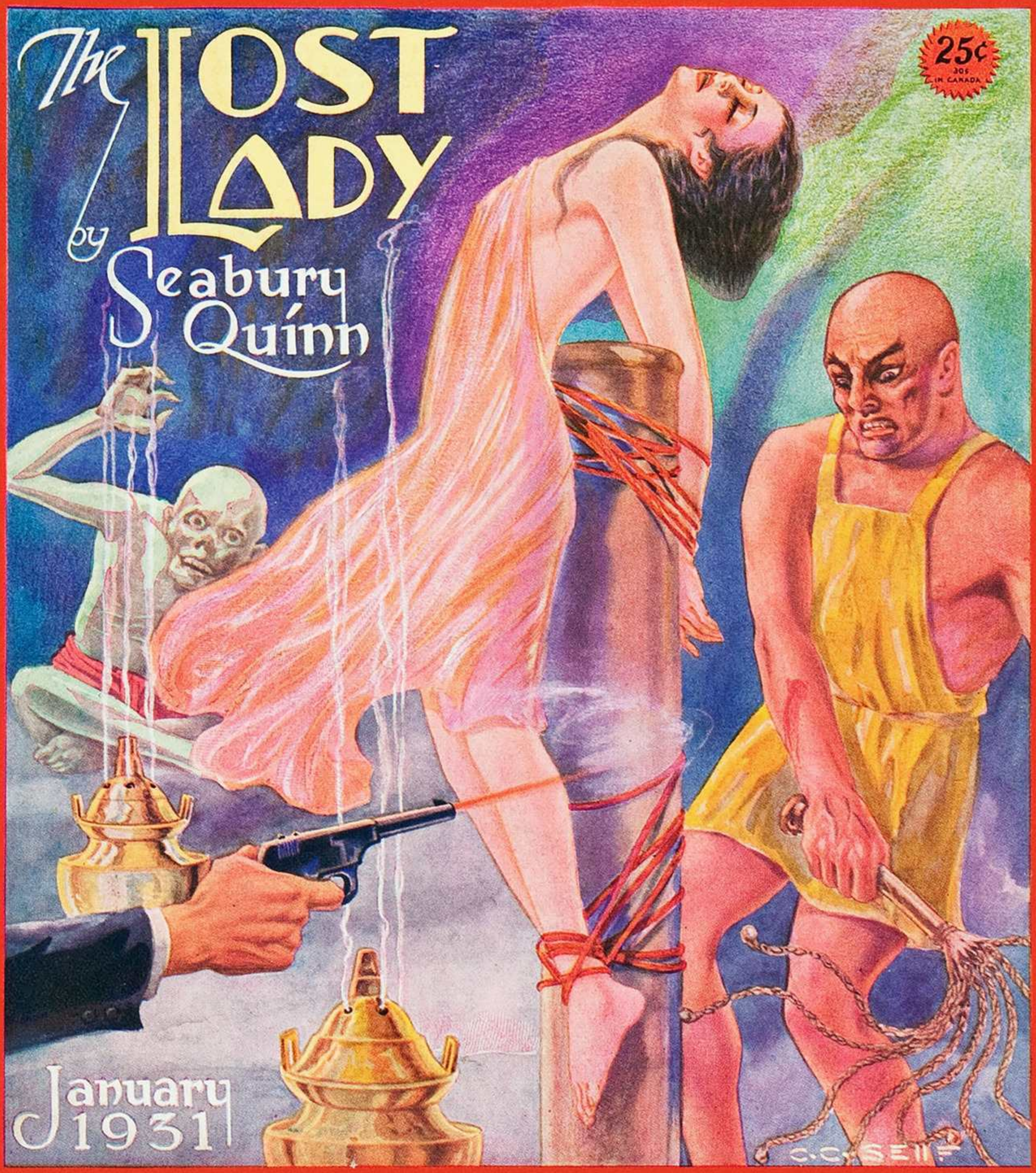
Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine



INTRODUCING

«»

A new magazine, the want of which has long been felt. Its name is: ORIENTAL STORIES. It will be the purpose of this magazine to present in fiction the glamor and mystery of the East. The Orient makes a romantic appeal to the imagination that no other part of the world can equal. The inscrutable mystery of Tibet, the veiled allure of Oriental harems, the charge of fierce Arab tribesmen, the singing of almond-eyed maidens under a Japanese moon, the whirling of dervishes, the barbaric splendor of mediæval sultans, the ageless life of Egypt—from all these the story-writers weave charms to shut out the humdrum world of everyday life, and transport the reader into a fairyland of imagination, but a fairyland that exists in its full reality in Asia.

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THE VEILED LEOPARD, by G. G. Pendarves. An exciting story of the slave trade and a half-breed Arab leader whom the Touareggs called the Leopard.

THE CHINA KID, by Frank Owen. Yih Yoh's protestations of meekness masked the cruel heart of a tiger—a strange novelette of the China Sea.

GESTURE OF THE GODS, by Guy Fletcher. The curse that took the lives of the despoilers of King Tut-ankh-amen's tomb is firmly believed in Egypt today—a vivid story of Luxor and the Valley of the Kings.

GOLDEN ROSEBUD, by Dorota Flatau. A grim story of a blighted Chinese romance and the unutterable cruelty of China under the Mandarins.

THE SCOURGE OF MEKTOUB, by Paul Ernst. African black magic was called to aid the Rose of Meknes when confronted with the horrible punishment devised by Lakhdar, the sinister Arab captain.

WITH THE VENEER RIPPED OFF, by Lee Robinson. A startling, red-blodded tale of Morocco and the Spanish Foreign Legion in the Riff campaign.

THE SACRED CANNON RECOILS, by Pollok Guiler. A tale of murder, intrigue, piracy, and the opium traffic in the Dutch East Indies.

THE VENGEANCE OF SA'IK, by Otis Adelbert Kline. A stirring tale of the Arab revolt against Turkey during the World War—a story of the desert and the unleashed blood-lust of a fierce race of warriors.

THE GREEN JADE GOD, by John Briggs. An unusual story about three enemies, one blind, one deaf and one tongueless, who were forced into a strange comradeship—a story of India and a native idol.

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL



VOLUME XVII NUMBER 1

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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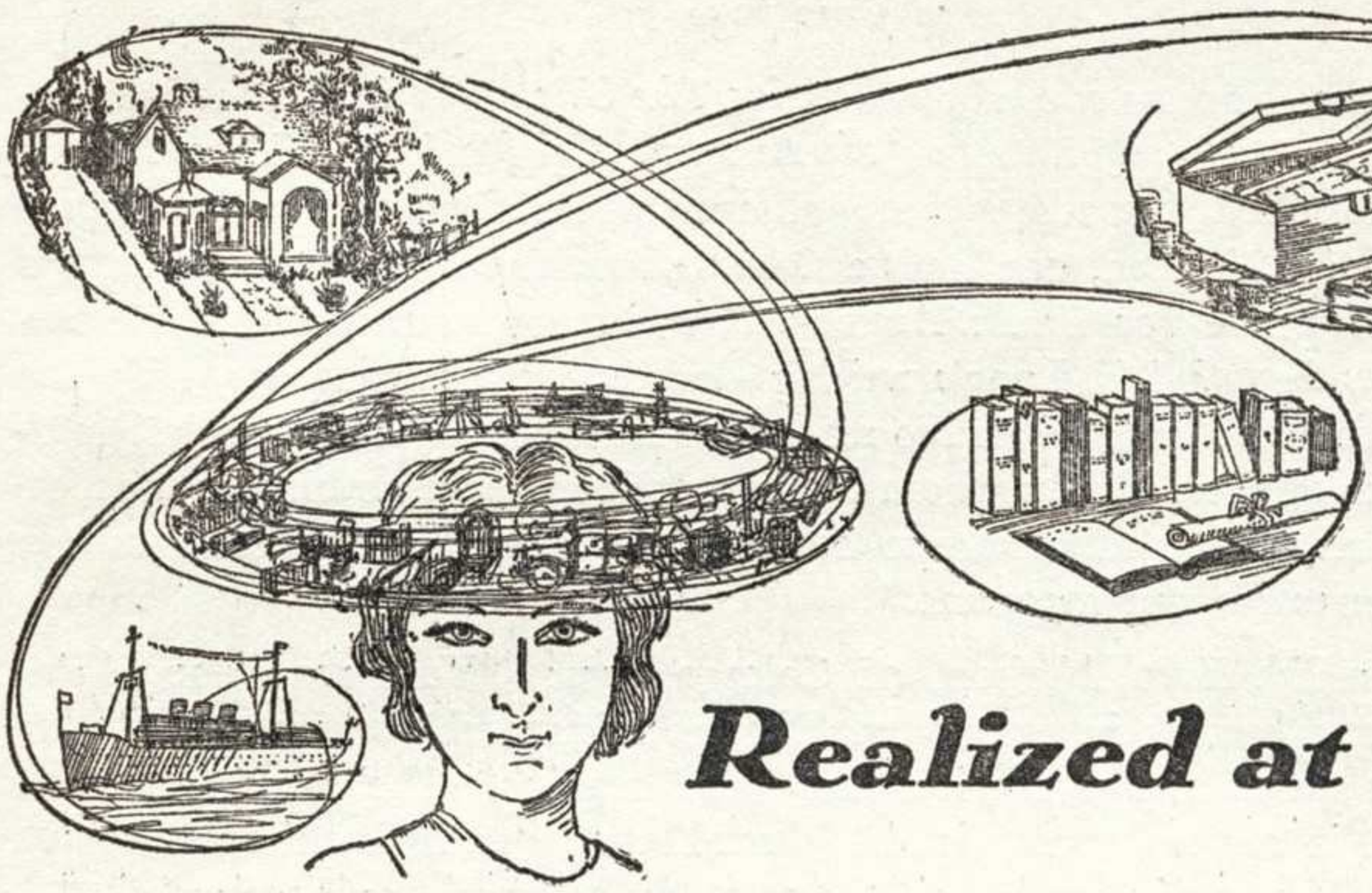
KULL, the king of Valusia, has captured the imagination of WEIRD TALES readers, to judge by the enthusiastic letters that you have written to this department commending Robert E. Howard's latest story, *Kings of the Night*. Just as *The Shadow Kingdom* and *The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune* aroused vast enthusiasm, so has this latest story in the series fired the readers by the compelling sweep of its fantasy and the strange power of its style. *Kings of the Night* easily took first place in the voting for favorite story in the November issue.

A letter from Doctor C. P. Binford, of Huntsville, Alabama, says: "The story, *Kings of the Night,* is undoubtedly the very best I have ever read in your most wonderful magazine. I am only an Alabama country doctor; but no one reads your magazine with any more appreciation than I do. It is a godsend. In *Kings of the Night,* ethnology, geography, ancient history of lost continents and forgotten races, with a skilfully blended modern version of the latest theories of Space and Time, are masterfully interwoven into a most interesting tale, that bears in every paragraph the stamp and touch of the very highest type of literary genius. Verily, I thought the same author's *Moon of Skulls* could not be surpassed; but *Kings of the Night* is as far above it as the present-day American is above the ape-man of Java. Literature owes a stupendous debt to Robert E. Howard, greatest writer of the Twentieth Century. Give us, please, some more interstellar stories like Edmond Hamilton's *The Cosmic Cloud*. I really like to leave this minor planet in a second-rate solar system and visit the great worlds of Antares, Betelgeuse, etc."

"My favorite author, head and shoulders above all others, is Robert E. Howard," writes Doctor Arthur H. Burlong, of Philadelphia. "His stories are all splendid. I have on my library shelves every number of WEIRD TALES from number one to date, and now I hope to add to this wealth of reading matter this new and virgin field of literature offered by the companion magazine, ORIENTAL STORIES. WEIRD TALES fills a place with me that no other magazine can fill, but I will welcome gladly this new one sponsored by you."

James Gartlan, of Toronto, Canada, who signs himself "A WIERD TALES fan forever," writes to the Eyrie: "I have been a constant reader of WEIRD TALES since 1926 and have enjoyed immensely every story in it. It sure is a long hard wait between issues but it is worth while to obtain the very interesting stories which are the keynote of WEIRD TALES. My most ardent plea for you is just keep WEIRD TALES as it has been for the past four years, unique in every respect, awe-inspiring and thoroughly interesting."

(Continued on page 6)



Realized at last!

Your Thought Pictures Turned Into Realities

VISUALIZING and dreaming of the things you need in life only creates them in the mind and does not bring them into living realities of usefulness. If you can visualize easily or if there are certain definite needs in your life which you can plainly see in your mind and are constantly visualizing them as the dreams of your life, you should waste no more time in holding them in the thought world but bring them into the material world of realities. What your mind can think and create, you can bring into realization if you know how. Don't waste your life and happiness that should be yours by dreaming of the things you need. Make them become your possessions and serve you.

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For years I dreamed of the things I wanted and searched in vain for ways to bring the dreams into realization. I followed all the methods of concentration and I used affirmations and formulas to bring things to me from the so-called abundant supply of the Cosmic, but still I dreamed on and on without any realization of my fondest hopes. All of the instructions I read and lectures I heard simply helped me to build up thought pictures in my mind and to visualize more clearly the things I needed, but nothing brought them into realization.

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You need not search as I had to for I will be happy to send you a fascinating book that tells a different story than any you may have ever read and it explains how you, too, may use the simple methods which I found and which have helped thousands to start new lives creating out of their mind power the things they need in life. I will be glad to send you this book, if you are sincere, called "THE LIGHT OF EGYPT," if you will write to me personally asking for it.

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(Continued from page 4)

"I would like to express my admiration for *The Uncharted Isle* in the November issue," writes Genevieve K. Sully, of Auburn, California. "Clark Ashton Smith's work always has literary distinction, and when that quality is coupled with superb weird imagination, one finds a story well worth reading. May I express a belated word of praise for Frank Belknap Long's story in the September number, *The Man from Egypt?* Mr. Long's writing denotes an acquaintance with the finer things, and I for one should be glad to read more from one with his scholarly attitude of mind. Both of these writers whom I have mentioned have nothing of the commonplace about their work, and you are to be congratulated upon your good taste in including their stories in your magazine."

A letter from Ed. Esko Abelson, of Chicago, says: "Your magazine is improving by leaps and bounds in every way. Though this month's adventure of Jules de Grandin is just a murder mystery, it makes good reading. The story par excellence in this issue, in my estimation, is *A Million Years After.* It is quite an unusual plot. *Tales of the Werewolf Clan* has all the earmarks of a real tragic series."

Charles Sharts, of Fremont, Ohio, bursts into verse in a letter to the Eyrie: "Now in my happy married life, Each month there is a day When there is more or less of strife, And not so much of play. It is the day WEIRD TALES comes out: It happens every time, My wife calls me a lazy lout, Says I'm not worth a dime. With that book—it's a spooky one—I find an easy seat. What care I if the work's not done? The stories can't be beat. What care I if the coal's not in Or if the wood's not split? If there's no wood in the wood bin, Let her take care of it. What care I if I milk the cows, Or if I feed the sows? I don't care if I feed the chicks, Or trim the oil lamp wicks. Sometimes I get a dirty look And she gets on her upper; But say, if she would get that book, Then I would get no supper."

