vision of a venerable, silvery-haired old lady clad in rustling black silk who, more probably than not, supported her tottering footsteps with the aid of an ebony stick. Imagine my astonishment to find myself being introduced to a radiantly beautiful young lady who appeared to be scarcely older than Alan himself. She must have married the late Sir James unusually young, I decided as I regarded her pale though petal-clear skin and the wavy masses of hair which, shining with the glossy black luster of a bird's plumage, framed the perfect oval of her face. Her eyes, shadowed with long lashes, held in their dark depths a baffling expression that was at once languorous yet keenly alert; the set of her firm, scarlet lips, the only touch of color in her face, appeared to hint at unusual determination and fixity of purpose.

Ian Duncardin, her son, had inherited something of her dark, exotic beauty; but his face bore a sulky expression, and for some reason or other he seemed just then to be somewhat ill at ease.

We chatted on different subjects during the meal, and presently I began to tell them of my adventure on the moor. I had just reached the point where I was describing the coming of the strange hound when Alan thought fit to supplement my tale with a few words of—to my thinking unnecessary—explanation.

"Of course it was some wandering sheep-dog," he interposed.

I shook my head decisively. "No. I am prepared to take my oath that the animal I saw was a huge, gray-coated deerhound."

A sudden crash interrupted me. The coffee-cup had fallen from Lady Annabel's hand and she was staring across the table at me with parted lips and wide-open eyes.

"A deerhound, did you say?" she asked slowly.

"I'm sure of it," I returned, not a little puzzled to account for her intense interest in the breed of the dog. "I'm very fond of dogs, and I take a great interest in the various breeds. It was a deerhound, sure enough. I intend to take a long tramp across the moor this morning in the hope of renewing my acquaintance with my friend in need."

"I don't think you'll meet that dog again," said Lady Annabel slowly. "But if you do, I should advise you to give it a wide berth."

I lifted my eyebrows at this. "Why, do you think it is dangerous?"

She nodded her dark head once or twice as she regarded me through narrowed lids.

"Yes," she said at length. "It might be very dangerous." And after a pause she repeated the last two words under her breath: "Very dangerous!"

I smiled to myself but said nothing. It seemed to me that Alan's beautiful stepmother was unusually nervous where dogs were concerned. Subsequent events proved that she had need to be.

Breakfast over, Alan took me for a tour of inspection over the old castle. I say "tour" advisedly, for the place proved to be much more extensive than I had at first supposed. Although interesting enough from an antiquarian point of view, the dark corridors and deserted chambers had a grim, forbidding air. The old chieftain who had reared it had planned with an eye to strength rather than comfort, and but few modern improvements had been added subsequently.

Lastly he showed me the chapel. It was small, but a perfect gem of pure Gothic architecture, with exquisite stone carvings on the capitals of the pillars and the frettings of the vaulted roof. Here were the tombs of every head of the House of Duncardin, from the first Sir Roderick to Alan's elder brother, who had been laid their eighteen months ago.

"He died young," I remarked, as I read the inscription chiseled on the marble slab which covered the entrance to the vault. "Did he meet with an accident?"

Alan Duncardin shook his head without speaking, and immediately turned and led the way out of the chapel. Glancing at his face, I noticed that he looked unusually pale, and as he mounted the spiral stair his breathing became labored and irregular.

"It's that cursed gas!" he gasped jerkily. "I've never been the same since it bowled me over that night when the Germans made their big drive at Bois Grenier. I'm sorry to leave you on your own, but I think I'll have to turn in for a bit until I feel a little better. Would you mind helping me to my room and asking Dugald to send for Dr. Blair?"

Although Alan tried to make light of his illness, I could see that he was in considerable internal pain, but somehow or other I could not reconcile his symptoms with the after-effects of poison gas. It seemed to me more likely that he had eaten something that had disagreed with him.

I caught sight of Dr. Blair as he passed through the hall on his arrival. He was stout and elderly, with a slow, pompous manner, and he evidently possessed no small opinion of his own importance.

"Poor Alan has had one of his attacks," I heard Lady Annabel say as she came forward to meet him.

"Oh, I'll soon set him right again," was the doctor's confident reply. "Nothing to be alarmed about, your ladyship. These attacks are distressing while they last, and —ah—undoubtedly painful. But a little treatment — ah — palliative treatment, which a practitioner of my large experience knows so well how to administer——"

I could not help smiling to myself as they passed out of earshot. Evidently Dr. Blair was a type of medical man that is fast becoming extinct.

IN SPITE of the aged medico's confidence in the efficacy of "a little palliative treatment," it was quickly apparent that Alan's illness was no trifling matter. He was confined to his bed the whole of the next day, and I was rigidly excluded from his room. Left to my own devices, I routed out a very serviceable built-cane rod and a book of flies, and, armed with these, I determined to see what sport the sea-trout would afford in the neighboring loch. After lunch I waylaid Dugald, the old butler, and made a few inquiries as to the best places to try.

"Aye, there's some gran' fush in yon

loch," he said in a tone which showed him to be a keen enthusiast in the beloved sport of Izaak Walton; and he surprized me somewhat by offering to accompany me and act as gillie.

I was only too pleased to take advantage of his offer, for local knowledge means a lot of difference to your haul when fishing strange waters. Dugald changed his clothes for a suit of homespun tweed, and we set out together, he carrying a creel and a gaff whose dimensions seemed to augur well for the size of the "fush" he expected to encounter.

From a fly-fisher's point of view the weather was unusually promising. The sky was overcast with a thin veil of fleecy clouds, just sufficient to take the glare off the water; the gentle westerly breeze was just strong enough to cause a tiny ripple on the otherwise calm waters of the loch. Old Dugald pointed to where a series of tiny swirling breaks showed on the surface of the inshore shallows.

"Guidsakes, sir, but they're takin' fine. Ye'll hae guid sport, A'm thinkin'."

The old man proved a true prophet. After an afternoon of pleasurable excitement I had the satisfaction of seeing five fine trout, none of them under three pounds, safely gaffed and transferred to the creel. By the time the fish had ceased to rise, the sun was already low in the western sky.

I noticed that Dugald seemed unusually silent and thoughtful as we started to return; he gave me the impression of wanting to say something without knowing exactly how to begin. When we were almost at the castle gate he turned to me with a question:

"Begging your pardon, sir, but did I no hear ye tell her leddyship something aboot a deerhoond that ye saw the nicht ye came here?"

I told him of my adventure on the moor and of the dog that had shown me the way out of the swamp. When I had finished, the old man shook his head.

"I dinna ken any such dog hereaboots," he said slowly, adding in a curious tone of voice, "at least, no the noo."

"What do you mean?" I asked, puzzled as much by his tone as the broad Doric.

Dugald puckered his eyes and favored me with an odd look.

"The young laird, Sir Malcolm, used to hae such a dog as yon, and verra' fond of it he was, too. After Sir Malcolm died, the dog was aye scratching and whining at his tomb in the auld chapel. The puir critter's grief was pitiful to witness, sir, and in the end her leddyship had to hae puir Bruce—that was the dog's name, sir—she had to hae him destroyed."

"So the dog is dead?" I asked, rather needlessly.

"Deid an' buried, sir, these eighteen months."

"In that case it could not have been Bruce that I saw on the moor," I remarked with a laugh.

There was a long pause during which Dugald strode by my side in silence. Glancing out of the tail of my eye, I saw that he was stroking the strip of sandy-gray whisker, at the side of his face, with a curiously irresolute air. At last he stopped dead and grasped my arm.

"The young laird died michty queer and sudden, an noo Sir Alan's tuk wi' the same seemptoms—an', mark ye, her leddyship's ain son is heir to the title and estates——"

I stared at the man blankly, only half comprehending the sinister meaning of the fiercely whispered words.

"Good God, man!" I cried. "What do you suspect?"