"Let me voice one criticism of your magazine," writes M. G. Lichty, of Astoria, New York. "I don't believe you should print those interplanetary stories. To my mind they're not weird and have no place in WEIRD TALES, particularly as there are at least three magazines in the field specializing in that type of story. I think the space they occupy could be better devoted to weird stories. Otherwise I have no criticism to make, as I enjoy all the other stories, particularly the few that appear from Lovecraft's pen."

Allen Glasser, of New York City, writes to the Eyrie. "I have been a silent but deeply appreciative reader of WEIRD TALES since its early issues. The first copy I read contained Lovecraft's unforgettable story, *The Rats in the Walls,* and *Ashes,* by C. M. Eddy, among others. Since that far-gone day, WEIRD TALES has been a constant source of entertainment to me—entertainment of a sort not often found in this prosaic world. I often wish that I might again experience the thrill of reading for the first time such incomparable masterpieces as *The Woman of the Wood* by Merritt; *Across Space* by Hamilton; *The Tenants of Broussac* by Quinn; *When the Green Star Waned* by Dyalhis; *On the Dead Man's Chest* by Colter—but I can not remember them all. Nor would I give the impression that I consider the old stories better than the new. I derive unbounded enjoyment from every issue of WEIRD

(Continued on page 8)



"But I Thought That Book Was Suppressed!" *Gasped Bess!*

"How On Earth Did You Ever Get It?"

IF Gloria Swanson and the Prince of Wales had suddenly walked into the room together, it couldn't have created a bigger sensation!

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(Continued from page 6)

TALES, and I am always eager for the next. But the true value of a story can best be gaged in retrospect. So, if I cast a wistful eye at bygone days, it is only because time has proved their worth."

"Glad to see Old King Kull back with us again," writes Alonso Leonard, of Portsmouth, Ohio. "Let us have more stories about him. But don't ask me which story I like best—that is an impossibility, as they are all best. However, I believe, and the readers will agree with me, that those stories which are linked together by a well-known character have more interest than those which are absolutely new. Such stories as those about Jules de Grandin, King Kull, the Overlord of Cornwall and the Werewolf of Ponkert are always sure to hit the mark. This is not a plea to publish no more new stories—only give us more of the 'connected' kind."

Paul Thibault, of San Diego, California, writes to the Eyrie: "I certainly enjoyed Francis Flagg's story, *The Jelly-Fish*. It is a pity we readers can't read more of his stuff. It is nearly a year since his *The Dancer in the Crystal* appeared in your magazine. What's the matter? I believe that I am not the only reader of WEIRD TALES who would enjoy reading more of Flagg's stories in the future. His stories are *good*, that's why! Give us more stories on the order of *The Dancer in the Crystal*."

Radio station WTAM, Cleveland, is giving you the opportunity of hearing Jules de Grandin and other WEIRD TALES story-characters enact their thrilling adventures over the air. If you want a real treat, listen in on WTAM every Wednesday at 12 midnight, Eastern standard time, and you will hear a dramatization of a fascinating story from this magazine.

"I wish WEIRD TALES had a little department about the authors who write the stories in it," suggests Herbert Sloan, of Zanesville, Ohio. "Most of us readers are interested in the writers of WEIRD TALES, and would enjoy knowing more about them, and where they 'dig up' the stuff that makes these interesting tales. I have often wondered if Seabury Quinn ever studied medicine. Before I call this day complete, I am going out in search of the new magazine, ORIENTAL STORIES, and feel sure I am going to like it too."

"A few months ago," writes Elvia B. Scott, of Boston, "I started reading WEIRD TALES to kill time while traveling. I found it so delightful and diverting that I have waited eagerly for it ever since. In the October issue *The Mind-Master* by Edmond Hamilton has a wonderful grip. *The Last Incarnation* by Wallace West has the fantastic pull, and brings out the religious viewpoint of forgiveness. Can't we have more of his? A good one by him in a back number I secured was a fanciful one—something about flowers being converted into nodding ladies' heads. Give us some longer ones if possible. Do you ever have continued stories by him?"

A tribute to Henry S. Whitehead is paid by William M. Tanner, of Sandusky, Ohio, in a letter to the Eyrie. "A few years back," writes Mr. Tanner, "a copy of WEIRD TALES fell into my hands at a wayside railroad station, as the only means of passing time on a weary train ride. Therein I found a story by Henry S. Whitehead, and I have been a more or less constant reader ever since. The comments of your readers in the Eyrie have always been of interest, but while Whitehead has received

(Continued on page 10)



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(Continued from page 8)

frequent mention he has not had any really adequate comment. His West Indian stories are authentic, but more than this, every one is a finished product. There are no 'wild-eyed' stories, nothing merely 'made up'. He works every one out to the last detail, and bases them on real beliefs and customs which can only come from actual experience in the West Indies. Knowing something about them, I particularly appreciate their reality. His finished style, showing complete knowledge of the English language, gives him, to me, pre-eminence among your writers. No slips, no awkwardness, and a wide vocabulary to put the right word or phrase in every Whitehead story. Every one is a model of pure and beautiful English, painstaking, workmanlike and finished. Take *Black Tancrede,* for example. A dozen readings and you get the same mounting horror and climbing goose-flesh every time. Likewise, *Sweet Grass, The Lips*—more perhaps, than in any other in that first story I read, *Sea Change*—there is a thriller for a reprint, but for that matter there is a tremendous wallop in each of his stories. It is not often that a magazine editor hears from me, but this man has made such an impression, I wanted you to know he secured at least one new reader for WEIRD TALES."

"I was particularly fascinated by the poem by Alice I'Anson in the latest issue," writes Robert E. Howard from his home in Texas. "The writer must surely live in Mexico, for I believe that only one familiar with that ancient land could so reflect the slumbering soul of prehistoric Aztec-land as she has done. There is a difference in a poem written on some subject by one afar off and a poem written on the same subject by one familiar with the very heart of that subject. I have put it very clumsily, but *Teotihuacan* breathes the cultural essence, spirit and soul of Mexico." [Mr. Howard is right: Alice I'Anson, author of the poem *Teotihuacan,* lives in Mexico City.—THE EDITORS.]

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FUNGI · from · YUGGOTH

By H.P. LOVECRAFT



6. NYARLATHOTEP

And at the last from inner Egypt came
  The strange dark One to whom the fellahs bowed;
  Silent and lean and cryptically proud,
And wrapped in fabrics red as sunset flame.
  Throngs pressed around, frantic for his commands,
But leaving, could not tell what they had heard;
While through the nations spread the awestruck word
  That wild beasts followed him and licked his hands.

7. AZATHOTH

Soon from the sea a noxious birth began;
  Forgotten lands with weedy spires of gold;
  The ground was cleft, and mad auroras rolled
Down on the quaking citadels of man.
  Then, crushing what he chanced to mold in play,
  The idiot Chaos blew Earth's dust away.

8. NYARLATHOTEP

Out in the mindless void the dæmon bore me,
  Past the bright clusters of dimensioned space,
Till neither time nor matter stretched before me,
  But only Chaos, without form or place.
Here the vast Lord of All in darkness muttered
  Things he had dreamed but could not understand,
While near him shapeless bat-things flopped and fluttered
  In idiot vortices that ray-streams fanned.

They danced insanely to the high, thin whining
  Of a cracked flute clutched in a monstrous paw,
Whence flow the aimless waves whose chance combining
  Gives each frail cosmos its eternal law.
"I am His Messenger," the dæmon said,
As in contempt he struck his Master's head.



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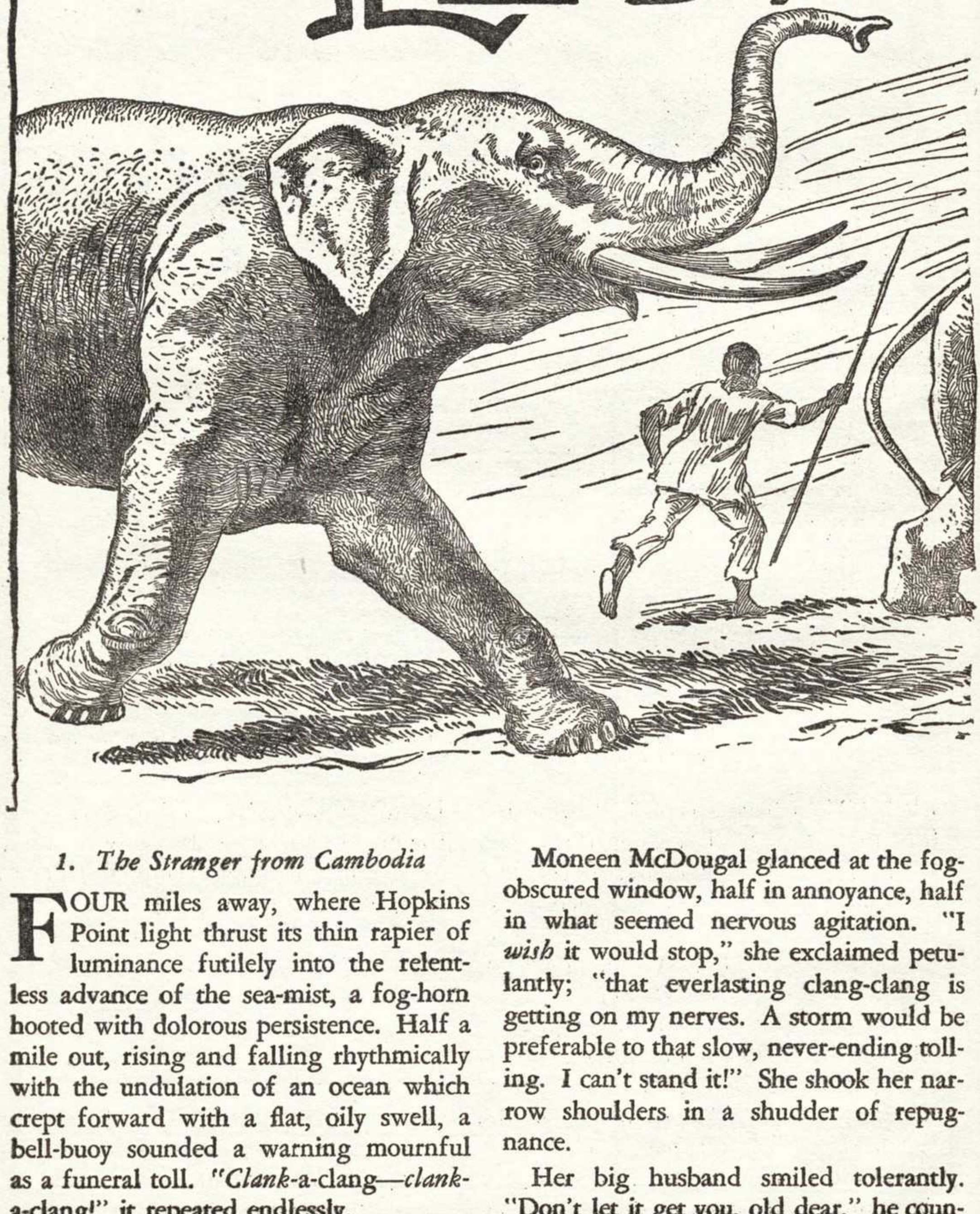
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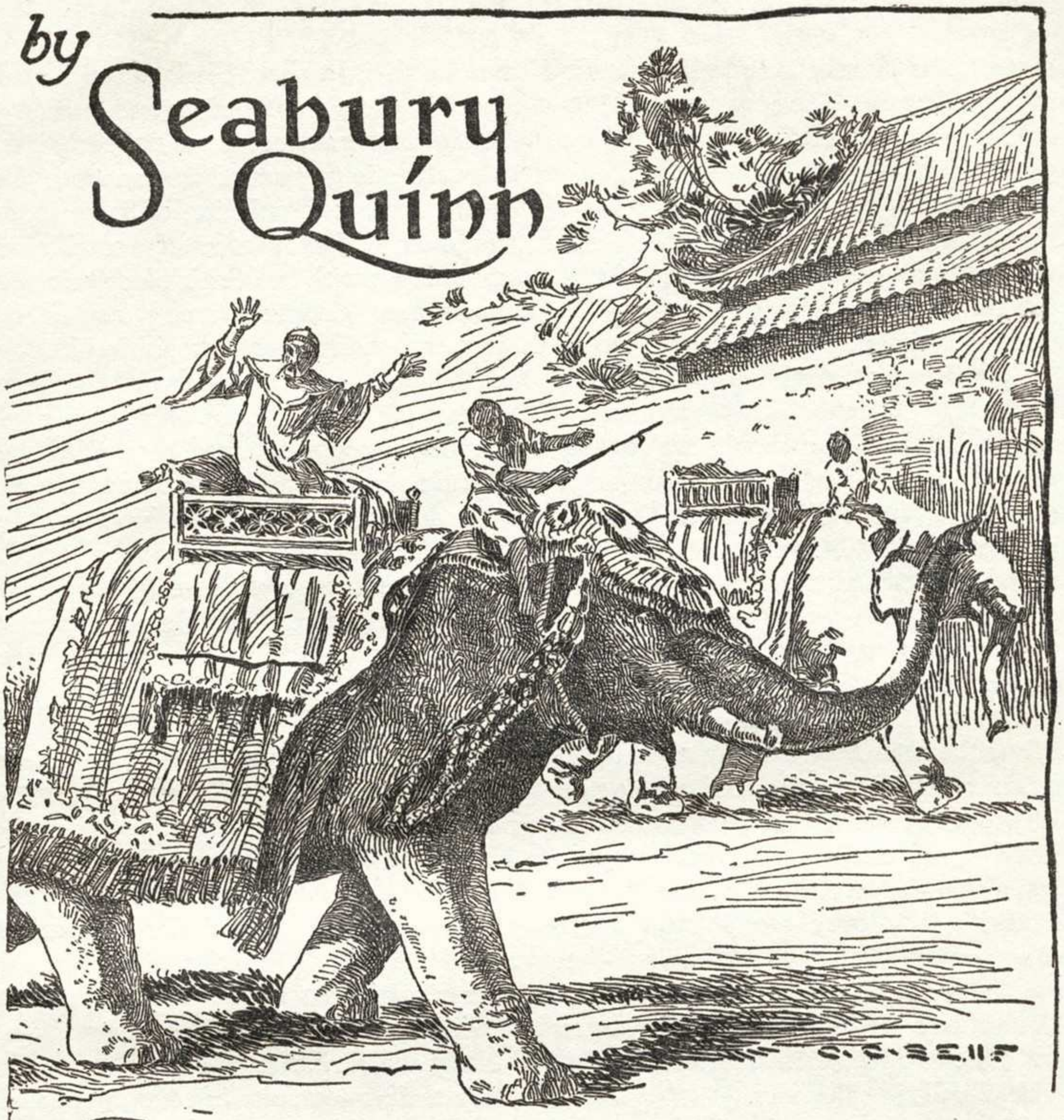
1. *The Stranger from Cambodia*

FOUR miles away, where Hopkins Point light thrust its thin rapier of luminance futilely into the relentless advance of the sea-mist, a fog-horn hooted with dolorous persistence. Half a mile out, rising and falling rhythmically with the undulation of an ocean which crept forward with a flat, oily swell, a bell-buoy sounded a warning mournful as a funeral toll. "*Clank*-a-clang—*clank*-a-clang!" it repeated endlessly.

Moneen McDougal glanced at the fog-obscured window, half in annoyance, half in what seemed nervous agitation. "I *wish* it would stop," she exclaimed petulantly; "that everlasting clang-clang is getting on my nerves. A storm would be preferable to that slow, never-ending tolling. I can't stand it!" She shook her narrow shoulders in a shudder of repugnance.

Her big husband smiled tolerantly. "Don't let it get you, old dear," he coun-

by Seabury Quinn



"The elephant on which Doctor Sun was sitting was directly in the maddened brute's path."

seled. "We'll have a capful of wind before morning; that'll change the tempo for you. This fog won't last; never does this time o' year." To us he added in explanation:

"Moneen's all hot and bothered tonight, her colored boy friend——"

"Dougal!" his wife cut in sharply. "I tell you he *wasn't* a negro. He was a Chinaman—an Oriental of some kind, at any rate. *Ugh!*" she trembled at the recollection. "He sickened me!"

Turning to me, she continued, "I drove into Harrisonville this afternoon, Doctor Trowbridge, and just as I was leaving Braunstein's he stepped up to me. I felt something pawing at my elbow without realizing what it was; then a hand gripped my arm and I turned round. A tall, thin man with a perfect death's-head face was bending forward, grinning right into my eyes. I started back, and he tightened his grip on my arm with one hand and reached the other out to stroke my face. Then I screamed. I couldn't help it, for the touch of those long, bony fingers fairly sickened me.

"Fortunately the doorman happened

to notice us just then, and came running to my assistance. The strange man leaned over and whispered something I couldn't understand in my ear, then made off through the crowd of shoppers before the doorman could lay hold of him. *B-r-r-rh!*" she shuddered again; "I can't get the memory of that face out of my mind. It was too dreadful."

"Oh, he was probably just some harmless nut," Dougal McDougal consoled with a laugh. "You should feel complimented, my dear. Cheerio, Christmas is coming. Licker up!" He poured himself a glassful of Napoleon brandy and raised it toward us with a complimentary gesture.

Jules de Grandin replaced his demitasse on the low tabouret of Indian mahogany and decanted less than a thimbleful of the brandy into a tiny crystal goblet. "*Exquis,*" he pronounced, passing the little glass beneath his narrow nostrils, savoring the ruby liquor's bouquet as a languishing poet might inhale a rose from his lady-love's girdle. "*C'est sans comparaison. Madame, Monsieur* — to you. May you have a truly *joyeux Noël.*" He inclined his head toward our hostess and host in turn, then drained his glass with ritualistic solemnity.

"Oh, but it won't be Christmas for three whole days yet, Doctor de Grandin," Moneen protested, "and Dougal—the horrid old thing—won't tell me what my gift's to be!"

"Night after tomorrow is *la veille de Noël,*" de Grandin reminded with a smile as he refilled his glass, "and we can not be too forehanded with good wishes, *Madame.*"

Dougal McDougal and his bride sat opposite each other across the resined logs that blazed in the wide, marble-manteled fireplace—the cunningly modernized fireplace from a vandalized French château—he, tall, long-limbed, handsome in a dark, bleak, discontented fashion (a trick of nature and heredity, for by temperament he was neither); she, a small, slight wisp of womanhood, the white, creamy complexion of some long-forgotten Norse ancestor combining charmingly with her Celtic black hair and pansy eyes, clad in a scanty *eau-de-Nil* garment, swinging one boyishly-slim leg to display its perfection of cobweb silken sheath and Paris slipper. The big, opulent living-room matched both of them. Electric lamps under painted shades spilled pools of light on bizarre little tables littered with unconsidered trifles —cigarette boxes, bridge-markers, ultra-modern magazines—the deep mahogany bookshelves occupying recesses each side of the mantelpieces hoarded current best-sellers and standard works of poetry indiscriminately, a grand piano stood in the deep oriel window's bay, the radio was cunningly camouflaged in a charming old cabinet of Chinese Chippendale; here and there showed the blurred blue, mulberry and red of priceless old china and the dwarfed perfection of exquisitely chosen miniatures in frames of carved and heavily gilded wood. The room was obviously the shrine of these two, bodying forth their community of treasures, tastes and personalities.

"Give me a cigarette, darling," Moneen, curled up in her deep chair like a Persian kitten on its cushion, extended a bare, scented arm toward her big, handsome husband.

Dougal McDougal proffered her a hammered silver tray of Deities, while de Grandin, not to be outdone in gallantry, leaped nimbly to his feet, snapped his silver pocket lighter into flame and held the blue-blazing wick out to her till she set her cigarette aglow.

"Beg pardon, sir," Tompkins, McDougal's irreproachable butler, bowed deferentially from the arched doorway,

"there's a gentleman here — a foreign gentleman—who insists on seeing Doctor de Grandin at once. He won't give his name, sir, so——"

Quick steps sounded on the polished floor of the hall and an undersized individual shouldered the butler aside with a lack of ceremony I should never have essayed, then glanced menacingly about the room.

On second glance I realized my impression of the visitor's diminutive stature was an error. Rather, he was a giant in miniature. His very lack of height gave the impression of material equilibrium and tremendous physical force. His shoulders were unusually broad and his chest abnormally deep. One felt instinctively that the thews of his arms were massive as those of a gladiator and his torso sheathed in muscles like that of a professional wrestler. A mop of iron-gray hair was brushed back in a pompadour from his wide brow, and a curling white mustache adorned his upper lip, while a wisp of white imperial depended from his sharply pointed chin. But the most startling thing about him was his cold, pale face—a face with the pallor of a statue—from which there burned a pair of big, deep-set, dark eyes beneath horizontal parentheses of intensely black and bushy brows.

Once more the stranger gazed threateningly about; then, as his glowing eyes rested on de Grandin, he announced ominously: "I am here!"

Jules de Grandin's face went blank with amazement, almost with dismay, then lit up with an expression of diabolical savagery. "*Morbleu,* it is the assassin!" he exclaimed incredulously, leaping from his seat and putting himself in a posture of defense.

"*Apache!*" the stranger ground the insult between strong, white teeth which flashed with animal-like ferocity.

"Stealer of superannuated horses!" de Grandin countered, advancing a threatening step toward the other.

"Pickpocket, burglar, highwayman, cut-throat, everything which is execrable!" shouted the intruder with a furious scowl as he shook clenched fists in de Grandin's face.

"*Embrasse moi!*" they cried in chorus, and flung themselves into each other's arms like sweethearts reunited after long parting. For a moment they embraced, kissing each other's cheeks, pounding each other's shoulders with affectionate fists, exchanging deadliest insults in gamin French. Then, remembering himself, de Grandin put the other from him and turned to us with a ceremonious bow.

"Monsieur and Madame McDougal, Doctor Trowbridge," he announced with stilted formality, "I have the very great honor to present Monsieur Georges Jean Joseph Marie Renouard, *Inspecteur du Service de Sûreté Général,* and the cleverest man in all the world—except myself. Georges, abominable stealer-of-blind-men's-sous that you are, permit that I introduce Monsieur and Madame Dougal McDougal, my host and hostess, and Doctor Samuel Trowbridge, skilled physician and as noble a fellow as ever did honor to the sacred name of friend. It is with him I have lived since coming to this country."

Inspecteur Renouard bent forward in a jack-knife bow as he raised Moneen's hand to his lips, bowed again to McDougal, then took my hand in a grip which nearly paralyzed the muscles of my forearm.

"I am delight'," he assured us. "Monsieur Trowbridge, your taste in permitting this one to reside beneath your roof is execrable, no less, but he is clever—almost as clever as I—and doubtless he has imposed on you to make you think him an honest fellow. *Eh bien,* I have

arrived at last like Nemesis to spoil his little game. Me, I shall show him in his true colors, no less!" Having thus unburdened himself, he lapsed into a seat upon the divan, accepted a liqueur, folded his large white hands demurely in his lap and gazed from one of us to the other with a quick, bird-like glance which seemed to take minute inventory of everything it fell upon.

"And what fortunate wind blows you here, *mon brave?*" de Grandin asked at length. "Well I know it is no peaceful mission you travel on, for you were ever the stormy petrel. Tell me, is excitement promised? I grow weary of this so uneventful American life."

"*Tiens,*" Renouard laughed. "I think we shall soon see much excitement—plenty—*mon petit coq.* As yet I have not recovered my land legs after traveling clear about the earth in search of one who is the Devil's other self, but tomorrow the hunt begins afresh, and then—who knows? Yes. Certainly." He nodded gravely to us in turn; then: "Clear from Cambodia I come, my friend, upon the trail of the cleverest and wickedest of clever-wicked fellows—and a lady."

"A lady?" de Grandin's small blue eyes lit up with interest. "You amaze me."

"Prepare for more amazement, then, *mon vieux;* she is a runaway lady, young, beautiful, *ravissante*"—he gathered his fingers at his lips and wafted a kiss gently toward the ceiling—"a runaway *bayadère* from the great temple of Angkor, no less!"

"*Mordieu,* you excite me! What has she done?"

"Run away, decamped; skipped!"

"*Précisément,* great stupid-head; but why should you, an inspector of the secret police, pursue her?"

"She ran away from the temple——" Renouard began again, and:

"*Bête,* repeat that so senseless statement but one more time and I shall give myself the pleasure of twisting your entirely empty head from off your deformed shoulders!" de Grandin broke in furiously.

"——and he whom I seek ran after her," his colleague continued imperturbably. "*Voilà tout.* It is once again a case of *cherchez la femme.*"

"Oh, how interesting!" Moneen exclaimed. "Won't you tell us more, Inspector Renouard?"

Frenchmen are seldom importuned in vain by pretty women. The Inspector was no exception. "Do you know Cambodia, by any unhappy chance?" he asked, flashing his gleaming eyes appreciatively at the length of silk-sheathed leg Moneen displayed as she sat one foot doubled under her, the other hanging toward the floor.

We shook our heads, and he continued: "It is the hottest spot upon the earth, *mes amis*—hot and wet. Always the humidity hovers near one hundred per cent. Your clothes are soaked with perspiration in a few minutes, and will not dry out overnight. Sheets and bedding are useless for the same reason, and one learns to sleep on tightly stretched matting or on bare boards. Clothing mildews and wounds never heal. It is the only land where snakes large enough to kill by constriction are also venomous, and its spiders' bites make that of the tarantula seem harmless by comparison. The natives sleep all day and emerge at night like bats, cats and owls. It is a land unfit for white men."

"But this temple dancer—this Oriental girl?" Moneen insisted. "Why do you follow her here?"

"She is no Oriental, *Madame;* she, too, is white."

"White? A temple dancing-girl? How——"

THE Inspector lit a cigarette before replying: "The Angkor temple is the great cathedral of Buddhism in Southern Asia. But it is a Buddhism gone to seed and overgrown with strange rites, even as the Lamist Buddhism of Tibet is bastardized. Very well. This temple of Angkor is a vast stone structure with sculptured terraces, fountains and houses for the priests and sacred dancers. All ceremonies are held outdoors, the terraces being the scenes of the rites. The debased Buddhism is a religion of the dance. Its services are largely composed of most beautiful and extremely intricate dances, which often last for days on end. Nor are they meaningless or merely ritualistic. By no means. Like those of the devil-dancers of the North, these ceremonies of the South have meaning—definite meaning. Every movement of arms, legs, head, eye and lips, down to the very angle of hands and feet, conveys a word or phrase or sentence to those who watch and understand as clearly as the soldier's semaphore flags convey a meaning to the military observer. It is kind of stenography of motion.

"Now it can easily be imagined that such skill is not acquired overnight. No, the dancers are trained almost from the cradle. They are under the absolute control of the priests. The smallest infraction of a temple rule, or even the whim of a holy man, and sentence is forthwith passed and the unfortunate dancer dies slowly and in circumstances of great elaboration and discomfort.

"So much by way of prologue. Now for this runaway young lady: Twenty years ago a young and earnest man from your country named Joseph Crownshield came to Cambodia to preach the Word of God as expounded by authority of the Mennonite Church to the benighted followers of Buddha. *Hélas,* while his zeal was great, his judgment was small. He committed two great errors, first in coming to Cambodia at all, second in having with him his young wife.

"The priests of Angkor did not relish the things which this Monsieur Crownshield said. They relished even less what he did, for he was earnest, and began to convert the natives, and gifts for the great temple were less plentiful.

"The young man died. A snake bit him as he was about to enter his bath. Snakes have no business in the bathroom, but — his household servants were, of course, Cambodians, and the priesthood numbered expert snake-charmers among its personnel. At any rate, he died.

"Misfortunes seldom come singly. Two days later the church and parsonage burned down, and in the smoking ruins was found the body of a woman. Madame Crownshield? Perhaps. Who can say? At all events, the body was interred beside the missionary's and life went on as usual. But sixteen years later came rumors to the French *gendarmerie* of a dancer in the temple, a girl who danced like a flame in the wind, like a moonbeam on flowing water, like the twinkling of a star at midnight. And, rumor said, though her hair was black it was fine as split-silk, not coarse like that of the native women, and her skin was fair as milk and her eyes blue as violets in springtime.

"Devotees of the temple are not supposed to speak to outsiders; the penalty of an unguarded tongue is lingering death, but—the ear of the *Sûreté* is keen and its arm is very long. We learned that rumor was well founded. Within the temple there was such an one, and she was even as rumor described her. Though she never emerged from her dwelling-place within the sacred edifice, her presence there was definitely established. Unquestionably she was white; equally beyond question she had no business where she was, but——" He paused, spreading his hands and puffing out his cheeks. "It

is not wise to trifle with the religion of the natives," he ended simply.

"But who *was* she?" Moneen asked.

"*Parbleu,* I would give my tongue to the cat if I could answer you," the Inspector returned. "The *Sûreté* found itself against a wall of stone more stubborn than that of which the temple was composed. In that God-detested land we learn much. If one fasts long enough he will hear voices and see visions. The poisons of certain drugs and the toxins of certain fevers have the same effect. Occasionally 'the Spirit of Buddha' permeates the soul of a white man—more frequently a white woman—in the tropics. The accumulated toxic effect of the climate leads him—or her—to give up the materialistic, cleanly civilization of the West and retire to a life of squalor, filth and contemplation as a devotee of some Eastern faith. Had this happened here? Was this girl self-devoted as a dancer in the temple? Had her mother, perhaps, devoted herself years ago, and had the child been born and reared in the shadow of the temple idols? One wonders."

"But surely you investigated?" Moneen pursued.

"But naturally, *Madame.* I am Renouard; I do not do things by the half. No.

"To the Angkor temple I went and demanded sight of her. 'There is no such person here,' I was assured.