"I suspect there's deil's wurrk gang on yonder," he jerked his head toward the distant towers, now outlined black against the glory of the dying sun. "It's ma belief that the hound ye saw was no mortal critter, and, if I may make so bold, I'd like ye to let me know the meenit ye see it again. I sleep in the room wi' the door facing the passage belangin' to your ain room, sir, and I doot I'll be wakin' maist the night."

As he said the words a faint sound was borne to our ears on the wings of the rising night wind. Far off and intermittent though it was, there could be no mistaking the nature of that cry, and I shivered suddenly as though a sponge soaked in ice-cold water had been passed down my spine.

For the sound we heard was the long-drawn, mournful baying of a hound.

TIRED out as I was by my long day in the open air, I found that sleep would not come to me that night. My mind was busy with a thousand thoughts, speculations, and wild, impracticable plans as I lay staring up at the black-raftered ceiling above my bed, counting the quarters as they were told by the old clock at the foot of the stairs, watching and waiting for I knew not what.

To my ears, strained to catch the slightest sound, the ancient pile seemed filled with a thousand vague noises; the faint impact of a shutter against the wall as it swung in the wind, the occasional whine of the weathercock on the pointed roof of the tower overhead as it swung to the random gusts, the flapping of a loose corner of the tapestry on the wall, and the slow, regular tapping of some beetle burrowing in the ancient wainscot.

At last I could bear the tedium of my own thoughts no longer. I switched on my electric pocket-lamp and took up a book which I had begun earlier in the day. But the commonplace plot and the trite phrases proved a more effective anodyne than I had anticipated; after reading a page or two I was soundly asleep.

How long I slept I know not, but I woke with a start, every nerve a-tingle. In the corridor outside was a sound different from the natural noises of the night. It was the faint, padding footfalls of a large hound. Nearer and nearer they came, not ceasing until they were opposite the door of my room. Then there came the sound of snuffing at the crack between the woodwork of the panels and the floor.

I passed my tongue over my dry lips, then called softly.

"Bruce!"

The dog seemed to recognize his name, for he gave a low whine of recognition and pawed eagerly against the door. So friendly and natural was his demonstration of delight that I felt my misgivings vanish. I rose, put on a dressing-gown and thrust my feet into my slippers. Then I crossed to the door and—not without some slight hesitation, I confess—pulled back the bolt and allowed it to swing open.

Standing on the threshold, wagging his long, bushy tail with pleasure, was the deerhound that had saved me from the marsh.

For a moment I stared at him in wondering silence, scarcely knowing what to think. Then Bruce bounded forward,

thrust his muzzle against my legs, his great expressive eyes looking up into my face and then at the door with an appeal there could be no mistaking.

I leant down and patted his coarse, shaggy coat.

"What is it, Bruce, old boy?" I said.

The great dog trotted out into the corridor, then half turned and stood watching me, whining softly the while. It was an unmistakable invitation for me to follow him.

Mindful of my promise to the old butler, I tapped lightly on his door. It was immediately opened by Dugald who, fully dressed, had been awaiting the summons.

"Guid presairve us!" the old man whispered in an awed voice. "'Tis auld Bruce himself!"

"And he wants to lead us somewhere," I returned. "Come, let us follow him."

Treading as softly as possible, we passed along the corridor and down the spiral staircase to the ground floor. There the dog made straight for the door leading into the old chapel.

"'Tis as I thocht, sir. The puir beast is makin' for his maister's grave!"

The old man's hands were trembling so that he could scarcely fit the key in the lock. But at last he had the door open; then, straight as an arrow, the hound made for the marble slab which covered the tomb of the dead laird and began scratching frantically at it with his paws.

"Is there a vault below that stone?" I asked the white-haired man at my side.

"Aye, sir. But surely——"

"Help me to raise it," I interrupted.

Exerting our united strength, we shifted the slab to one side. Beneath was a square, stone-lined cavity containing a single coffin. The dog immediately leapt down, and I, pausing only to thrust my lamp into Dugald's shaking hand and bid him direct the beam downward, followed. The agitation of the dog was pitiful when I commenced to loosen the screws of the coffin lid with the blade of my knife. But, unheedful of everything save the task before me, I worked steadily until the last one was extracted and the lid was free.

Slowly, reverently, I uncovered the face of the body within; then——

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded a harsh, metallic voice above me.

It was Lady Annabel, her face deathwhite, her dark eyes charged with horror, and, it seemed, with fear as well. I scrambled out of the vault and stood facing her.

"It means that I have solved the mystery of Sir Malcolm's untimely death," I said slowly, "and, unless I mistake not, of Sir Alan's present illness."

"You're mad!" came from the woman's faltering lips.

I pointed downward into the vault.

"Look upon the face of the dead, Lady Annabel," I said sternly. "There is only one thing that would preserve a body uncorrupted for so long a time. Sir Malcolm met his death by *arsenic!*"

Lady Annabel slowly raised her hand, and for the first time I saw that she held a small silver-plated revolver. I saw the shining barrel change into a circle as she aimed the weapon at me, and I gave myself up for lost.

A horrible, rasping laugh came from her lips.

"You're right—I poisoned him!" she cried. "Take that knowledge with you to hell!"

I threw myself flat as the weapon

cracked, and I heard the smack of the bullet on the stones above my head. Immediately afterward another report echoed through the silent chapel. When I rose unsteadily to my feet it was to see the murderess lying, slain by her own hand, by the side of her victim's grave.

But the faithful hound, whose love and devotion death itself had been powerless to quench, was nowhere to be seen.

A Brief Weird Tale

"JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT"

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

THEY heard it first a week after Edward had been taken ill. They were sitting in the living-room before the fireplace, waiting for the doctor to come down to them from the darkened room above, when they heard the woman singing. It came quite suddenly, and Mrs. Grant started forward.

"My dear," she said, turning to her husband, "I do believe that wretched nurse is singing."

"Nonsense," said he, "it is most likely a woman somewhere on the street."

Mrs. Grant hesitated. "I don't think it is, John. It's somewhere in this house, I'm sure. I think," she said half rising, "I shall go look for it."

He patted her arm gently. "You should go and rest, darling. This constant waiting is upsetting you too much. I am quite certain that the singing is outside, and if it isn't, we can always track it down tomorrow."

Abruptly, the doctor came into the room. He put down his case, and came over to the fireplace, where he stood confronting them.

"Well?" said John Grant, looking up at him.

The doctor took off his pince-nez and rubbed them reflectively for a moment before replying. Then he shrugged his shoulders jerkily and said, "I can hardly say definitely now. The boy has a strong fever, and I'm afraid delirium is not far away. In cases of this kind, absolute quiet is necessary. Now, I heard some one singing just before, and that must be stopped at once." The doctor cast a quick glance in the direction of Mrs. Grant.

"Then it was not the nurse," said Mrs. Grant.

"Certainly not," replied the doctor. "I thought—felt, that it came from this floor."

"And I am sure it came from above," said Mrs. Grant.

"A woman in the street, I think," said John Grant easily.

"Oh!" exclaimed the doctor, "I am sorry. I was so sure that it came from somewhere in the house. Curious how

one is deceived sometimes! But then, you have such a big house."

"The cook," murmured Mrs. Grant in an undertone, as if she had not heard.

"My dear!" said John Grant sharply.

The doctor raised his eyebrows very slightly, and for a moment his face seemed very uneasy. "This boy," he said suddenly, "you say he is not your own child?"

"No," said Grant. "No, he isn't; though, of course, we've made him feel as much our own as the others. No, we found him one night on our doorstep. Bitter cold it was, and, of course, we took him in."

"You advertised?" said the doctor, putting on his glasses once more.

"Nothing came of it; so we adopted the poor fellow." John Grant rose with alacrity. "Let me go to the door with you, doctor."

He took the doctor's arm, and together the two men moved out of the room. John Grant closed the door of the living-room softly behind him.

"Will you have a cigar, doctor?" he asked, drawing a vest-pocket case from his dressing-gown.

"Thank you, I will."

John Grant waited until the doctor was well started on the cigar before he spoke. "You'll forgive me for not smoking with you, I hope," he said, "but there are a few things I'd like to say to you."

"Yes, I thought there was something on your mind, Grant," said the doctor. "Is it about your wife?"

"Not exactly, no. It's the boy."

"Oh," said the doctor. "I'm afraid for him, of course. I don't think——"

"It's not that," said John Grant hastily. "It's something else. You know, I think the boy has the most startling delusions sometimes."

"Indeed. Well, that is rather common in cases like this."

"No, no. Doctor, you don't understand. I mean, when he's not ill at all. He has the delusions then. When we first took him into this house—why, he found his way about here with startling rapidity. He seemed to know every nook and cranny of the house before either my wife or I did. I had the most uncanny feeling—you know, it was almost as if the boy had been here before."

The doctor raised his eyebrows and regarded the glowing end of his cigar reflectively. "I don't think of that as a delusion," he said slowly. "That's quite a natural thing—this extraordinary capacity for finding their way about—in children especially."

"No," said John Grant. "If that were all! The boy knew just where the nursery was, for instance. And the longer he stayed with us, the more peculiar he became. He used to speak very often of having played there *before*, and then he'd mention *the others*. I can't make it out. My wife thought it very peculiar at first, but finally she thought that perhaps the boy was playing a little game all his own."

"Possible," said the doctor shortly. "How old was the boy when you found him?"

"Four or five, I think," said Grant. "He'd evidently walked to this place from wherever he came. He was huddled up against the door in all that cold."

"Well," said the doctor. "Have you ever considered that he might have been here before?"

"I looked up the family who'd had this house for years before we came.

Family by the name of Carroll. There was only one child, and he died quite early, I understand."

The doctor nodded. "Well," he said, "I'll go over my books and hunt up parallel cases. You know, we scientific men are rather skeptical. I'm afraid what you're driving at is some sort of reincarnation, and that's a little stiff."

"I'll expect to hear from you," said Grant.

The doctor picked up his case and moved toward the outer door.

"And by the way," said John Grant on the threshold, "if you hear that singing again, doctor—I'd rather you said nothing about it to my wife."

The doctor looked hard at Grant. "Very well," he said, "I won't. But I'll tell you, it had better stop. For the boy's sake."

"A woman outside," said Grant lamely.

"Sheer nonsense," said the doctor sharply. "That singing came from somebody in the house, and it excited the boy very much."

JOHN GRANT closed the door and walked slowly down the hall and into the living-room. His wife had gone upstairs, but he saw the white-clad form of the nurse waiting to speak to him.

"My wife has gone up?" he asked, as he came up to her.

The nurse nodded. "Yes. She is with the boy now, and I came down to tell you, as you asked me to, about the singing. It was so much louder tonight; you must have heard it."

"I did. Both of us did, as a matter of fact."

"Yes, the doctor did, too," she continued. "And the boy . . . why, he was positively wild in spite of his weak condition—seemed to want to sing along, and actually tried."

"Did you get the words?" asked John Grant. "We couldn't distinguish words down here."

"The woman was singing *Love's Old Sweet Song*—quite an old piece," said the nurse.

John Grant nodded thoughtfully. "Is there anything more?" he asked.

"Yes," said the nurse. "I saw the woman."

John Grant looked at the nurse. "You saw her? How was that? Surely she was not in Edward's room?"

"No, she wasn't." said the nurse. "When the doctor first heard the sound he said for me to go and see who was singing. I felt it would do no good, but I stepped outside the door of the room for a moment, and there she was, standing at the end of the hall."

"What did she look like?"

"Seemed to be in some kind of bathrobe. She was not very clearly outlined, and except for her face, was all grayish. I could see through her."

"What did you do?" asked Grant.

"I went toward her, and she just vanished. Melted away," said the nurse.

"Brave girl," said Grant. "Anybody else would have screamed to bring the house down!"

"I'd better go back up now," said the nurse, and John Grant nodded.

NEXT day John Grant went to see the agent who had sold him the house and had told him about the Carrolls.

"I remember telling you that there were queer stories about the house," said Mr. Barnes, "and I think you made a bit of a joke of the matter. The woman

who sings the twilight song is one of the stories."

"Well, who is she supposed to be?" asked John Grant.

The agent shrugged his shoulders. "That's more than I can say," he said. "But there's one thing you might keep in mind. Mrs. Carroll went a little mad after the death of her son, and died not long after. And the son's name, by the way, was Edward."

"Why!" exclaimed Grant. "That's more than a coincidence!"

"I can't tell you any more, Mr. Grant," continued the agent. "If anything further happens, come in again to see me. I'll do what I can for you."

"One thing more," said Grant. "Tell me, do you believe in reincarnation?"

Mr. Barnes favored his visitor with a smile which very clearly expressed his contempt for reincarnation. "Why, no," he said, very affably, "I don't think I do."

The doctor, when he came, was likewise inclined to look very severely on Grant's curious idea. "It's preying on your mind, Grant, and that's bad for you. Get rid of the idea somehow; it's just something that seems to fit a peculiar set of circumstances, that's all."

"I wish," said Grant stonily, "that it were. Let us drop the matter, doctor. How is the boy?"

"Very low," said the doctor gravely. "Frankly, I don't think I shall be needed again."

Grant nodded. "All right, doctor. About when, do you think?"

"He may last through until morning; that will give him a better chance again. But if he is disturbed—in any way excited during the night—he can't last."

John Grant nodded thoughtfully. "Very well."

"And don't, for his sake, let that woman start singing again tonight.

Grant smiled wryly. "Do you think she would have sung before, if I could have stopped her?"

The doctor looked at Grant suspiciously. "See here, Grant," he said, picking up his case, "you watch yourself, or you'll go under one of these days."

With that, the doctor was gone, and John Grant turned back and went into the living-room. His wife was watching for him, looking eagerly over the back of the chair.

"What did he say?" she asked.

"There is little hope, darling. Very little. But he may last through the night, if he is not disturbed. Then he will have a much better chance." He tried to smile encouragingly, but he felt that the attempt was not quite successful.

He dropped into a chair at her side, reached out and took her hand, and sat with her looking into the dancing flames before them. There they sat, listening for a sound above the ticking of the clock and the distant hum of motors on the road outside—a sound of quick feet, and the nurse's low call. But there was nothing.

THE minutes passed, and the hours, and then, suddenly, came the singing. It was very low, but clear and sweet. John Grant must have dozed off, for his wife's convulsive grasp on his hand brought him up in his chair, fully awake on the instant.

"Just . . . a song . . . at . . . twi-light,
When . . . the lights . . . are . . . low;
And . . . the flick'-ring . . . shadows
Soft-ly come . . . and . . . go . . . !"

There it was, in the air, all about them.

"Edward," said Mrs. Grant suddenly. "That is for Edward."

"My dear," said John Grant, looking with alarm at his wife's strained features, "it is probably the cook, after all."

"No, no," said Mrs. Grant. "The cook is gone. I know—what it is. She is coming for the boy—I can feel it." Mrs. Grant sprang up suddenly. "I am going up," she said.

At the same instant came the sound of swift, pattering feet, and from the stairs beyond came the low voice of the nurse, "Come quickly . . . I think he's going."

John Grant was in the hall as quickly as his wife. Running up the stairs, they heard the nurse going back to Edward's room, and above the sound of running feet, the singing.

"Tho' . . . the heart . . . be . . . wea-ry,
Sad . . . the day . . . and . . . long . . . !"

And then, suddenly, just before they reached the second floor, the singing began all over again, and now . . . there were two voices, and one was the voice of a boy!

John Grant and his wife were halfway down the hall, quite near the sickroom, when Mrs. Grant stopped abruptly and clung to her husband, sobbing. "Too late," she said. "too late!"

At the same moment, the door of the sickroom opened, and the nurse appeared, nodding her head. "Gone," she said.