" 'You lie,' I answered courteously, 'and unless you bring her to me forthwith, I shall come in for her.'

"*Eh bien, Messieurs,*" he turned to us with a chuckle, "the Frenchman is logical. He harbors no illusions about the love of subject peoples. Nor does he seek to conciliate them. Love him they may not, but fear and respect him they must. My hint was sufficient—especially as two platoons of *gendarmerie,* a howitzer and machine-guns were there to give it point. The lady whose existence had been denied so vehemently a moment before was straightway brought to me.

"Beyond doubt she was pure European. Her hair was black and gently waved, her skin was white as curdled cream, her eyes were blue as — *parbleu, Madame*" — he gazed at Moneen McDougal with wide-open eyes, as though he saw her for the first time—"she was much like you!"

I thought I saw a shiver of terror ripple through Moneen's lithe form, but her husband's hearty laugh relieved the tension. "Well, who was she?" he asked.

"*Le bon Dieu* knows," Renouard returned. "Although I made the ape-faced priests retire so that we might converse unheard, they had either terrified the girl that she dared not speak, or she was actually unable to inform me. I spoke to her in every language that I know—and they are many — but only the lingo of the Khmer could she understand or speak. Her name, she said, was Thi-bah, she was a sacred dancer in the temple, and she remembered no other world. She had always lived there. Of her parentage she could not speak, for father or mother she had never known. And at the end she joined hands together palm to palm, the fingers pointing downward—which is the symbol of submission — and begged I would permit her to go back to her place among the temple women. *Sacré nom!* What is one to do in such circumstances? Nothing!

"That is what I did. I retired in chagrin and she returned to her cell within the temple."

"*Bien oui,*" de Grandin tweaked the needle points of his little blond mustache and grinned impishly at the Inspector, "but a tale half told is poorly told, my friend. What of this other one, this so clever-devilish fellow whom you trail while he trails the runaway lady? *Hein?*"

RENOUARD joined his square-tipped fingers end to end and pursed his lips judicially. *"Oui-da,"* he admitted, "that is the other half of the tale, indeed. Very well; *regardez-moi bien:* In Cochin China in the days before the Great War there lived a certain gentleman named Sun Ah Poy. He was, as you may gather from his name, Chinese, but his family had been resident in Saigon for generations. The Sun family is so numerous in China that to bear the name means little more than for a Frenchman to be called DuPont, or an Englishman Smith or an Irishman Murphy. Nevertheless, all these names have had their famous representatives, as you will recall when you think of your great colonizer, Captain John Smith, and the illustrious Albert of the present generation. Also you will remember China's first president was Doctor Sun Yat Sen.

"This Sun Ah Poy was no shopkeeping son of a coolie father; he was an educated gentleman, a man of great wealth, taught by private tutors in the learning of the East and holding a diploma from the Sorbonne. His influence with the native population was phenomenal, and his opinions were eagerly sought and highly regarded by the *conseil privé.* He wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor for distinguished service to the Republic. This, then, was the man who a few days before the Armistice went up-country to supervise an elephant hunt.

"A savage old tusker had been roped between two trained beasts and was being led into the stockade when, without warning, he broke his fetters and charged. The elephant on which Doctor Sun was seated was directly in the maddened brute's path. In a moment the runaway beast had seized the unfortunate man in his trunk, snatched him from his saddle and hurled him forty feet through the air, crashing him into the wall of the stockade.

"Medicine and surgery did their best. Sun Ah Poy lived, *hélas!* When he rose from his hospital bed it was with body and mind hopelessly crippled. The physical injury was apparent to all, the mental ailment we were to find out to our cost. Insubordination broke out among the natives, French officers were openly disobeyed, criminals were permitted to escape from prison, laborers on the public works were assaulted and beaten, sometimes killed; the process of criminal jurisprudence broke down completely, for witnesses could not be made to testify; *gendarmes* went forth to make arrests and came back feet first; examining magistrates who prosecuted investigations with honest thoroughness died mysteriously, and most opportunely for the criminals—official records of the police disappeared from their files overnight. It was all too obvious that outlawry had raised its red standard and hurled defiance at authority.

"In Paris this would have been bad. In Asia it was unspeakable, for the white man must keep his prestige at all costs. Once he 'loses face' his power over the natives is gone. What was to do?

"At length, like men of sound discretion, the Government put the case in my charge. I considered it. From all angles I viewed it. What did I see? A single dominating intelligence seemed guiding all the lawlessness, an intelligence which knew beforehand what plans Government made. I cast about for suspects, and my eye fell on three, Sun Ah Poy and two others. He seemed least likely of the three, but he enjoyed our confidence, and it lay within his power to thwart our plans if he so desired. Therefore I laid my trap. I called three councils of war, to each of which a different suspect was invited. At these councils I outlined my plans for raiding certain known centers of the criminal elements. The first two raids were

successful. We caught our game red-handed. The third raid was a glorious failure. Only a brightly glowing camp-fire and a deserted encampment waited for the *gendarmes*. It was of this raid I had spoken to Doctor Sun.

"Proof? Not in English courts, nor American; but this was under French jurisdiction. We do not let the guilty escape through fear of affronting the possibly innocent. No. I issued a warrant for Doctor Sun's apprehension.

"That evening, as I sat within my cabinet, I heard a clicking-scratching on the matting-covered floor. *Sapristi!* Toward me there charged full-tilt a giant tarantula, the greatest, most revolting-looking spider I had ever seen! Now, it is seldom that these brutes attack a man who does not annoy them; that they should deliberately attack an inoffensive, passive person is almost beyond experience; yet though I sat quiescent at my table, this one made for me as though he had a personal feud to settle. Fortunately for me, I was wearing my belt, and with a single motion I leaped upon the table, drew my pistol and fired. My bullet crushed the creature and I breathed again. But that night as I rode home to my quarters a second poison-spider dropped from a tree-bough into my 'rickshaw. I struck it with my walking-stick, and killed it, but my escape was of the narrowest. When I went into my bathroom I found a small but very venomous serpent coiled, ready to receive me.

"It struck. I leaped. *Grand Dieu,* I leaped like a monkey-on-the-stick, and came down with my heels upon its head. I triumphed, but my nerves were badly shaken.

"My men returned. Sun Ah Poy was nowhere to be found. He had decamped. Who warned him? My native clerk? Perhaps. The tentacles of this octopus I sought to catch stretched far, and into the most unexpected places.

"I walked in constant terror. Everywhere I went I carried my revolver ready; even in my house I went about with a heavy cane in my hand, for I knew not what instant silent death would come striking at my feet or dropping on me from the ceiling.

"At length my spies reported progress. A new priest, a crippled man, was in the Angkor temple. He was enamoured of the white dancer, they said. It was well. Where the lioness lairs the lion will surely linger. I went to take him, nor did I confide my plans to any but Frenchmen.

"*Hélas,* the love which makes the world to move also spoiled my coup.

"The Khmer are an effeminate, lascivious, well-nigh beardless race. All traces of virility have vanished from them, and craft had replaced strength in their dealings. Thi-bah, the white-girl dancer, had lived her life within the confines of the temple, and except myself, I doubt that she had seen a single white man in her whole existence—till Monsieur Archibald Hildebrand appeared. He was young, handsome, vigorous, mustached—all that the men she knew were not. Moreover, he was of her race, and like calls to like in Cambodia as in other places. How he met her I do not know, nor how he made himself understood, for she spoke no English, he no Khmer; but a gold key unbars all doors, and the young man from America had gold in plenty. Also love makes mock of lexicons and speaks its own language, and they had love, these two. *Enfin,* they met, they loved; they eloped.

"It may seem strange that this could be, for the whole world knows that temple-women of the East are well-nigh as carefully guarded as inmates of the zenana. Elsewhere, yes; but in Cambodia, no! There night is day and day is night.

In the torrid, steaming heat of day the population sleeps, or tries to, and only fleeing criminals and foreigners unaccustomed to the land are abroad. One might mount the temple terraces and steal the head from off a carven Buddha and never find a temple guard to say him nay, provided he went by daylight. So it was here. Thi-bah the dancer had but to creep forth from her cell on soft-stepping, unshod feet, meet her lover in the sunlight, and go away.

"Two days before I arrived at Angkor with handcuffs already warmed to fit the wrists of him I sought, Monsieur Hildebrand and this Thi-bah set sail from Saigon on a Messageries Maritimes steamship. One day later Doctor Sun Ah Poy shook the dust of Cochin China from his feet. He did it swiftly, silently. He dropped down the Saigon River in a sampan, was transferred to a junk at sea and vanished—where, whither?"

"Here?" we asked in breathless chorus.

"Where else? The man is crazed with love, or passion, or whatever you may choose to call it. He is fabulously rich, infinitely resourceful, diabolically wicked and inordinately vain, as all such criminal lunatics are. Where the moth of his desire flutters the spider will not be long absent. Although he did not travel as quickly as the fleeing lovers, he will soon arrive. When he does I have grave fears for the health of Monsieur Hildebrand and his entire family. They are thorough, these men from the East, and their blood-feuds visit the sins of the sons upon the ancestors unto the third and fourth generation."

"Can that be *our* Archy Hildebrand, Doctor Trowbridge?" Moneen asked.

Inspector Renouard drew forth a small black-leather notebook and consulted it. "Monsieur Archibald Van Buren Hildebrand, son of Monsieur Van Rensselaer Hildebrand," he read. "Address of house: 1937 Rue Passaic"—he pronounced it "Pay-sa-ay"—"Harrisonville, New Jersey, E. U. A."

"Why, that *is* Archy!" Moneen exclaimed. "Oh, I hope nothing happens to——"

"Nonsense, dear," her husband cut in bruskly, "what could happen here? This is America, not Cochin China. The police——"

"*Tiens,* Monsieur," de Grandin reminded frigidly, "they also have police in Cambodia."

"Oh, yes; of course, but——"

"I hope you are correct," the little Frenchman interrupted. "Me, I do not discount anything which Inspecteur Renouard may say. He is no alarmist, as I very well know. *Eh bien,* you may be right. But in the meantime, a little preparedness can do no harm."

2. *Doctor Sun Leaves His Card*

At my invitation the Inspector agreed to make my house his headquarters, and it was arranged that he and de Grandin share the same room. Midnight had long since struck when we bid the McDougals adieu, and began our twenty-mile drive to the city. "Remember, you're all invited here Christmas evening," Moneen reminded us at parting. "I'm expecting my sister Avis down from Holyoke and I know she'd love to meet you."

We left the fog behind us as we drove northward from the ocean, and the night was clear and cold as we whizzed through Susquehanna Avenue to my house.

"That's queer," I muttered as I bent to insert my latchkey in the lock. "Somebody must know you're here, Inspector. Here's a note for you." I picked up the square, white envelope which had dropped as I thrust the door open and put it in his hand.

He turned the folder over and over, in-

specting the clear-cut, boldly written inscription, looking in vain for a clue to the sender. "Who can know—who could suspect that I am arrived?" he began wonderingly, but de Grandin interrupted with a chuckle.

"You are incurably the detective, *mon* Georges," he rallied. "You receive a letter. *'Parbleu,* who can have sent this?' you ask you, and thereupon you examine the address, you take tests of the ink, you consult handwriting experts. 'This is from a lady,' you say to yourself, 'and from the angle of the letters in her writing I am assured she is smitten by my manly beauty.' Thereupon you open the note, and find what? That it is a bill for long-overdue charges on your laundry, *cordieu!* Come, open it, great stupidhead. How otherwise are you to learn from whom it comes?"

"Silence, magpie!" Renouard retorted, his pale face flushing under de Grandin's mockery. "We shall see—*mon Dieu,* look!"

The envelope contained a single sheet of dull white paper folded in upon itself to form a sort of frame in which there rested a neatly engraved gentleman's visiting-card:

DR. SUN AH POY
Saigon

That was all, no other script, or print.

"Eh bien, he is impudent, that one!" de Grandin exclaimed, bending over his friend's shoulder to inspect the missive. *"Parbleu,* he laughs at our faces, but I think all the cards are not yet played. We shall see who laughs at whom before this game is ended, for——"

He broke off abruptly, head thrown back, delicate nostrils contracting and expanding alternately as he sniffed the air suspiciously. "Do you, too, get it?" he asked, turning from Renouard to me inquiringly.

"I think I smell some sort of perfume, but I can't quite place it——" I began, but his exclamation cut me short.

"Drop it, *mon vieux*—unhand it, right away, at once; immediately!" he cried, seizing Renouard's wrist and fairly shaking the card from his grasp. "Ah—so; permit it to remain there," he continued, staring at the upturned square of pasteboard. "Trowbridge, Renouard, *mes amis,* I suggest you stand back—mount chairs—keep your feet well off the floor. So! That is better!"

We stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment as he barked his staccato orders, but as he matched command with obedience and mounted a chair himself after the manner of a timid housewife who sights a mouse, we followed suit.

From the shaft of his gold-headed ebony opera cane he drew the slender, wire-like sword-blade and swished it once or twice through the air, as though to test its edge. "Attend me," he commanded, fixing his level, unwinking stare on us in turn. "Like you, Friend Georges, I have lived in Cambodia. While you were still among the Riffs in Africa I went to nose out certain disaffections in Annam, and while there I kept eyes, ears and nose wide open. Certainly. Tell me, my friend —think back, think carefully—just what happened that night in Saigon when you were beset by spiders?"

Renouard's bright dark eyes narrowed in concentration. "My laundry was delayed that day," he answered at length, "the messenger had good excuses, but my white uniforms did not arrive until—*nom d'une pipe*—yes! Upon the freshly starched-and-ironed drill there hung a faint perfume, such as we smell here and now!"

"Exactement," de Grandin nodded. "Me, I recognized him almost immediately. He is a concentrated extract, or a synthetic equivalent for the scent excreted by a great—and very poisonous—

Cambodian spider to attract its mate. I damn suspected something of the kind when you related your experience at Monsieur McDougal's, but I did not put you to the cross-examination then lest I frighten our pretty hostess, who had already received one shock today, of which I must inform you, but hist, my friends; *regardez!*"

Something squat and obscene, something like a hand amputated at the wrist, long mummified and overgrown with spiny prickles, but now endued with some kind of ghastly after-life which enabled it to flop and crawl upon bent fingers, came sliding and slithering across the floor of the hall, emerging from the darkness of my consulting-room.

"*Ah-ha; ah-ha-ha, Monsieur la Tarentule,* you have walked into *our* parlor, it would seem!" de Grandin cried exultantly. The razor-edged, needle-pointed sword whistled through the air as he flung it from his vantage-point upon the chair, stabbing through the crawling creature's globular body and pinning it to the floor. But still the dry, hairy legs fought and thrashed as the great spider sought to drag itself toward the scented card which lay a yard or so beyond it. "Wriggle, *parbleu,*" de Grandin invited mockingly as he dropped from his refuge on the chair and advanced toward the clawing monster, "wriggle, writhe and twist. Your venom will not find human flesh to poison this night. No, *pardieu!*" With a quick stamp of his heel he crushed the thing, withdrew the sword which pinioned it to the floor and wiped the steel upon the rug.

"It was fortunate for us that my nose and memory co-operated," he remarked. "He was clever, your friend Sun, *mon brave,* I grant you. The card, all smeared with perfume as it was, was addressed to you. Naturally your hands would be the first to touch it. Had we not acted as we did, you would have been a walking invitation to that one"—he nodded toward the spider's carcass—"and I do not think he would have long delayed responding. No. Assuredly you would have moved when he leaped on you and *pouf!* tomorrow, or the next day, or the next day after that at latest, we should have had the pleasure of attending a solemn high mass of requiem for you, for his bite is very poisonous."

"You don't suppose any more of those things are hiding 'round the house, do you?" I asked uncomfortably.

"I doubt it," he returned. "Renouard's friend could not have had time to pack an extensive kit before he left, and spiders and reptiles of the tropics are difficult to transport, especially in this climate. No, I think we need have small fear of a repetition of that visit, tonight, at least. Also, if there be others, the center of attraction will be the scented card. They will not trouble us unless we tread on them."

FOR several minutes after we had entered the study he sat in silent thought. At last: "They can not know for sure what room you will occupy, *mon* Georges," he remarked, "but the bathroom is always easily identified. Trowbridge, my friend, do you happen to possess such a thing as a sheet of fly-paper at this time?"

"Fly-paper?" I asked, astonished.

"But certainly, the stuff with which one catches flies," he answered, going through the pantomime of a luckless fly alighting on a sheet of tanglefoot and becoming enmeshed on it.

"I hardly think so," I replied, "but we can look in the pantry. If Nora had any left over in the autumn she probably stored it there."

We searched the pantry shelves as pros-

pectors might hunt the hills for gold. At last, *"Triomphe,"* de Grandin called from his perch upon a step-ladder. *"Eureka,* I have found it!" From the uppermost shelf he dragged a packet of some half a dozen sticky sheets.

We warmed the stuff at the furnace door, and when its adhesive surface was softened to his satisfaction de Grandin led us to the bathroom. Stealthily he pushed the door open, dropped a double row of fly-paper on the tiled floor, then with the handle of a mop began exploring the recesses beneath the tub and behind the washstand.

We had not long to wait. Almost at the second thrust of the mop-handle a faint, almost soundless hissing noise, like steam escaping from a gently boiling kettle came to us, and as he probed again something like a length of old-fashioned hair watch-chain seemed to uncoil itself upon the white-tile floor and slither with the speed of light across the room. It was a dainty little thing, no thicker than a lead-pencil and scarcely longer, prettily marked with alternating bands of black, yellow and red.

"Sacré nom!" Renouard exclaimed. *"Le drapeau Allemand!"*

De Grandin bent still farther forward, thrust his stick fairly at the tiny, writhing reptile and endeavored to crush its small, flat head against the wall. The thing dodged with incredible quickness, and so swiftly I could scarcely follow its motion with my eye, struck once, twice, three times at the wood, and I watched it wonderingly, for it did not coil to strike, but bent its head quickly from side to side, like a steel spring suddenly set vibrating by the touch of a finger.

"You see?" he asked simply, still prodding at the flashing, scaly thing.

Although his efforts to strike it were unsuccessful, his strategy was well planned, for though it dodged his flailing stick with ease, the snake came ever nearer to the barricade of fly-paper which lay before the door. At last it streaked forward, passed fairly over the sticky paper, then gradually slowed down, writhed impotently a moment, then lay still, its little red mouth gaping, lambent tongue flickering from its lips like a wind-blown flame, low, almost inaudible hisses issuing from its throat.

"You have right, my friend, it is 'the German flag,' so called because it bears the German national colors in its markings," he told Renouard. "A tiny thing it is, yet so venomous that the lightest prick of its fangs means certain death, for aid can not be given quickly enough to counteract its poison in the blood. Also it can strike, as you noticed, and strike again without necessity for coiling. One has but to step on or even near it in darkness, or in light, for that matter—and he is lucky if its venom allows him time to make his tardy peace with heaven. It is of the order *elapidae,* this little, poison thing, a small but worthy cousin of the king cobra, the death adder and the tiger snake of Australia."

He bore the fly-paper with its helpless prisoner to the cellar and flung it into the furnace. *"Exeunt omnes,"* he remarked as the flames destroyed the tiny cylinder of concentrated death. "Die you must eventually, Friend Georges, but it was not written that you should die by snake-bite this night. No. Your friend Doctor Sun is clever, but so is Jules de Grandin, and I am here. Come, let us go to bed. It is most fatiguing, this oversetting of Doctor Sun's plans for your American reception, my friend."

3. A Lost Lady

THE day dawned crisp and cold, with a tang of frost and hint of snow in the air. My guests were in high spirits, and did ample justice to the panned sole,

waffles and honey in the comb which Nora McGinnis had prepared for breakfast. Renouard, particularly, was in a happy mood, for the joy the born man-hunter takes in his work was fairly overflowing in him as he contemplated the game of hide-and-seek about to commence.

"First of all," he announced as he scraped the last remaining spot of honey from his plate, "I shall call at the *préfecture de police* and present my credentials. They will help me; they will recognize me. Yes."

"Undoubtlessly they will recognize you, *mon enfant,*" de Grandin agreed with a nod. "None could fail to do so."

Renouard beamed, but I discerned the hidden meaning of de Grandin's statement, and had all I could do to keep a sober face. Innate good taste, cosmopolitan experience and a leaning toward the English school of tailoring marked Jules de Grandin simply as a more than ordinarily well-dressed man wherever he might be; Renouard, by contrast, could never be mistaken for other than what he was, an efficient officer of the *gendarmerie* out of uniform, and the trade mark of his nationality was branded indelibly on him. His rather snugly fitting suit was that peculiarly horrible shade of blue beloved of your true Frenchman, his shirt was striped with alternate bands of blue and white, his cravat was a thing to give a haberdasher a violent headache, and his patent leather boots with their round rubber heels tapered to sharp and most uncomfortable-looking points.

"But of course," he told us, "I shall say to them, *'Messieurs,* if you have here a stout fellow capable of assisting me, I beg you will assign him to this case. I greatly desire the assistance of——"

"Sergeant Costello," Nora McGinnis announced as she appeared in the breakfast room door, the big, red-headed Irish detective towering behind her.

"Ah, welcome, *mon vieux,*" de Grandin cried, rising and extending a cordial hand to the caller. "A Merry Christmas to you."

"An' th' same to ye, sor, an' ye, too, gentlemen," Costello returned, favoring Renouard and me with a rather sickly grin.

"How now? You do not say it heartily," de Grandin said as he turned to introduce Inspector Renouard. "You are in trouble? Good. Tell us; we shall undoubtlessly be able to assist you."

"I'm hopin' so, sor," the Sergeant returned as he drew up a chair and accepted a cup of steaming coffee. "I'm afther needin' help this mornin'."

"A robbery, a murder, blackmail, kidnapping?" de Grandin ran through the catalogue of crime. "Which is it, or is it a happy combination of all?"

"Mebbe so, sor, I'm not quite sure yet meself," Costello replied. "Ye see, 'twas early this mornin' it happened, an' I ain't got organized yet, so to speak. It were like this, sor:

"A Miss Brindell come over to Harrisonville on th' six o'clock train. She wuz comin' to visit her sister who lives down on th' South Shore, an' they hadn't expected her so early, so there's no one to meet her when she gits to th' station. She knows about where her brother-in-law's house is over to Mary's Landin', so she hops in a taxi an' starts there. 'Twere a twenty-mile drive, sor, but she's satisfied wid th' price, so th' cabby don't argue none wid her.

"Well, sors, th' taxi has hardly started from th' depot when alongside runs another car, crowds 'im to th' curb an' dishes his wheel. Th' cabby ain't too well pleased wid that, ye may be sure, so he starts to get down an' express his opinion

o' th' felly as done it when *wham!* sumpin hits him on th' coco an' he goes down fer th' count."

"The *comte?*" Renouard interjected. "Where was this nobleman, and why should the chauffeur descend for him?"

"Silence, *mon brave,* it is an American idiom, I will explain later," de Grandin bade. To Costello: "Yes, my Sergeant, and what then?"

"Well, sor, th' next thing th' pore felly knows he's in Casualty Horspittle wid a bandage round his head an' his cab's on th' way to th' police pound. He tells us he had a second's look at th' guy that crowned 'im, an——"

"I protest!" Renouard broke in. "I understood you said he was struck with a *massue,* now I am told he was crowned. It is most confus——"

"*Imbécile,* be silent!" de Grandin ordered savagely. "Because you speak the English is no reason for you to flatter yourself that you understand American. Later I shall instruct you. Meantime, keep fast hold upon your tongue while we talk. Proceed, Sergeant, if you please."

"He got a glimpse o' th' felly that K. O.'d him, sor, an' he swore it were a Chinaman. We're holdin' 'im, sor, for his story seems fishy to me. I've been on th' force, harness bull an' fly cop, since th' days when Teddy Roos-velt—God rest his noble soul!—wuz President, an' though we've a fair-sized Chinatown here an' th' monks gits playful now an' then an' shoots each other up or carves their initials in each other wid meat-cleavers, I've never known 'em to mix it wid white folks, an' never in me livin' days have I heard of 'em stealin' white gur-rls, sor. I know they tells some funny tales on 'em, but me personal experience has been that th' white gur-rls as goes wid a Chinaman goes o' their own free will an' accord an' not because annybody steals 'em. So——"

"What is it you say, she was kidnapped?" de Grandin interrupted.

"Looks kind o' that way, sor. We can't find hide nor hair o' her, an'——"

"But you know her name. How is that?"

"That's part o' th' funny business, sor. Her grips an' even her handbag wuz all in th' taxi when we went through it, an' in 'em we found letters to identify her as Miss Avis Brindell, who'd come to visit her brother-in-law an' sister, Mr. an' Mrs. Dougal McDougal, at their house at Mary's Landin'; so——"

"*Nom d'un chou-fleur,* do you tell me so?" de Grandin gasped. "Madame McDougal's sister kidnapped by Orientals? *Ha,* can it be possible? One wonders."

"What's that, sor?"

"I think your taximan is innocent, my friend, but I am glad you have him readily available," de Grandin answered. "Come, let us go interview him right away, immediately; at once."

MR. SYLVESTER MCCARTY, driver of Purple Cab 188672, was in a far from happy frame of mind when we found him in the detention ward of Casualty Hospital. His day had started inauspiciously with the wreck of his machine, the loss of a more than usually large fare, considerable injury to his person, finally with the indignity of arrest. "It's a weepin' shame, that's what it is!" he told us as he finished the recital of his woes. "I'm an honest man, sir, an'——"

"Agreed, by all means," de Grandin interrupted soothingly. "That is why we come to you for help, my old one. Tell us, if you will, just what occurred this morning—describe the cowardly miscreant who struck you down before you had a chance to voice your righteous indignation. I am sure we can arrange for your release from durance."

McCarty brightened. "It's hard to tell you much about it, sir," he answered, "fer it all happened so quick-like I hardly had time to git me bearin's. After I'm crowded to th' curb an' me wheel's dished, I sees th' other car is jammed right smack agin me, an' just as I turns round I hears me fare holler, 'Leave me be; take yer hands off'n me!'

"Wid that I jumps down an' picks up me crank-handle, fer if there's goin to be a argyment, I figures on bein' prepared. I on'y gits one eye-flash at 'em, though, sir. There's a queer-lookin' sort o' gink settin' at th' wheel o' th' other car—a brown-faced guy, not colored nor yet not quite like a Chinee, but more like some o' them Fillypinos ye see around sometimes, ye know. He's all muffled up in a fur coat, wid th' collar turned up around his chin an' his cap pulled down over his eyes, so I can't git much of a slant on him. But just as I starts in to tell him what sort o' people I think his family wuz, up hops another coffee-an'-cream-colored son-of-a-gun an' *zingo!* let's me have a bop over th' bean that makes me see all th' stars there is, right in broad daylight. I goes over like th' kingpin when a feller rolls a strike, but just before I goes to sleep I sees th' guy that smacked me down an' another one hustlin' th' young lady out o' me cab into th' other car; then th' chauffeur steps on her an' rolls away, leavin' me flatter'n a pancake. Then I goes out like a light an' th' next thing I knows I'm layin' here in th' horsepittle wid a bandage round me dome an' th' nurse is sayin', 'Sit up, now, an' drink this.' "

"U'm?" de Grandin regarded him gravely. "And did you notice the make of car which fouled you?"

"Not rightly, sir. But it was big an' long—a limousine. I thought it wuz a Rolls, though it might o' been a Renault or Issotta—I don't think it wuz an American car."

"Very good. And one presumes it is too much to hope you had opportunity to note the number?"

"I *did* that, sir. We gits camera-eyed in this racket, an' th' first thing we do when any one fouls us is to look at his number. It's second nature."

"Ah, fine, excellent, *parfait.* Tell me——"

"X 11 - 7734, sir. Jersey plates."

"Ah, my prince of chauffeurs, I salute you! Assuredly, it was nobly done! Sergeant, you will surely let him go now?"

"Sure," Costello grunted. "You can run along, feller; but don't try any hide-away business. We'll know where to git ye when we want ye, don't forgit."

"Sure, you will," Mr. McCarty assured him earnestly. "Right by th' depot, chief. I'm there ter meet all th' trains."

"An' now fer th' number," Costello chuckled. "Bedad, Doctor de Grandin, sor, this case is easier than I thought. I'm sorry I bothered ye wid it, now."

"Not too fast, my friend," the Frenchman counseled. "The prudent cat does not mistake all that is white for milk."

Five minutes later Costello returned from a telephone conversation with the license bureau. "I reckon I wuz all wet, Doctor de Grandin," he admitted ruefully. "X 11 - 7734 is th' plate o' Gleason's Grocery car. It's a Ford delivery truck, an' its plates wuz stolen last night whilst it was standin' in front o' th' store."

4. Poltergeist?

FOR a moment we stared at each other in blank consternation. "*Que diable?*" swore Renouard, grasping his tuft of beard and jerking it so violently that I feared for his chin.

"Looks that way," Costello nodded dis-

mally, understanding the Frenchman's tone, if not his words.

"*Sacré nom de dix mille sales cochons!*" de Grandin exclaimed. "Why do we stand here looking ourselves out of countenance like a convention of petrified bullfrogs in the *Musée de l'Histoire Naturelle?* Let us be doing!"

"Sez you," Costello responded. "Doin' what, sor?"

"Finding them, *pardieu.* Consider: Their appearance was bizarre enough to be noted by the excellent Monsieur McCarty, even in the little minute between the collision of their vehicle and his and the blow which struck him senseless. Very well. Will not others notice them likewise? I think so. They have not been here long, there has been small time to acquire a base of operations, yet they must have one. They must have a house, probably not far from here. Very good. Let us find the house and we shall have found them and the missing lady, as well."

"All right, I'll bite," Costello offered. "What's th' answer to that one?"