Then, together, the three turned to look down the hall, where at its end a faint grayness of two figures had inexplicably appeared. There seemed to be a woman, and at her side, clasping her hand, a boy, and as they were walking along, through the wall and out into the sky, there came the sound of the song, growing always fainter and fainter, and dwindling away at last to nothing:

"Just . . . a song . . . at . . . twi-light,
When . . . the lights . . . are . . . low;
And . . . the flick'-ring . . . shadows
Soft-ly come . . . and . . . go."

GHOSTS

***By* JEWELL BOTHWELL TULL**

'Tis said that nothing lives in the dark,
That growing things must have the light;
But I have seen the moon grow big
And beautiful at night.

And in the night my soul grows big
With doubt and hope and love and pain
That fade away with morning light,
Leaving me cold again.

The moon is made of old dead dreams,—
Pale echoes of a living sun;
The moon and I are lonely ghosts
That die when dreams are done.

The Permanent Stiletto

By W. C. MORROW

I HAD sent in all haste for Doctor Rowell, but as yet he had not arrived, and the strain was terrible. There lay my young friend upon his bed in the hotel, and I believed that he was dying. Only the jewelled handle of the knife was visible at his breast; the blade was wholly sheathed in his body.

"Pull it out, old fellow," begged the sufferer through white, drawn lips, his gasping voice being hardly less distressing than the unearthly look in his eyes.

"No, Arnold," said I, as I held his hand and gently stroked his forehead. It may have been instinct, it may have been a certain knowledge of anatomy that made me refuse.

"Why not? It hurts," he gasped. It was pitiful to see him suffer, this strong, healthy, daring, reckless young fellow.

Doctor Rowell walked in—a tall, grave man, with gray hair. He went to the bed and I pointed to the knife-handle, with its great, bold ruby in the end and its diamonds and emeralds alternating in quaint designs in the sides. The physician started. He felt Arnold's pulse and looked puzzled.

"When was this done?" he asked.

"About twenty minutes ago," I answered.

The physician started out, beckoned me to follow.

"Stop!" said Arnold. We obeyed. "Do you wish to speak of me?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the physician, hesitating.

"Speak in my presence then," said my friend; "I fear nothing." It was said in his old, imperious way, although his suffering must have been great.

"If you insist——"

"I do."

"Then," said the physician, "if you have any matters to adjust they should be attended to at once. I can do nothing for you."

"How long can I live?" asked Arnold.

The physician thoughtfully stroked his gray beard. "It depends," he finally said; "if the knife be withdrawn you may live three minutes; if it be allowed to re-

main you may possibly live an hour or two—not longer."

Arnold never flinched.

"Thank you," he said, smiling faintly through his pain; "my friend here will pay you. I have some things to do. Let the knife remain." He turned his eyes to mine, and, pressing my hand, said, affectionately, "And I thank you, too, old fellow, for not pulling it out."

The physician, moved by a sense of delicacy, left the room, saying, "Ring if there is a change. I will be in the hotel office." He had not gone far when he turned and came back. "Pardon me," said he, "but there is a young surgeon in the hotel who is said to be a very skilful man. My specialty is not surgery, but medicine. May I call him?"

"Yes," said I, eagerly; but Arnold smiled and shook his head. "I fear there will not be time," he said. But I refused to heed him and directed that the surgeon be called immediately. I was writing at Arnold's dictation when the two men entered the room.

THERE was something of nerve and assurance in the young surgeon that struck my attention. His manner, though quiet, was bold and straightforward and his movements sure and quick. This young man had already distinguished himself in the performance of some difficult hospital laparotomies, and he was at that sanguine age when ambition looks through the spectacles of experiment. Doctor Raoul Entrefort was the newcomer's name. He was a Creole, small and dark, and he had travelled and studied in Europe.

"Speak freely," gasped Arnold, after Doctor Entrefort had made an examination.

"What think you, doctor?" asked Entrefort of the older man.

"I think," was the reply, "that the knifeblade has penetrated the ascending aorta, about two inches above the heart. So long as the blade remains in the wound the escape of blood is comparatively small, though certain; were the blade withdrawn the heart would almost instantly empty itself through the aortal wound."

Meanwhile, Entrefort was deftly cutting away the white shirt and the undershirt, and soon had the breast exposed. He examined the gem-studded hilt with the keenest interest. "You are proceeding on the assumption, doctor," he said, "that this weapon is a knife."

"Certainly," answered Doctor Rowell, smiling; "what else can it be?"

"It *is* a knife," faintly interposed Arnold.

"Did you see the blade?" Entrefort asked him, quickly.

"I did—for a moment."

Entrefort shot a quick look at Doctor Rowell and whispered, "Then it is *not* suicide." Doctor Rowell looked puzzled and said nothing.

"I must disagree with you, gentlemen," quietly remarked Entrefort; "this is not a knife." He examined the handle very narrowly. Not only was the blade entirely concealed from view within Arnold's body, but the blow had been so strongly delivered that the skin was depressed by the guard. "The fact that it is not a knife presents a very curious series of facts and contingencies," pursued Entrefort, with amazing coolness, "some of which are, so far as I am informed, entirely novel in the history of surgery."

A quizzical expression, faintly amused and manifestly interested, was upon Doc-

tor Rowell's face. "What is the weapon, doctor?" he asked.

"A stiletto."

Arnold started. Doctor Rowell appeared confused. "I must confess," he said, "my ignorance of the differences among these penetrating weapons, whether dirks, daggers, stilettos, poniards, or bowie-knives."

"With the exception of the stiletto," explained Entrefort, "all the weapons you mention have one or two edges, so that in penetrating they cut their way. A stiletto is round, is ordinarily about half an inch or less in diameter at the guard, and tapers to a sharp point. It penetrates solely by pushing the tissues aside in all directions. You will understand the importance of that point."

Doctor Rowell nodded, more deeply interested than ever.

"How do you know it is a stiletto, Doctor Entrefort?" I asked.

"The cutting of these stones is the work of Italian lapidaries," he said, "and they were set in Genoa. Notice, too, the guard. It is much broader and shorter than the guard of an edged weapon; in fact, it is nearly round. This weapon is about four hundred years old, and would be cheap at twenty thousand florins. Observe, also, the darkening color of your friend's breast in the immediate vicinity of the guard; this indicates that the tissues have been bruised by the crowding of the 'blade,' if I may use the term."

"What has all this to do with me?" asked the dying man.

"Perhaps a great deal, perhaps nothing. It brings a single ray of hope into your desperate condition."

Arnold's eyes sparkled and he caught his breath. A tremor passed all through him, and I felt it in the hand I was holding. Life was sweet to him, then, after all—sweet to this wild daredevil who had just faced death with such calmness! Doctor Rowell, though showing no sign of jealousy, could not conceal a look of incredulity.

"With your permission," said Entrefort, addressing Arnold, "I will do what I can to save your life."

"You may," said the poor boy.

"But I shall have to hurt you."

"Well."

"Perhaps very much."

"Well."

"And even if I succeed (the chance is one in a thousand) you will never be a sound man, and a constant and terrible danger will always be present."

"Well."

Entrefort wrote a note and sent it away in haste by a bellboy.

"Meanwhile," he resumed, "your life is in imminent danger from shock, and the end may come in a few minutes or hours from that cause. Attend without delay to whatever matters may require settling, and Doctor Rowell," glancing at that gentleman, "will give you something to brace you up. I speak frankly, for I see that you are a man of extraordinary nerve. Am I right?"

"Be perfectly candid," said Arnold.

Doctor Rowell, evidently bewildered by his cyclonic young associate, wrote a prescription, which I sent by a boy to be filled. With unwise zeal I asked Entrefort:

"Is there not danger of lockjaw?"

"No," he replied; "there is not a sufficiently extensive injury to peripheral nerves to induce traumatic tetanus."

I subsided. Doctor Rowell's medicine came and I administered a dose. The physician and the surgeon then retired. The poor sufferer straightened up his

business. When it was done he asked me:

"What is that crazy Frenchman going to do to me?"

"I have no idea; be patient."