"*Cordieu,* it is so simple even you should see it!" the Frenchman retorted. "It is like this: They have scarcely had time to consummate a purchase; besides, that would be wasteful, for they require only a temporary abode. Very well, then, what have they done? Rented a house, *n'est-ce-pas?* I think likely. We have, then, but to set a corps of energetic investigators to the task of soliciting the realty agents of the city, and when one tells us he has let a house to an Oriental gentleman—*voilà,* we have him in our net. Certainly."

"Sure, it sounds O. K.," Costello agreed, "but th' only thing wrong wid it is it won't work. Just because th' assistant villains who kidnapped th' pore little lady this mornin' wuz a lot o' monkey-faced chinks is no sign th' head o' th' gang's one, too. 'Tis more likely he's a white man usin' Chinese to do his dirty work so's he'll not be suspected, an'——"

"And it is entirely probable that pigs would fly like birds, had they the necessary wings," de Grandin interrupted bitingly. "I say no! Me, I know—at least I damn suspect—what all this devil's business means, and I am sure an Oriental is not only the head, but the brains of this crew of *apaches,* as well. Come, *mon fils,* do as I say. We shall succeed. We *must* succeed."

Dubiously Costello agreed, and two officers at headquarters were given copies of the classified telephone directory and bidden go down the list of real estate agents systematically, 'phoning each and inquiring whether he had rented a dwelling to a Chinese gentleman during the past week or ten days. Meantime de Grandin smoked innumerable cigarettes and related endless risqué stories to the great edification of the policemen lounging in the squad room. I excused myself and hurried to the office, for consulting hours had come, and I could not neglect my practise.

THE seasonal number of coryza cases presented themselves for treatment and I was wondering whether I might cut short the consultation period, since no more applicants for Seiler's solution and Dover's powder seemed imminent, when a young man hurried into the office. Tall, lean, sun-bitten till he almost resembled a Malay, he was the kind of chap one took to instantly. A scrubbed-with-cold-water cleanliness and vigor showed in every line of his spare face and figure, his challenging, you-be-damned look was softened by the humorous curve of the wide, thin-lipped mouth beneath his dark, close-clipped mustache. Only the lines of

habit showed humor now, however, for an expression of keen anxiety was on his features as he advanced toward me. "I don't know whether you'll remember me or not, Doctor Trowbridge," he opened while still ten feet from me, "but you're one of my earliest recollections. I'm Archy Hildebrand. My father——"

"Why, surely I remember you, son," I returned, "though I don't know I'd have recognized you. We were talking about you last night."

"Were, eh?" he answered grimly. "Suppose you particularized concerning how many different kinds of a fool I've made of myself? Well, let me tell you——"

"Not at all," I cut in as I noted the quick anger hardening in his eyes. "A French gentleman from Saigon was out to McDougal's last night, and he happened to mention your romance, and we were all greatly interested. He seemed to think——"

"Was he a policeman?" Archy interrupted eagerly.

"Why—er—yes, I suppose you might call him that. He's an inspector in the *Sûreté Général,* and——"

"Thank the Lord! Maybe he'll be able to help us. But I need you, first, sir."

"What's the matter?" I began, but he literally dragged me toward the door.

"It's Thi-bah, my wife, sir. I met her in Cambodia and married her in France. No time to go into particulars now, but she—she's in a bad way, sir, and I wish you'd see her as soon as you can. It seems like some sort of eruption, and it's dreadfully painful. Won't you come now, right away?"

"*Mais certainement,* right away, immediately," de Grandin assured him, appearing with the abruptness of a phantom at the consulting-room door. "We shall be most happy to place ourselves at the entire disposal of *Madame,* your wife, young *Monsieur.*"

As Hildebrand stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment, he explained: "I have but just entered the house, and it was impossible for me not to overhear what you said to Doctor Trowbridge. I have had much experience with the obscure diseases of the Orient, whence Madame Hildebrand came, and I am sure I shall be of assistance to Friend Trowbridge, if you do not object to my entering the case with him?" He paused on a questioning note and regarded Archy with a frank, disarming smile.

"Delighted to have you," I put in before the younger man could express an opinion. "I know you'll be glad of Doctor de Grandin's assistance, too, Archy," I added.

"Certainly," he agreed. "Only hurry, please, gentlemen. She may be suffering another attack right now, and she's so lonely without me—I'm the only one who understands her, you see."

We nodded sympathetically as we left the house, and a moment later I had headed the car toward the Hildebrand mansion.

"Perhaps you can give us a description of *Madame's* malady?" de Grandin asked as we spun along.

Archy flushed beneath his coat of tan. "I'm afraid it'll be hard to tell you," he returned slowly. "You know"—he paused a moment, then continued in evident embarrassment—"if such a thing were possible, I'd say she's the victim of a *poltergeist.*"

"Eh, what is it you say?" the Frenchman demanded sharply.

The young man misunderstood his query. "A *poltergeist,*" he returned. "I've seen what they declared to be their work in the Black Forest district of Ger-

(Continued on page 130)

THE HORROR FROM THE HILLS

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.

A goose-flesh story of cosmic menace—a stone idol brought from China

1. *The Coming of the Stone Beast*

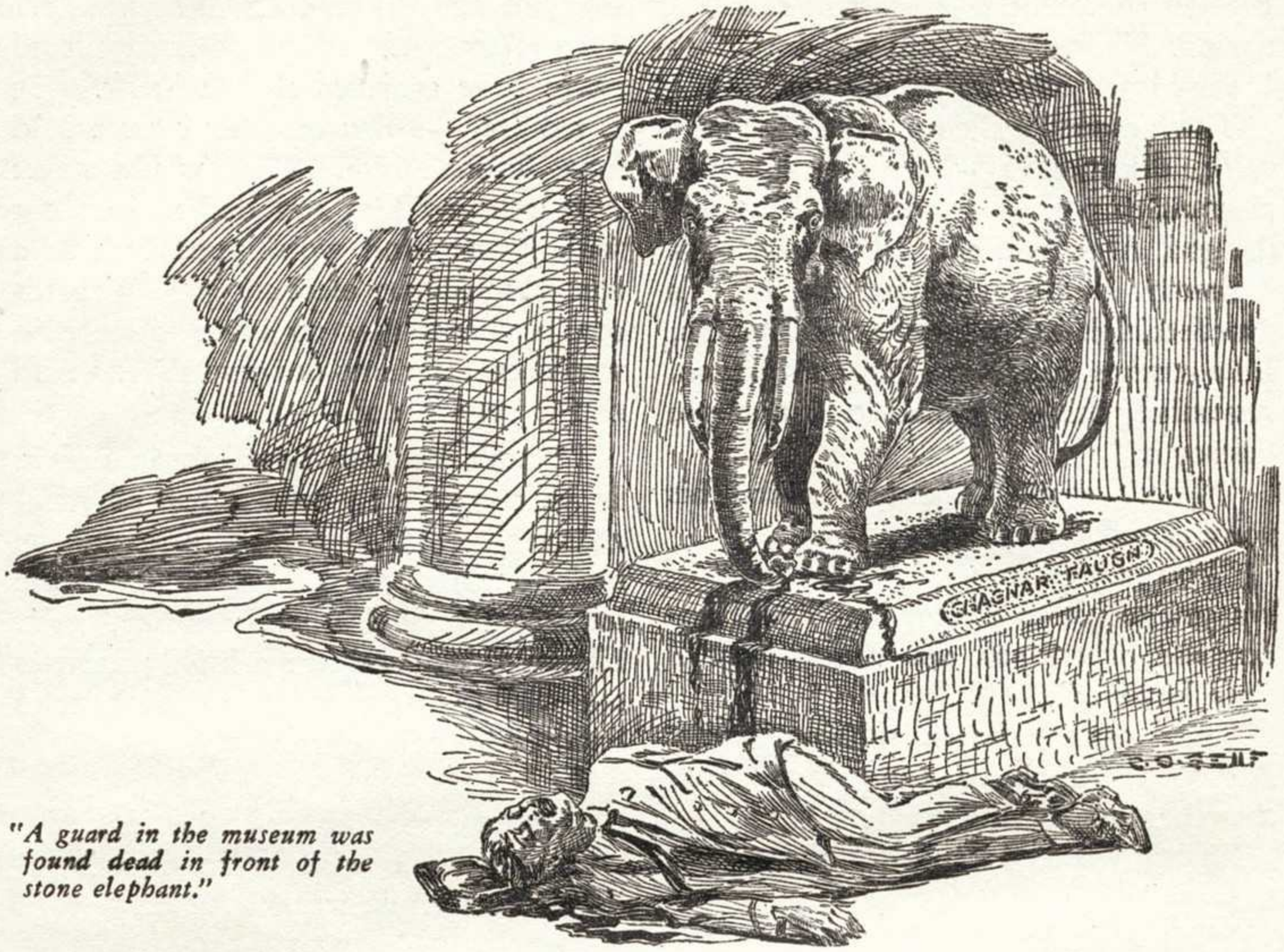
IN A long, low-ceilinged room adorned with Egyptian, Græco-Roman, Minoan and Assyrian antiquities a thin, careless-seeming young man of twenty-six sat jubilantly humming. As nothing in his appearance or manner suggested the scholar—he wore gray tweeds of collegiate cut, gray spats, striped blue shirt and collar and a ridiculously brilliant cravat—the uninitiated were inclined to regard him as a mere supernumerary in his own office. Strangers entered unannounced and called him "young man" at least twenty times a week, and he was frequently asked to convey messages to a non-existent superior. No one suspected, no one dreamed until he enlightened them, that he was the lawful custodian of the objects about him; and even when he revealed his identity people surveyed him with distrust and were inclined to suspect that he was ironically pulling their legs.

Algernon Harris was the young man's name and graduate degrees from Yale and Oxford set him distinctly apart from the undistinguished majority. But it is to his credit that he never paraded his erudition, nor succumbed to the impulse —almost irresistible in a young man with academic affiliations—to put a Ph.D. on the title page of his first book.

It was this book which had endeared him to the directors of the Manhattan Museum of Fine Arts and prompted their unanimous choice of him to succeed the late Halpin Chalmers as Curator of Archeology when the latter retired in the fall of 1929.

In less than six months young Harris had exhaustively familiarized himself with the duties and responsibilities of his office and was becoming the most successful curator that the museum had ever employed. So boyishly ebullient was he, so consumed with investigative zeal, that his field workers contracted his enthusiasm as though it were a kind of fever and sped from his presence to trust their scholarly and invaluable lives to slant-eyed ferocious Orientals, and gibbering hairy Indians, and entirely naked black men on the most detestable crustal sections of our planet.

And now they were coming back—for days now they had been coming back—occasionally with haggard faces, and once or twice, unfortunately, with something radically wrong with them. The Symons tragedy was a case in point. Symons was a Chang Dynasty specialist, and he had been obliged to leave his left eye and a piece of his nose in a Buddhist temple near a place called Fen Chow Fu. But when Algernon questioned him he could only mumble something about a small malignant face with corpsy eyes that had glared and glared at him out of a purple mist. And Francis Hogarth lost eighty pounds and a perfectly good right arm somewhere between Lake Rudolph and Naivasha in British East Africa.



"A guard in the museum was found dead in front of the stone elephant."

But a few inexplicable and hence, from a scientific point of view, unfortunate occurrences were more than compensated for by the archeological treasures that the successful explorers brought back and figuratively dumped at Algernon's feet. There were mirrors of Græco-Bactrian design and miniature tiger-dragons or tao-tiehs from Central China dating from at least 200 B. C., enormous diorite Sphinxes from the Valley of the Nile, "Geometric" vases from Mycenæan Crete, incised pottery from Messina and Syracuse, linens and spindles from the Swiss Lakes, sculptured lintels from Yucatan and Mexico, Mayan and Manabi monoliths ten feet tall, Paleolithic Venuses from the rock caverns of the Pyrenees, and even a series of rare bilingual tablets in Hamitic and Latin from the site of Carthage.

It is not surprizing that so splendid a garnering should have elated Algernon immoderately and impelled him to behave like a schoolboy. He addressed the attendants by their first names, slapped them boisterously upon their shoulders whenever they had occasion to approach him, and went roaming haphazardly about the building immersed in ecstatic reveries. So far indeed did he descend from his pedestal that even the directors were disturbed, and it is doubtful if anything short of the arrival of Clark Ulman could have jolted him out of it.

Ulman may have been aware of this, for he telephoned first to break the news mercifully. He had apparently heard of the success of the other expeditions and hated infernally to intrude his skeleton at the banquet. Algernon, as we have seen, was humming, and the jingling of a phone-bell at his elbow was the first intimation he had of Ulman's return. Has-

tily detaching the receiver he pressed it against his ear and injected a staccato "What is it?" into the mouthpiece.

There ensued a silence. Then Ulman's voice, disconcertingly shrill, smote unpleasantly upon his tympanum. "I've got the god, Algernon, and I'll be over with it directly. I've three men helping me. It's four feet high and as heavy as granite. Oh, it's a strange, loathsome thing, Algernon. An unholy thing. I shall insist that you destroy it!"

"What's that?" Algernon raised his voice incredulously.

"You may photograph it and study it, but you've got to destroy it. You'll understand when you see what—*what I have become!*"

There came a hoarse sobbing, whilst Algernon struggled to comprehend what the other was driving at.

"It has wreaked its malice on me—on me——"

With a frown Algernon put up the receiver and began agitatedly to pace the room. "The elephant-god of Tsang!" he muttered to himself. "The horror Richardson drew before—before they impaled him. It's unbelievable. Ulman has crossed the desert plateau on foot—he's crossed above the graves of Steelbrath, Talman, McWilliams, Henley and Holmes. Richardson swore the cave was guarded night and day by leprous yellow abnormalities. I'm sure that's the phrase he used—abnormalities without faces—fetid beast-men in thrall to some malign wizardry. He averred they moved in circles about the idol on their hands and knees, and participated in a rite so foul that he dared not describe it.

"His escape was a sheer miracle. He was a 'stout fellow;' it was merely because they couldn't kill him that the priest was impressed. A man who can curse valiantly after three days of agonizing torture must of necessity be a great magician and wonder-worker. But it couldn't have happened twice. Ulman could never have achieved such a break. He is too frail—a day on their cross would have finished him. They would never have released him and decked him out with flowers and worshipped him as a sort of subsidiary elephant-god. Richardson predicted that no other white man would ever get into the cave alive. And as for getting out——

"I can't imagine how Ulman did it. If he encountered even a few of Richardson's beast-men it isn't surprizing he broke down on the phone. 'Destroy the statue!' Imagine! Sheer insanity, that. Ulman is evidently in a highly nervous and excitable state and we shall have to handle him with gloves."

THERE came a knock at the door.

"I don't wish to be disturbed," shouted Algernon irritably.

"We've got a package for you, sir. The doorman said for us to bring it up here."

"Oh, all right. I'll sign for it."

The door swung wide and in walked three shabbily dressed men staggering beneath a heavy burden.

"Put it down there," said Algernon, indicating a spot to the rear of his desk.

The men complied with a celerity that amazed him.

"Did Mr. Ulman send you?" he demanded curtly.

"Yes, sir." The spokesman's face had formed into a molding of relief. "The poor gentleman said he'd be here hisself in half an hour."

Algernon started. "Why do you say 'poor gentleman'?" he demanded.

The spokesman shuffled his feet. "It's on account of his face, sir. There's something wrong with it. He keeps it covered and won't let nobody look at it."

"Good God!" murmured Algernon. "They've mutilated him!"

"What's that, sir? What did you say?"

Algernon collected himself with an effort. "Nothing. You may go now. The doorman will give you a dollar. I'll phone down and tell him to give you a dollar."

Silently the men filed out. As soon as the door closed behind them Algernon strode into the center of the room and began feverishly to strip the wrappings from the thing on the floor. He worked with manifest misgivings, the distaste in his eyes deepening to disgust and horror as the loathly form came into view.

Words can not adequately convey the repulsiveness of the thing. It was endowed with a trunk and great, uneven ears, and two enormous tusks protruded from the corners of its mouth. But it was not an elephant. It was not even very closely analogous to an elephant. For the ears were *webbed and tentacled,* the trunk terminated in a huge flaring disk at least a foot in diameter, and the tusks, which intertwined and interlocked at the base of the statue, were as pellucid as glass.

The pedestal upon which it squatted was of black onyx: the statue itself, with the exception of the tusks, had apparently been chiseled from a single block of stone, and was so hideously mottled and eroded and discolored that it looked, in spots, as though it had been dipped in sanies.

The thing sat bolt upright. Its forelimbs were bent stiffly at the elbow, and its hands—it had human hands—rested palms upward on its lap. Its shoulders were broad and square and its breasts and enormous stomach sloped outward, cushioning the trunk. It was as quiescent as a Buddha, as enigmatical as a sphinx, and as malignantly poised as a gorgon or cockatrice. Algernon could not identify the stone out of which it had been hewn, and its greenish sheen disturbed and puzzled him.

For a moment he stood staring uncomfortably into its little malign eyes. Then he shivered, and taking down a muffler from the coat-rack in the corner he cloaked securely the features which repelled him.

ULMAN arrived unannounced. He advanced unobtrusively into the room and laid a tremulous hand on Algernon's shoulder. "Well, Algernon, how are you?" he murmured. "I—I'm glad to get back. Just to see—an old friend—is a comfort. I thought—but, well it doesn't matter. I was going to ask—to ask if you knew a good physician, but perhaps—I—I——"

Startled, Algernon glanced backward over his shoulder and straight into the other's eyes. He saw only the eyes, for the rest of Ulman's face was muffled by a black silk scarf. "Clark!" he ejaculated. "By God, sir, but you gave me a start!"

Rising quickly, he sent his chair spinning against the wall and gripped his friend cordially by the shoulders. "It is good to see you again, Clark," he murmured. "It is good—why, what is the matter?"

Ulman had fallen upon his knees and was choking and gasping for breath.

"I should have warned you—not to touch me," he moaned. "I can't stand —being touched."

"But why——"

"The wounds haven't healed," he sobbed. "*It* doesn't want them to heal. Every night it comes and lays—the disk on them. I can't stand being touched."

Algernon nodded sympathetically. "I can imagine what you've been through, Clark," he said. "You must take a va-

cation. I shall have a talk with the directors about you tomorrow. In view of what you've done for us I'm sure I can get you at least four months. You can go to Spain and finish your *Glimpses into Pre-History*. Paleontological anthropology is a soothing science, Clark. You'll forget all about the perplexities of mere archeological research when you start poking about among bones and artifacts that haven't been disturbed since the Pleistocence."

Ulman had gotten to his feet and was staring at the opposite wall.

"You think that I have become—irresponsible?"

A look of sadness crept into Algernon's eyes. "No, Clark. I think you are merely suffering from—from visual hallucinations. A heavy neurasthenia, you know, can cause such illusions, and considering what you've been through——"

"What I've been through!" Ulman caught at the phrase. "Would it interest you to know precisely what they did to me?"

"Yes, Clark. I wish to hear everything."

"They said that I must accompany Chaugnar Faugn into the world."

"Chaugnar Faugn?"

"That is the name they worship *it* by. When I told them I had come from America they said that Great Chaugnar had *willed* that I should be his companion.

" 'It must be carried,' they explained, 'and it must be nursed. If it is nursed and carried safely beyond the rising sun it will possess the world. And then all things that are now in the world, all creatures and plants and stones will be devoured by Great Chaugnar. All things that are and have been will cease to be, and Great Chaugnar will fill all space with its Oneness. Even its Brothers it will devour, its Brothers who will come down from the mountains ravening for ecstasy when it calls to them.'

"I didn't protest when they explained this to me. It was precisely the kind of break I had been hoping for. I had read Richardson's book, you see, and I had gleaned enough between the lines to convince me that Chaugnar Faugn's devotees were growing a little weary of it. It isn't a very pleasant deity to have around. It has some regrettable and very nasty habits."

A horror was taking shape in Ulman's eyes.

"You must excuse my levity. When one is tottering on the edge of an abyss it isn't always expedient to dispense with irony. Were I to become wholly serious for a moment, were I to let the—what I believe, what I know to be the truth behind all that I am telling you coalesce into a definite concept in my mind I should go quite mad. Let us call them merely regrettable habits.

"I guessed, as I say, that the guardians of the cave were not very enthusiastic about retaining Chaugnar Faugn indefinitely. It made—depredations. The guardians would disappear in the night and leave their clothes behind them, and the clothes, upon examination, would yield something only remotely analogous.

"But however much your savage may want to dispose of his god the thing isn't always feasible. It would be the height of folly to attempt to send an omnipotent deity on a long journey without adequate justification. An angered god can take vengeance even when he is on the opposite side of the world. And that is why most barbarians who find themselves saddled with a deity they fear and hate are obliged to put up with it indefinitely.

"The only thing that can help them is a legend—some oral or written legend that will enable them to send their ogre

packing without ruffling its temper. The devotees had such a legend. At a certain time, which the prophecy left gratifyingly indefinite, Chaugnar Faugn was to be sent out into the world. It was to be sent out to possess the world to its everlasting glory, and it was also written that those who sent it forth should be forever immune from its ire.

"I knew of the existence of this legend, and when I read Richardson and discovered what a vile and unpleasant customer the god was I decided I'd risk a trip across the desert plateau of Tsang."

"You crossed on foot?" interrupted Algernon with undisguised admiration.

"There were no camels available," assented Ulman. "I made it on foot. On the fourth day my water ran short and I was obliged to open a vein in my arm. On the fifth day I began to see mirages—probably of a purely hallucinatory nature. On the seventh day"—he paused and stared hard at Algernon—"on the seventh day I consumed the excrements of wild dogs."

Algernon shuddered. "But you reached the cave?"

"I reached the cave. The—the faceless guardians whom Richardson described found me groveling on the sands in delirium a half-mile to the west of their sanctuary. They restored me by heating a flint until it was white-hot and laying it on my chest. If the high priest hadn't interfered I should have shared Richardson's fate."

"Good God!"

"The high priest was called Chung Ga and he was devilishly considerate. He took me into the cave and introduced me to Chaugnar Faugn.

"You've Chaugnar there," Ulman pointed to the enshrouded form on the floor, "and you can imagine what the sight of it squatting malignly on its haunches at the back of an evil-smelling, atrociously lighted cave would do to a man who had not eaten for three days.

"I began to say very queer things to Chung Ga. I confided to him that Great Chaugnar Faugn was not just a lifeless statue in a cave, but a great universal god malignantly filling all space—that it had created the world in a single instant by merely expelling its breath, and that when eventually it decided to inhale, the world would disappear. 'It also made this cave,' I hastened to add, 'and you are its chosen prophet.'

"The priest stared at me curiously for several moments without speaking. Then he approached the god and prostrated himself in ecstasy before it. 'Chaugnar Faugn,' he intoned, 'the White Acolyte has confirmed that you are about to become a great universal god filling all space. He will carry you safely into the world, and nurse you till you have no further need of him. The prophecy of Mu Sang has been most gloriously fulfilled.'

"For several minutes he remained kneeling at the foot of the idol. Then he rose and approached me. 'You shall depart with Great Chaugnar tomorrow,' he said. 'You shall become Great Chaugnar's companion and nurse.'

"I felt a wave of gratitude for the man. Even in my befuddled state I was sensible that I had achieved a magnificent break. 'I will serve him gladly,' I murmured, 'if only I may have some food.'

"Chung Ga nodded. 'It is my wish that you eat heartily,' he said. 'If you are to nurse Great Chaugnar you must consume an infinite diversity of fruits. And the flesh of animals. Red blood—red blood is Chaugnar's staff. Without it my god would swoon, would suffer tortures unspeakable.'

"He tapped a drum and immediately I was confronted with a wooden bowl filled to the brim with pomegranate juice.

" 'Drink heartily,' he urged. 'I have reason to suspect that Chaugnar Faugn will be ravenous tonight.'

"I was so famished that I scarcely gave a thought to what he was saying and for fifteen minutes I consumed without discrimination everything that was set before me—evil-smelling herbs, ewe's milk, eggs, peaches and the fresh blood of antelopes.

"The priest watched me in silence. At last when I could eat no more he went into a corner of the cave and returned with a straw mattress. 'You have supped most creditably,' he murmured, 'and I wish you pleasant dreams.'

"With that he withdrew, and I crawled gratefully upon the mat. My strength was wholly spent and the dangers I still must face, the loathsome proximity of Great Chaugnar and the possibility that the priest had been deliberately playing a part and would return to kill me, were swallowed up in a physical urgency that bordered on delirium. Relaxing upon the straw I shut my eyes, and fell almost instantly into a deep sleep.

"I AWOKE with a start and a strange impression that I was not alone in the cave. Even before I opened my eyes I knew that something unspeakably malign was crouching or squatting on the ground beside me. I could hear it panting in the darkness and the stench of it strangled the breath in my throat.

"Slowly, very slowly, I endeavored to rise. An unsurpassably ponderous weight descended upon my chest and hurled me to the ground. I stretched out my hand to disengage it and met with an iron resistance. A solid wall of something cold, slimy and implacable rose up in the darkness to thwart me.

"In an instant I was fully awake and calling frantically for assistance. But no one came to me. And even as I screamed the wall descended perpendicularly upon me and lay clammily upon my chest. An odor of corruption surged from it and when I tore at it with my fingers it made a low, gurgling sound, which gradually increased in volume till it woke echoes in the low-vaulted ceiling.

"The thing had pinioned my arms, and the more I twisted and squirmed the more agonizingly it tightened about me. The constriction increased until breathing became a torture, till all my flesh palpitated with pain. I wriggled and twisted, and bit my lips through in an extremity of horror.

"Then, abruptly, the pressure ceased and I became aware of two corpsy, viscid eyes glaring truculently at me through the darkness. Agonizingly I sat up and ran my hands over my chest and arms. A warm wetness slithered through my fingers and with a hideous clarity it was borne in on me that the thing had been supping on my blood! The revelation was mind-shattering. With a shriek I struggled to my feet and went careening about the cavern.

"A most awful terror was upon me, and so unreasoning became my desire to escape from that fearsome, vampirish obscenity that I retreated straight toward the throne of Chaugnar Faugn.

"It loomed enormous in the darkness, a refuge and a sanctuary. It occurred to me that if I could scale the throne and climb upon the lap of the god the horror might cease to molest me. Foul and fetid and malignant beyond belief it undoubtedly was, but I refused to credit it with more than animalistic intelligence. Even in that moment of infinite peril, as I groped shakingly toward the rear of the cave, my mind was evolving a conceit to account for it.

"It was indubitably, I told myself, some atavistic survival from the age of reptiles—some fell and lumpish abnor-

mality that had experienced no necessity to advance on the course of evolution. It is more than probable that all vertebrated animals above the level of fishes and amphibians originated in Asia, and I had recklessly conveyed myself to the hoariest section of that detestable continent. Was it after all so amazing that I should have encountered, in a dark and inaccessible cave on a virtually uninhabited plateau, a reptilian blasphemy endowed with propensities as mysterious as they were abhorrent?

"It was a comfortable conceit and it sustained me till I reached the throne of Great Chaugnar. I fear that up to that instant my obtuseness had been positively idiotic. There was only one really adequate explanation for what had occurred, but not until I actually ascended the throne and began to feel about in the darkness for the body of Chaugnar did the truth rush in upon me.

"Great Chaugnar had forsaken its throne! It had descended into the cave and was roaming about in the darkness. In its execrable peregrinations it had stumbled upon my sleeping form, had felled me with its trunk so that it might detestably sup.

"For an instant I crouched motionless upon the stone, with a cold horror gnawing at my vitals. Then, quickly, I began to descend. But I had not lowered more than my right leg when something ponderous collided with the base of the throne. The entire structure quivered and I was almost thrown to the ground.

"I refuse to dwell on what happened after that. There are experiences too revolting for sane description. Were I to tell how the horror began slobberingly to mount, to recount at length how it heaved its slabby and mucid vastness to the pinnacle of its throne and began nauseatingly to breathe upon me, the doubts you now entertain as to my sanity would coalesce into certainties.

"Neither shall I describe how it picked me up in its nasty, fetid hands and began revoltingly to maul me, and how I nearly fainted beneath the foulness which drooled from its mouth and descended stickily upon me. It is sufficient that eventually it wearied of its malign sport, that after sinking its slimy black nails into my throat, chest and navel till I shrieked in agony, it experienced a sudden access of wrath and hurled me venomously from the pedestal.

"The fall stunned me and for many minutes I lay on my back on the stones, dimly conscious only of a furtive whispering in the void about me. Then, slowly, my vision cleared and under the guidance of some nebulous and sinister influence my eyes were drawn upward until they encountered the pedestal from which I had fallen and the enormous, ropy bulk of Chaugnar Faugn loathsomely waving his great trunk in the dawn.

"It isn't surprizing that when Chung Ga found me deliriously gibbering at the cavern's mouth he was obliged to carry me into the sunlight and force great wooden spoonfuls of revivifying wine down my parched throat. If there was *anything* inexplicable in the sequel to that hideous nightmare it was the matter-of-fact reception which he accorded my story.

"He nodded his head sympathetically when I recounted my experiences on the throne, and assured me that the incident accorded splendidly with the prophecies of Mu Sang. 'I was afraid,' he said, 'that Great Chaugnar would not accept you as its companion and nurse—that it would destroy you as utterly as it has the guardians—more of the guardians than I would care to adumbrate.'

"He studied me for a moment intense-

ly. 'No doubt you think me a superstitious savage, a ridiculous barbarian. Would it surprize you very much if I should confess to you that I have spent eight years in England and that I am a graduate of the University of London?'

"I could only stare at him in befuddled surprize. So unbelievable and ghastly had been the coming to life of Chaugnar Faugn that lesser wonders made little impression on me. Had he told me that he had an eye in the middle of his back or a tail twenty feet long which he kept continuously coiled about his body I should have evinced little surprize. I doubt indeed if anything short of a universal cataclysm could have roused me from my stupor.