In less than an hour they returned, bringing with them a keen-eyed, tall young man, who had a number of tools wrapped in an apron. Evidently he was unused to such scenes, for he became deathly pale upon seeing the ghastly spectacle on my bed. With staring eyes and open mouth he began to retreat toward the door, stammering:

"I—I can't do it."

"Nonsense, Hippolyte! Don't be a baby. Why, man, it is a case of life and death!"

"But—look at his eyes! He is dying!"

Arnold smiled. "I am not dead, though," he gasped.

"I—I beg your pardon," said Hippolyte.

Doctor Entrefort gave the nervous man a drink of brandy and then said:

"No more nonsense, my boy; it must be done. Gentlemen, allow me to introduce Mr. Hippolyte, one of the most original, ingenious, and skilful machinists in the country."

Hippolyte, being modest, blushed as he bowed. In order to conceal his confusion he unrolled his apron on the table with considerable noise of rattling tools.

"I have to make some preparations before you may begin, Hippolyte, and I want you to observe me that you may become used not only to the sight of fresh blood, but also, what is more trying, the odor of it."

Hippolyte shivered. Entrefort opened a case of surgical instruments.

"Now, doctor, the chloroform," he said to Doctor Rowell.

"I will not take it," promptly interposed the sufferer; "I want to know when I die."

"Very well," said Entrefort; "but you have little nerve now to spare. We may try it without chloroform, however. It will be better if you can do without. Try your best to lie still while I cut."

"What are you going to do?" asked Arnold.

"Save your life, if possible."

"How? Tell me all about it."

"Must you know?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. The point of the stiletto has passed entirely through the aorta, which is the great vessel rising out of the heart and carrying the aerated blood to the arteries. If I should withdraw the weapon the blood would rush from the two holes in the aorta and you would soon be dead. If the weapon had been a knife, the parted tissue would have yielded, and the blood would have been forced out on either side of the blade and would have caused death. As it is, not a drop of blood has escaped from the aorta into the thoracic cavity. All that is left for us to do, then, is to allow the stiletto to remain permanently in the aorta. Many difficulties at once present themselves, and I do not wonder at Doctor Rowell's look of surprize and incredulity."

That gentleman smiled and shook his head.

"It is a desperate chance," continued Entrefort, "and is a novel case in surgery; but it is the only chance. The fact that the weapon is a stiletto is the important point—a stupid weapon, but a blessing to us now. If the assassin had known more she would have used——"

Upon his employment of the noun

"assassin" and the feminine pronoun "she," both Arnold and I started violently, and I cried out to the man to stop.

"Let him proceed," said Arnold, who, by a remarkable effort, had calmed himself.

"Not if the subject is painful," Entrefort said.

"It is not," protested Arnold; "why do you think the blow was struck by a woman?"

"Because, first, no man capable of being an assassin would use so gaudy and valuable a weapon; second, no man would be so stupid as to carry so antiquated and inadequate a thing as a stiletto, when that most murderous and satisfactory of all penetrating and cutting weapons, the bowie-knife, is available. She was a strong woman, too, for it requires a good hand to drive a stiletto to the guard, even though it miss the sternum by a hair's breadth and slip between the ribs, for the muscles here are hard and the intercostal spaces narrow. She was not only a strong woman, but a desperate one also."

"That will do," said Arnold. He beckoned me to bend closer. "You must watch this man; he is too sharp; he is dangerous."

"Then," resumed Entrefort, "I shall tell you what I intend to do. There will undoubtedly be inflammation of the aorta, which, if it persist, will cause a fatal aneurism by a breaking down of the aortal walls; but we hope, with the help of your youth and health, to check it.

"Another serious difficulty is this: With every inhalation, the entire thorax (or bony structure of the chest) considerably expands. The aorta remains stationary. You will see, therefore, that as your aorta and your breast are now held in rigid relation to each other by the stiletto, the chest, with every inhalation, pulls the aorta forward out of place about half an inch. I am certain that it is doing this, because there is no indication of an escape of arterial blood into the thoracic cavity; in other words, the mouths of the two aortal wounds have seized upon the blade with a firm hold and thus prevent it from slipping in and out. This is a very fortunate occurrence, but one which will cause pain for some time. The aorta, you may understand, being made by the stiletto to move with the breathing, pulls the heart backward and forward with every breath you take; but that organ, though now undoubtedly much surprized, will accustom itself to its new condition.

"What I fear most, however, is the formation of a clot around the blade. You see, the presence of the blade in the aorta has already reduced the blood-carrying capacity of that vessel; a clot, therefore, need not be very large to stop up the aorta, and, of course, if that should occur death would ensue. But the clot, if one form, may be dislodged and driven forward, in which event it may lodge in any one of the numerous branches from the aorta and produce results more or less serious, possibly fatal. If, for instance, it should choke either the right or the left carotid, there would ensue atrophy of one side of the brain, and consequently paralysis of half the entire body; but it is possible that in time there would come about a secondary circulation from the other side of the brain, and thus restore a healthy condition. Or the clot (which, in passing always from larger arteries to smaller, must unavoidably find one not sufficiently large to carry it, and must lodge somewhere) may either necessitate amputation of one of the four limbs or lodge itself so deep

within the body that it can not be reached with the knife. You are beginning to realize some of the dangers which await you."

Arnold smiled faintly.

"But we shall do our best to prevent the formation of a clot," continued Entrefort; "there are drugs which may be used with effect."

"Are there more dangers?"

"Many more; some of the more serious have not been mentioned. One of these is the probability of the aortal tissues pressing upon the weapon relaxing their hold and allowing the blade to slip. That would let out the blood and cause death. I am uncertain whether the hold is now maintained by the pressure of the tissues or the adhesive quality of the serum which was set free by the puncture. I am convinced, though, that in either event the hold is easily broken and that it may give way at any moment, for it is under several kinds of strains. Every time the heart contracts and crowds the blood into the aorta, the latter expands a little, and then contracts when the pressure is removed. Any unusual exercise or excitement produces stronger and quicker heart-beats, and increases the strain on the adhesion of the aorta to the weapon. A fright, fall, a jump, a blow on the chest—any of these might so jar the heart and aorta as to break the hold."

Entrefort stopped.

"Is that all?" asked Arnold.

"No; but is not that enough?"

"More than enough," said Arnold, with a sudden and dangerous sparkle in his eyes. Before any of us could think, the desperate fellow had seized the handle of the stiletto with both hands in a determined effort to withdraw it and die. I had had no time to order my faculties to the movement of a muscle, when Entrefort, with incredible alertness and swiftness, had Arnold's wrists. Slowly Arnold relaxed his hold.

"There, now!" said Entrefort, soothingly; "that was a careless act and might have broken the adhesion! You'll have to be careful."

Arnold looked at him with a curious combination of expressions.

"Doctor Entrefort," he quietly remarked, "you are the devil."

Bowing profoundly, Entrefort replied: "You do me too great honor;" then he whispered to his patient: "If you do *that*"—with a motion toward the hilt—"I will have *her* hanged for murder."

Arnold started and choked, and a look of horror overspread his face. He withdrew his hands, took one of mine in both of his, threw his arms upon the pillow above his head, and, holding my hand, firmly said to Entrefort:

"Proceed with your work."

"Come closer, Hippolyte," said Entrefort, "and observe narrowly. Will you kindly assist me, Doctor Rowell?" That gentleman had sat in wondering silence.

ENTREFORT'S hand was quick and sure, and he used the knife with marvelous dexterity. First he made four equidistant incisions outward from the guard and just through the skin. Arnold held his breath and ground his teeth at the first cut, but soon regained command of himself. Each incision was about two inches long. Hippolyte shuddered and turned his head aside. Entrefort, whom nothing escaped, exclaimed:

"Steady, Hippolyte! Observe!"

Quickly was the skin peeled back to the limit of the incisions. This must have been excruciatingly painful. Arnold

groaned, and his hands were moist and cold. Down sank the knife into the flesh from which the skin had been raised, and blood flowed freely; Doctor Rowell handled the sponge. The keen knife worked rapidly. Arnold's marvelous nerve was breaking down. He clutched my hand fiercely; his eyes danced; his mind was weakening. Almost in a moment the flesh had been cut away to the bones, which were now exposed—two ribs and the sternum. A few quick cuts cleared the weapon between the guard and the ribs.

"To work, Hippolyte—be quick!"

The machinist had evidently been coached before he came. With slender, long-fingered hands, which trembled at first, he selected certain tools with nice precision, made some rapid measurements of the weapon and of the cleared space around it, and began to adjust the parts of a queer little machine. Arnold watched him curiously.

"What——" he began to say; but he ceased; a deeper pallor set on his face, his hands relaxed, and his eyelids fell.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Entrefort; "he has fainted—he can't stop us now. Quick, Hippolyte!"

The machinist attached the queer little machine to the handle of the weapon, seized the stiletto in his left hand, and with his right began a series of sharp, rapid movements backward and forward.

"Hurry, Hippolyte!" urged Entrefort.

"The metal is very hard."

"Is it cutting?"

"I can't see for the blood."

In another moment something snapped. Hippolyte started; he was very nervous. He removed the little machine.

"The metal is very hard," he said; "it breaks the saws."

He adjusted another tiny saw and resumed work. After a little while he picked up the handle of the stiletto and laid it on the table. He had cut it off, leaving the blade inside Arnold's body.

"Good, Hippolyte!" exclaimed Entrefort. In a minute he had closed the bright end of the blade from view by drawing together the skin-flaps and sewing them firmly.

Arnold returned to consciousness and glanced down at his breast. He seemed puzzled. "Where is the weapon?" he asked.

"Here is part of it," answered Entrefort, holding up the handle.

"And the blade——"

"That is an irremovable part of your internal machinery." Arnold was silent. "It had to be cut off," pursued Entrefort, "not only because it would be troublesome and an undesirable ornament, but also because it was advisable to remove every possibility of its withdrawal." Arnold said nothing. "Here is a prescription," said Entrefort; "take the medicine as directed for the next five years without fail."

"What for? I see that it contains muriatic acid."

"If necessary I will explain five years from now."

"If I live."

"If you live."

Arnold drew me down to him and whispered, "Tell her to fly at once; this man may make trouble for her."

Was there ever a more generous fellow?

* * * * * * *

I THOUGHT that I recognized a thin, pale, bright face among the passengers who were leaving an Australian

steamer which had just arrived at San Francisco.

"Doctor Entrefort!" I cried.

"Ah!" he said, peering up into my face and grasping my hand; "I know you now, but you have changed. You remember that I was called away immediately after I had performed that crazy operation on your friend. I have spent the intervening four years in India, China, Tibet, Siberia, the South Seas, and God knows where not. But wasn't that a most absurd, hare-brained experiment that I tried on your friend! Still, it was all that could have been done. I have dropped all that nonsense long ago. It is better, for more reasons than one, to let them die at once. Poor fellow! he bore it so bravely! Did he suffer much afterward? How long did he live? A week—perhaps a month?"

"He is alive yet."

"What!" exclaimed Entrefort, startled.

"He is, indeed, and is in this city."

"Incredible!"

"It is true; you shall see him."

"But tell me about him now!" cried the surgeon, his eager eyes glittering with the peculiar light which I had seen in them on the night of the operation. "Has he regularly taken the medicine which I prescribed?"

"He has. Well, the change in him, from what he was before the operation, is shocking. Imagine a young daredevil of twenty-two, who had no greater fear of danger or death than of a cold, now a cringing, cowering fellow; apparently an old man, nursing his life with pitiful tenderness, fearful that at any moment something may happen to break the hold of his aorta-walls on the stiletto-blade; a confirmed hypochondriac, peevish, melancholic, unhappy in the extreme. He keeps himself confined as closely as possible, avoiding all excitement and exercise, and even reads nothing exciting. The constant danger has worn out the last shred of his manhood and left him a pitiful wreck. Can nothing be done for him?"

"Possibly. But has he consulted no physician?"

"None whatever; he has been afraid that he might learn the worst."

"Let us find him at once. Ah, here comes my wife to meet me! She arrived by the other steamer."

I recognized her immediately and was overcome with astonishment.

"Charming woman," said Entrefort; "you'll like her. We were married three years ago at Bombay. She belongs to a noble Italian family and has travelled a great deal."

He introduced us. To my unspeakable relief she remembered neither my name nor my face. I must have appeared odd to her, but it was impossible for me to be perfectly unconcerned. We went to Arnold's rooms, I with much dread. I left her in the reception room and took Entrefort within. Arnold was too greatly absorbed in his own troubles to be dangerously excited by meeting Entrefort, whom he greeted with indifferent hospitality.

"But I heard a woman's voice," he said. "It sounds——" He checked himself. and before I could intercept him he had gone to the reception room; and there he stood face to face with the beautiful adventuress—none other than Entrefort's wife now—who, wickedly desperate, had driven a stiletto into Arnold's vitals in a hotel four years before because he had refused to marry her. They recognized each other instantly and both grew pale;

but she, quicker witted, recovered her composure at once and advanced toward him with a smile and an extended hand. He stepped back, his face ghastly with fear.

"Oh!" he gasped, "the excitement, the shock—it has made the blade slip out! The blood is pouring from the opening —it burns—I am dying!" and he fell into my arms and instantly expired.

The autopsy revealed the surprizing fact that there was no blade in his thorax at all; it had been gradually consumed by the muriatic acid which Entrefort had prescribed for that very purpose, and the perforations in the aorta had closed up gradually with the wasting of the blade and had been perfectly healed for a long time. All his vital organs were sound. My poor friend, once so reckless and brave, had died simply of a childish and groundless fear, and the woman unwittingly had accomplished her revenge.

The Curse of Ximu-tal

(Continued from page 161)

tains—*and know that you were not alone?* Eh? That was the way it was with me. *I wasn't alone!* Not any longer. Somewhere in the shadows just out of reach of my torch it was waiting for me. I knew.

"And all at once it came to me that the room was no longer still. I didn't know what it was. It sounded like the slow running back of a wave over the pebbles. It was a sound that went with the smell of the place; a sound that whispered with the voice of all the evil of thousands and thousands of years.

"The sound was all around me, coming in from the dark shadows of the walls. I blew my torch into flame, half burned as it was, and held it high over my head, sparks dropping down on me like rain.

"And I saw it. All about the room, flowing over the stone floor like a green river, was the body of a snake. I tell you, sir, that snake was old. Big as my leg, it was; thickening and pulsing and lengthening out; tightening and drawing closer in to the coffin of Ximu-tal, and me; making a coil all the way around that room. I didn't see the snake's head at first, off in the shadows; just that thick green cable of a body as it pulsed and flowed.

"I was weak as water. I knew I was done, finished. I knew that Ximu-tal's snake was going to crush me against that stone coffin, just as he had crushed the other white man. I knew that my bones were going to join his there on the floor of the great room—when the snake was done. Just like that other white man—only there wasn't any *mozo* with me to carry my canteen and gun back to his hut.

"I hadn't thought of that gun before. I wouldn't have had the guts to get it out now, but my fingers were on that bit of jade in my pocket, that fighting elephant. It was like it was whispering to me, telling me to fight. I got the heavy gun in my hand. The snake was close now, the green folds two deep all around where I stood backed up against old Ximu-tal's coffin.

"And then I saw the head. Floating in the air it was, that head, just like the carved head in the chamber above. Close. The jaws were open, and I could see that fiery patch of red in its throat, eyes of jade above. Fire and ice, and both wicked as hell.

"I SHOT, five times I shot, straight at that hungry, flaming throat. I hit it, too. God, the anger of that snake! Writhing, smashing, swinging—I tell you, sir, I don't know how I got away. Ximu-tal's coffin went over, wrecked, with a crash that shook the stone floor under my feet. Something splintered like breaking glass, and a green spark flashed by me, the broken head of the jade snake. Even then I felt bad to think of that beautiful jade carving all broken and smashed.

"I was in the passage, Ximu-tal's great snake coming after me, blood dripping from its angry jaws. The gun was empty. The trigger clicked once, twice, on the empty chamber, and I threw the gun at that bloody head. I had nothing else; nothing but the stub of my burned-out torch. And I threw that back as I ran; threw it back like a crimson ribbon down the black passage.

"All the long way up I could hear Ximu-tal's snake coming, like the flowing of water over pebbles. And I ran. God, how I ran! I threw off my coat, my gun belt. I tell you, sir, I was afraid as I never had been afraid before.

"I ran. Up through the dark, up into that chamber with the carved snake of Ximu-tal running about it, the carved head ready to strike. I thought it would strike. I could not stir the carven stone of the floor. I ran on, feeling with my hands along the wall for that blessed way out, finding it, and scrambling up the dug passage, bumping my head, stumbling;

all the time hearing behind me the dreadful flowing of the angry snake.

"I tell you, sir, I was desperate. It was terrible; the soft, pressing darkness that held me back as I ran, and behind me, closer and closer, the coming of that great green snake of Ximu-tal's. All this time I had in my hand that tiny piece of jade, the carven elephant fighting the serpent. I did not know that I held it. I do not know, sir, how it found its way to my fingers, but I held it. And now I turned and threw it. I threw it with all my strength into the thick darkness where the old priest's snake was coming.

"It was then my shoulder in the darkness hit the stake that other man had put in the passage to prop up the rock in the roof. I struck it, and knocked it down with the weight of my body. I was running, and I was afraid, and I hit it hard. The stake came down, and I fell over it.

"Behind me, just at my feet, the big rock fell down from the roof; and like water the little rocks and sand flowed after it, faster and faster. The sand poured over my feet as I lay there, trembling.

"No, sir, I do not know how I got out of there. I do not know how I got out of that dead city where warfare had been between Ximu-tal of the snake, and the priests of the elephant. I do not know how long I wandered in the jungle until I came to the plantation. They did not believe me when I told of the snake—of the two snakes—of Ximu-tal.

"Jade is an evil thing. I tell you, sir, it holds all the wickedness of all the ages since it was made in the furnaces of those evil priests of the lost Atlantis. But I'd like to see that great carved piece again."

The Hills of the Dead

(Continued from page 173)

strife. He halted, frozen. Down the slope the black horde was fleeing and over their heads and close at their shoulders flew huge vultures, tearing and rending avidly, sinking their beaks in the dead black flesh, devouring the vampires as they fled.

Kane laughed, almost insanely.

"Defy man and God, but you may not deceive the vultures, sons of Satan! They know whether a man be alive or dead!"

N'Longa stood like a prophet on the pinnacle and the great black birds soared and wheeled about him. His arms still waved and his voice still wailed out across the hills. And over the skylines they came, hordes on endless hordes—vultures, vultures, vultures! come to the feast so long denied them. They blackened the sky with their numbers, blotted out the sun; a strange darkness fell on the land. They settled in long dusky lines, diving into the caverns with a whir of wings and a clash of beaks. Their talons tore at the black horrors which these caves disgorged.

Now all the vampires were fleeing to their city. The vengeance held back for ages had come down on them and their last hope was the heavy walls which had kept back the desperate human foes. Under those crumbling roofs they might find shelter. And N'Longa watched them stream into the city, and he laughed until the crags re-echoed.

Now all were in and the birds settled

like a cloud over the doomed city, perching in solid rows along the walls, sharpening their beaks and claws on the towers.

And N'Longa struck flint and steel to a bundle of dry leaves he had brought with him. The bundle leaped into instant flame and he straightened and flung the blazing thing far out over the cliffs. It fell like a meteor to the plateau beneath, showering sparks. The tall grass of the plateau leaped aflame.

From the silent city beneath them Fear flowed in unseen waves, like a white fog. Kane smiled grimly.

"The grass is sere and brittle from the drouth," he said; "there has been even less rain than usual this season; it will burn swiftly."

Like a crimson serpent the fire ran through the high dead grass. It spread and it spread and Kane, standing high above, yet felt the fearful intensity of the hundreds of red eyes which watched from the stone city.

Now the scarlet snake had reached the walls and was rearing as if to coil and writhe over them. The vultures rose on heavily flapping wings and soared reluctantly. A vagrant gust of wind whipped the blaze about and drove it in a long red sheet around the wall. Now the city was hemmed in on all sides by a solid barricade of flame. The roar came up to the two men on the high crag.

Sparks flew across the wall, lighting in the high grass in the streets. A score of flames leaped up and grew with terrifying speed. A veil of red cloaked streets and buildings, and through this crimson, whirling mist Kane and N'Longa saw hundreds of black shapes scamper and writhe, to vanish suddenly in red bursts of flame. There rose an intolerable scent of decayed flesh burning.

Kane gazed, awed. This was truly a hell on earth. As in a nightmare he looked into the roaring red cauldron where black insects fought against their doom and perished. The flames leaped a hundred feet in air, and suddenly above their roar sounded one bestial, inhuman scream like a shriek from across nameless gulfs of cosmic space, as one vampire, dying, broke the chains of silence which had held him for untold centuries. High and haunting it rose, the death cry of a vanishing race.

Then the flames dropped suddenly. The conflagration had been a typical grass fire, short and fierce. Now the plateau showed a blackened expanse and the city a charred and smoking mass of crumbling stone. Not one corpse lay in view, not even a charred bone. Above all whirled the dark swarms of the vultures, but they, too, were beginning to scatter.

Kane gazed hungrily at the clean blue sky. Like a strong sea wind clearing a fog of horror was the sight to him. From somewhere sounded the faint and far-off roaring of a distant lion. The vultures were flapping away in black, straggling lines.

5. *Palaver Set!*

KANE sat in the mouth of the cave where Zunna lay, submitting to the fetish-man's bandaging.

The Puritan's garments hung in tatters about his frame; his limbs and breast were deeply gashed and darkly bruised, but he had had no mortal wound in that deathly fight on the cliff.

"Mighty men, we be!" declared N'Longa with deep approval. "Vampire city be silent now, sure 'nough! No walking dead man live along these hills."

"I do not understand," said Kane, resting chin on hand. "Tell me, N'Longa, how have you done things? How talked you with me in my dreams; how came you into the body of Kran; and how summoned you the vultures?"

"My blood-brother," said N'Longa, discarding his pride in his pidgin English, to drop into the river language understood by Kane, "I am so old that you would call me a liar if I told you my age. All my life I have worked magic, sitting first at the feet of mighty ju-ju men of the south and the east; then I was a slave to the Buckra — the white man — and learned more. My brother, shall I span all these years in a moment and make you understand with a word, what has taken me so long to learn? I could not even make you understand how these vampires have kept their bodies from decay by drinking the lives of men.

"I sleep and my spirit goes out over the jungle and the rivers to talk with the sleeping spirits of my friends. There is a mighty magic on the voodoo staff I gave you—a magic out of the Old Land which draws my ghost to it as a white man's magnet draws metal."

Kane listened unspeaking, seeing for the first time in N'Longa's glittering eyes something stronger and deeper than the avid gleam of the worker in black magic. To Kane it seemed almost as if he looked into the far-seeing and mystic eyes of a prophet of old.

"I spoke to you in dreams," N'Longa went on, "and I made a deep sleep come over the souls of Kran and of Zunna, and remove them to a far dim land, whence they shall soon return, unremembering. All things bow to magic, blood-brother, and beasts and birds obey the master words. I worked strong voodoo, vulture-magic, and the flying people of the air gathered at my call.

"These things I know and am a part of, but how shall I tell you of them? Blood-brother, you are a mighty warrior, but in the ways of magic you are as a little child lost. And what has taken me long dark years to know, I may not divulge to you so you would understand. My friend, you think only of bad spirits, but were my magic always bad, should I not take this fine young body in place of my old wrinkled one and keep it? But Kran shall have his body back safely.

"Keep the voodoo staff, blood brother. It has mighty power against all sorcerers and serpents and evil things. Now I return to the village on the Coast where my true body sleeps. And what of you, my blood-brother?"

Kane pointed silently eastward.

"The call grows no weaker. I go."

N'Longa nodded, held out his hand. Kane grasped it. The mystical expression had gone from the dusky face and the eyes twinkled snakily with a sort of reptilian mirth.

"Me go now, blood-brother," said the fetish-man, returning to his beloved jargon, of which knowledge he was prouder than all his conjuring tricks. "You take care—that one fellow jungle, she pluck your bones yet! Remember that voodoo stave, brother. *Ai ya,* palaver set!"

He fell back on the sand, and Kane saw the keen sly expression of N'Longa fading from the face of Kran. His flesh crawled again. Somewhere back on the Slave Coast, the body of N'Longa, withered and wrinkled, was stirring in the ju-ju hut, was rising as if from a deep sleep. Kane shuddered.

Kran sat up, yawned, stretched and smiled. Beside him the girl Zunna rose, rubbing her eyes.

"Master," said Kran apologetically, "we must have slumbered."

Pigmy Island

(Continued from page 192)

stumbled away from the buildings and down toward the island's shore thin curls of smoke lifted from the two structures. They reached the shore of the island, opposite that where Russell had first landed, and there was the long boathouse with still upon its door the lock that Garland had placed there. They crashed into it, and in moments had the cabin-boat out and heading with noisy motor away from the island.

Clouds of dark smoke were lifting skyward from the island's higher center as the flames ate the two buildings there. The sunset's level rays struck in vain against their black and billowing masses. Snelling held the boat westward away from the island, Lowerman and Hall and Johnson sprawled in its cockpit. Wallace pointed back with unsteady hand to the lifting smoke-clouds as he and Russell gazed.

"There never were any of Garland's compounds—never any pigmies that he made with them from men," he said. "Never anything but an accidental fire that caught Garland. You understand?"

Russell nodded weakly. "Better so," he whispered. "Better that the world hear it so——"

He crouched with Wallace, looking back still. The island was dropping behind, vanishing in the waters, but the smoke from it rose visible still into the heavens like a great black column, an enormous sign. Their eyes could mark it still, though the island itself had passed from sight. Snelling, though, had not turned, had not looked, heading the boat straight onward into the setting sun.

there clawing frantically ... was ..."the THING"!

ONLY a moment before, in the dead night, she had been awakened by strange scraping noise. Her heart thum ing wildly she looked fearfully around the roo but at first could see nothing. Suddenly her hea stopped beating—for there at the window was t THING—awful, inhuman, its two hands clawing frantically the glass!

She shook in terror—for she knew only too well what had ha pened to others! Now ***she*** was at its mercy!

What, indeed, was this weird thing of evil? What was its u canny power? What awful fate lay ahead of this beautiful gi alone and unprotected?

This and hundreds of other amazing cases tha only Scotland Yard can solve await you in thes thrilling books here offered for the first time in a uniform binding in

The NEW SCOTLAND YARD MYSTER LIBRARY

By CHARLES BARRY—W. S. MASTERMAN—H. C. BAILEY

12 Gripping Volumes of the Most Puzzling Mysteries Ever Written—At a bargain if you act promptly!

DRAW up your chair and prepare for the most thrilling hours of your life, for these are the amazing stories of Scotland Yard itself by three of Britain's greatest writers of detective mysteries—Barry, Masterman and Bailey!

Here indeed is your rare opportunity to get behind the scenes and watch the keenest minds of Scotland Yard solve their most baffling cases.

Good Mystery Stories a Great Boon

Why do you constantly read in the papers that many of our most famous men are devotees of the mystery story—men like Ex-Premier Baldwin, Thomas A. Edison and Ambassador Morrow?

It is because they have discovered that good mystery stories rout worries, stimulate the imagination, sharpen the wits, and give complete relaxation!

Nowhere else indeed will you receive so much enjoyment for so little money as in these 3,300 extraordinary pages of gripping tales—stories you will read over and over with increasing delight!

Introductory Bargain Offer
37% off Publisher's Price

To help secure quick introduction we are offering a limited number of these superb sets at 37% below the publisher's price! But to secure this bargain you must ACT QUICKLY!

Complete Sets
FREE ON APPROVAL

Simply mail the coupon today and read them 10 days free. Then if not delighted, return at our expense. But act quickly before the edition is exhausted!

Mail the Bargain Coupon Now!

YOU RISK NOTHING—MAIL NOW!

Dep
34
8-3
McKINLA
STONE &
MACKENZ
114 E. 16 St., N.

Send me for free e
amination, charg
prepaid, The Ne
Scotland Yard Myster
Library in 12 volume
handsomely bound in cloth
If at the end of 10 days I a
more than delighted, I wi
keep them and send you $
promptly and $1 a month ther
after for only 14 months. Othe
wise, I will return the set in
days at your expense, the examina
tion to cost me nothing.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

Occupation .....

(5% off for cash) Age: Over 21?..... Under 21?.....

McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, Dept. 342
114 East 16th Street, New York, N. Y.

Classics of Weird Literature

Autographed by the Author

The Wind That Tramps the World

by FRANK OWEN

Splashes of *Chinese Color*

ACCLAIMED BY CRITICS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

New York Times: "Fanciful, touched by the supernatural, exotic in thought and coloring. Flowers, poems, music and jade are interwoven with their themes and the effect is often both quaint and charming."

The China Weekly Review, Shanghai, China: "Reveals a true sense of gentleness, the heart of a dreamer, a deep sense of rhythm and beauty. He sees China and the Chinese through misty, naive, sometimes philosophic eyes."

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Honolulu, Hawaii: "They are strange and glowing tales of an unearthly beauty. Their scenes are laid in China but they might be anywhere. They are essentially a part of the history of those lost lands where Dunsany's heroes live and die magnificently and where Walter de la Mare's dark travelers knock vainly at mysterious moonlit doors."

Daily Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, S. D.: "This is a collection to be read, laid down and read again."

Wilmington Every Evening, Wilmington, Del.: "Deserves a place among one's favorite books."

Ohio State Journal, Columbus, Ohio: "There is some weirdness here, some mystery and some tender passages, enough of each to make a superlative ensemble that won for this author a secure place in the field of Far East fiction."

Radio Station KDKA, Pittsburgh: "For those who are interested in Chinese literature and traditions, we believe this book will find a cordial welcome. A very beautiful book."

The Globe, Toronto, Ont.: "Dealing with curious phases of Chinese life, they are imaginative, colorful and replete with poetry. For the first of these qualities they might be likened to some of the creations of Edgar Allan Poe, but even the weirdest of them possess a tenderness to which Poe was a stranger."

Arizona Republican, Phoenix, Ariz.: "It is not often that such a book, as deserving of praise and as full of real literary merit as "The Wind That Tramps the World," comes our way. This sounds like effusiveness, but it isn't. It's merely giving credit for a real literary achievement. . . . They are masterpieces of a rich imagination, deep and gripping in their beauty and romance."

ANNOUNCING

Frank Owen's Latest Book

"THE PURPLE SEA"

More Splashes of Chinese Color

JUST OFF THE PRESS

"The Purple Sea" is a vivid weird story of Chinese pirates and bloody adventure in the South Seas

SPECIAL AUTOGRAPHED FIRST EDITIONS

Here are some real gems of literature. Poetic and fanciful Chinese stories with a real thrill to them. These are stories that deserve to live forever. Their ethereal sweetness will grip you. Both books are special first editions *autographed by the author*. These books are very artistically bound and would make an excellent gift to a friend or a valuable addition to your own library. Remember, first edition copies grow more valuable with the years and when autographed become doubly valuable. Order today. Price $1.50 each postpaid.

Weird Tales, Book Dept. F. O.
840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $_____. Please send me an autographed first edition of—

☐ "The Wind that Tramps the World"

☐ "The Purple Sea"

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State_____