" 'It astonishes you perhaps that I should have cast my lot with filthy primitives in this loathsome place and that I should have so uncompromisingly menaced your countrymen.' A wistfulness crept into his eyes. 'Your Richardson was a brave man. Even Chaugnar Faugn was moved to compassion by his valor. He gave no cry when we drove wooden stakes through his hands and impaled him. For three days he defied us. Then Chaugnar tramped toward him in the night and set him at liberty.

" 'You may be sure that from that instant we accorded him every consideration. But to return to what you would undoubtedly call my perverse and atavistic attitude. Why do you suppose I chose to serve Chaugnar?'

"His recapitulation of what he had done to Richardson had awakened in me a confused resentment. 'I don't know,' I muttered, 'you vile——'

" 'Spare me your opprobrium, I beg of you,' he exclaimed. 'It was Great Chaugnar speaking through me that dictated the fate of Richardson. I am merely Chaugnar's interpreter and instrument. For generations my forebears have served Chaugnar, and I have never attempted to evade the duties that were delegated to me when our world was merely a thought in the mind of my god. I went to England and acquired a little of the West's decadent culture merely that I might more worthily serve Chaugnar.

" 'Don't imagine for a moment that Chaugnar is a beneficent god. In the West you have evolved certain amiabilities of intercourse, to which you presumptuously attach cosmic significance, such as truth, kindliness, generosity, forbearance and honor, and you quaintly imagine that a god who is beyond good and evil and hence unamenable to your "ethics" can not be omnipotent.

" 'But how do you know that there *are* any beneficent laws in the universe, that the cosmos is friendly to man? Even in the mundane sphere of planetary life there is nothing to sustain such an hypothesis.

" 'Great Chaugnar is a terrible god, an utterly cosmic and unanthropomorphic god. It is akin to the fire mists and the primordial ooze, and before it incarned itself in Time it contained within itself the past, the present and the future. Nothing was and nothing will be, but all things are. And Chaugnar Faugn was once the sum of all things that are.'

"I remained silent and a note of compassion crept into his voice. I think he perceived that I had no inclination to split hairs with him over the paradoxes of transcendental metaphysics.

" 'Chaugnar Faugn,' he continued, 'did not always dwell in the East. Many thousands of years ago it abode with its Brothers in a cave in Western Europe, and made from the flesh of toads a race of small dark shapes to serve it. In bodily contour these shapes resembled men, but they were incapable of speech and their thoughts were the thoughts of Chaugnar.

" 'The cave where Chaugnar dwelt was never visited by men, for it wound its twisted length through a high and inaccessible crag of the mysterious Pyrenees, and all the regions beneath were rife with abominable hauntings.

" 'Twice a year Chaugnar Faugn sent its servants into the villages that dotted the foothills to bring it the sustenance its belly craved. The chosen youths and maidens were preserved with spices and stored in the cave till Chaugnar had need of them. And in the villages men would hurl their first-borns into the flames and offer prayers to their futile little gods, hoping thereby to appease the wrath of Chaugnar's mindless servants.

" 'But eventually there came into the foothills men like gods, stout, eagle-visaged men who carried on their shields the insignia of invincible Rome. They scaled the mountains in pursuit of the servants and awoke a cosmic foreboding in the mind of Chaugnar.

" 'It is true that its Brethren succeeded without difficulty in exterminating the impious cohorts—exterminating them unspeakably—before they reached the cave, but it feared that rumors of the attempted sacrilege would bring legions of the empire-builders into the hills and that eventually its sanctuary would be defiled.

" 'So in ominous conclave it debated with its Brothers the advisability of flight. Rome was but a dream in the mind of Chaugnar and it could have destroyed her utterly in an instant, but having incarned itself in Time it did not wish to resort to violence until the prophecies were fulfilled.

" 'Chaugnar and its Brothers conversed by means of thought-transference in an idiom incomprehensible to us and it would be both dangerous and futile to attempt to repeat the exact substance of their discourse. But it is recorded in the prophecy of Mu Sang that Great Chaugnar spoke *approximately* as follows:

" ' "Our servants shall carry us eastward to the primal continent, and there we shall await the arrival of the White Acolyte."

" 'His Brothers demurred. "We are safe here," they affirmed. "No one will scale the mountains again, for the doom that came to Pompelo will reverberate in the dreams of prophets till Rome is less to be feared than moon-dim Nineveh, or medusa-girdled Ur."

" 'At that Great Chaugnar waxed ireful and affirmed that it would go alone to the primal continent, leaving its Brothers to cope with the menace of Rome. "When the time-frames are dissolved I alone shall ascend in glory," it told them. "All of you I shall devour before I ascend to the dark altars. When the hour of my transfiguration approaches you will come down from the mountains cosmically athirst for That Which is Not to be Spoken of, but even as your bodies raven for the time-dissolving sacrament I shall consume them."

" 'Then it called for the servants and had them carry it to this place. And it caused Mu Sang to be born from the womb of an ape and the prophecies to be written on imperishable parchment, and into the care of my fathers it surrendered its body.'

"I rose gropingly to my feet. 'Let me leave this place,' I pleaded. 'Chaugnar has supped upon my blood and has surely no further need of me!'

"Chung Ga's features were convulsed with pity. 'It is stated in the prophecy that you must be Chaugnar's companion and accompany it to America. In a few days it will experience a desire to feed again. You must nurse it unceasingly.'

" 'I am ill,' I pleaded. 'I can not carry Chaugnar Faugn across the desert plateau.'

" 'I will have the guardians assist you,' murmured Chung Ga soothingly. 'You shall be conveyed in comfort to the gates of Lhasa, and from Lhasa to the coast it is less than a week's journey by caravan.'

"I REALIZED then how impossible it would be for me to depart without Great Chaugnar. 'Very well, Chung Ga,' I said. 'I submit to the prophecy. Chaugnar shall be my companion and I shall nurse it as diligently as it desires.'

"There was a ring of insincerity in my speech which was not lost on Chung Ga. He approached very close to me and peered into my eyes. 'If you attempt to dispose of my god,' he warned, 'its Brothers will come down from the mountains and tear you indescribably.'

"He saw perhaps that I wasn't wholly convinced, for he added in a more ominous tone, 'It has laid upon you the mark and seal of a flesh-dissolving sacrament. Destroy it, and the sacrament will be consummated in an instant. The flesh of your body will turn black and melt like tallow in the sun. You will become a seething mass of corruption, a fetid and frenzied abnormality.' "

Ulman paused to clear his throat. "There isn't much more to my story, Algernon. The guardians carried us safely to Lhasa and a fortnight later I reached the Bay of Bengal, accompanied by half a hundred scabrous and filthy beggars from the temples of the loathliest cities in India. There was something about our caravan that had attracted them. And all during the voyage from Bengal to Hongkong the Indian and Tibetan members of our crew would steal stealthily to my cabin at night and fight with one another for the privilege of pressing their repellent physiognomies against the shuttered panes.

"Don't imagine for a moment that I didn't share their superstitious awe of the thing I was compelled to companion. Continuously I longed to carry it on deck and cast it into the sea. Only the memory of Chung Ga's warning and the thought of what might happen to me if I disregarded it kept me chained and submissive.

"It was not until weeks later, when I had left the Indian and most of the Pacific Ocean behind me, that I discovered how unwise I had been to heed his vile threats. If I had resolutely hurled Chaugnar into the sea the shame and the horror might never have come upon me!"

Ulman's voice was rising, becoming shrill and hysterical. "Chaugnar Faugn is an awful and mysterious being, a repellent and obscene and lethal being, but how do I know that it is omnipotent? Chung Ga may have maliciously lied to me. Chaugnar Faugn may be merely an extension or distortion of inanimate nature. Some hideous *process,* as yet unobserved and unexplained by the science of the West, may be noxiously at work in desert places all over our planet to produce such fiendish anomalies. Perhaps parallel to protoplasmic life on the earth's crust is this other aberrant and hidden life—the revolting sentiency of stones that aspire, of earth-shapes, parasitic and bestial, that wax agile in the presence of man.

"Did not Cuvier believe that there had been not one but an infinite number of 'creations', and that as our earth cooled after its departure from the sun a succession of vitalic phenomena appeared on its surface? Conceding as we must the orderly and continuous development of protoplasmic life from simple forms, which Cuvier stupidly and ridiculously denied, is it not still conceivable that another evolutionary cycle may have preceded the one which has culminated in us? A non-protoplasmic cycle?

"Whether we accept the Laplacian or

the planetesimal theory of planetary formation it is permissible to believe that the earth coalesced very swiftly into a compact mass after the segregation of its constituents in space and that it achieved sufficient crustal stability to support animate entities one, or two, or perhaps even five billion years ago.

"I do not claim that life *as we know it* would be possible in the earliest phases of planetary consolidation, but is it possible to assert dogmatically that beings possessed of intelligence and volition could not have evolved in a direction merely parallel to the cellular? Life as we know it is complexly bound up with such substances as chlorophyll and protoplasm, but does that preclude the possibility of an evolved sentiency in other forms of matter?

"How do we know that stones can not think; that the earth beneath our feet may not once have been endowed with a hideous intelligence? Entire cycles of animate evolution may have occurred on this planet before the most primitive of 'living' cells were evolved from the slime of warm seas.

"There may have been eons of—experiments! Three billion years ago in the fiery radiance of the rapidly condensing earth who knows what monstrous shapes crawled—or shambled?

"And how do we know that there are not survivals? Or that somewhere beneath the stars of heaven complex and hideous processes are not still at work, shaping the inorganic into forms of primal malevolence.

"And what more inevitable than that some such primiparous spawn should have become in my eyes the apotheosis of all that was fiendish and accursed and unclean, and that I should have ascribed to it the attributes of divinity, and imagined in a moment of madness that it was immune to destruction. I should have hurled it into the depths of the seas and risked boldly the fulfilment of Chung Ga's prophecy. For even had it proved itself omnipotent and omnificent by rising in fury from the waves or summoning its Brothers to bemire me I should have suffered merely indescribably for an instant."

Ulman's voice had risen to a shrill scream. "I should have passed quickly enough into the darkness had I encountered merely the wrath of Chaugnar Faugn. It was not the fury but the forbearance of Chaugnar that has wrought an uncleanliness in my body's flesh, and blackened and shriveled my soul, till a furious hate has grown up in me for all that the world holds of serenity and joy."

Ulman's voice broke and for a moment there was silence in the room. Then, with a sudden, convulsive movement of his right arm he uncloaked the whole of his face.

He was standing very nearly in the center of the office and the light from its eastern window illumed with a hideous clarity all that remained of his features. But Algernon didn't utter a sound, for all that the sight was appalling enough to revolt a corpse. He simply clung shakingly to the desk and waited with ashen lips for Ulman to continue.

"It came to me again as I slept, drinking its fill, and in the morning I woke to find that the flesh of my body had grown fetid and loathsome, and that my face—my face——"

"Yes, Clark, I understand." Algernon's voice was vibrant with compassion. "I'll get you some brandy."

Ulman's eyes shone with an awful light.

"Do you believe me?" he cried. "Do you believe that Chaugnar Faugn has wrought this uncleanliness?"

Slowly Algernon shook his head. "No, Clark. Chaugnar Faugn is nothing but an obscene stone fetish. I believe that Chung Ga kept you under the influence of some potent drug until he had—had cut your face, and that he also mesmerized you and suggested every detail of the story you have just told me. I believe you are still actually under the spell of that mesmerization."

"When I boarded the ship at Calcutta there was nothing wrong with my face!" shrilled Ulman.

"Conceivably not. But some minion of the priest may have administered the drug and performed the operation on shipboard. I can only guess at what happened, of course, but it is obvious that you are the victim of some hideous charlatanry. I've visited India, Clark, and I have a very keen respect for the hypnotic endowments of the Oriental. It's ghastly and unbelievable how much a Hindoo or a Tibetan can accomplish by simple suggestion."

"I feared—I feared that you would doubt!" Ulman's voice had risen to a shriek. "But I swear to you——"

The sentence was never finished. A hideous pallor overspread the archeologist's face, his jaw sagged and into his eyes there crept a look of panic fright. For a second he stood clawing at his throat, like a man in the throes of an epileptic fit.

Then something, some invisible force, seemed to propel him backward. Choking and gasping he staggered against the wall and threw out his arms in a gesture of frantic appeal. "Keep it off!" he sobbed. "I can't breathe. I can't——"

With a cry Algernon leapt forward, but before he could reach the other's side the unfortunate man had sunk to the floor and was moaning and gibbering and rolling about in a most sickening way.

2. *The Atrocity at the Museum*

ALGERNON HARRIS emerged from the B. M. T. subway at the Fifty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue entrance and began nervously to pace the sidewalk in front of a large yellow sign, which bore the discouraging caption: "Buses do not stop here." Harris was most eager to secure a bus and it was obvious from the expectant manner in which he hailed the first one to pass that he hadn't the faintest notion he had taken up his post on the wrong side of the street. Indeed, it was not until four buses had passed him by that he awoke to the gravity of his predicament and began to propel his person in the direction of the legitimate stop-zone.

Algernon Harris was abnormally and tragically upset. But even a man trembling on the verge of a neuropathic collapse can remain superficially politic, and it isn't surprizing that when he ascended into his bus and encountered on a conspicuous seat his official superior, Doctor George Francis Scollard, he should have nodded, smiled and responded with an unwavering amiability to the questions that were shot at him.

"I got your telegram yesterday," murmured the president of the Manhattan Museum of Fine Arts, "and I caught the first train down. Am I too late for the inquest?"

Algernon nodded. "The coroner—a chap named Henry Weigal—took my evidence and rendered a decision on the spot. The condition of Ulman's body would not have permitted of delay. I never before imagined that—that putrefaction could proceed with such incredible rapidity."

Scollard frowned. "And the verdict?"

"Heart failure. The coroner was very positive that anxiety and shock were the sole causes of Ulman's lethal collapse."

"But you said something about his face being horribly disfigured."

"Yes. It had been rendered loathsome by—by plastic surgery. Weigal was hideously agitated until I explained that Ulman had merely fallen into the hands of a skilful Oriental surgeon with sadistic inclination in the course of his investigatory peregrinations. I explained to him that many of our field workers returned slightly disfigured and that Ulman had merely endured an exaggeration of the customary martyrdom."

"And you believe that plastic surgery could account for the repellent and gruesome changes you mentioned in your night-letter — the shocking prolongation of the poor devil's nose, the flattening and broadening of his ears——"

Algernon winced. "I must believe it, sir. It is impossible to entertain any other explanation sanely. The coroner's assistant was a little incredulous at first, until Weigal pointed out to him what an unwholesome precedent they would set by even so much as hinting that the phenomenon wasn't pathologically explicable. 'We would play right into the hands of the spiritualists,' Weigal explained. 'An officer of the police isn't at liberty to adduce an hypothesis that the district attorney's office wouldn't approve of. The newspapers would pounce on a thing like that and play it up disgustingly. Mr. Harris has supplied us with an explanation which seems adequately to cover the facts, and with your permission I shall file a verdict of natural death.' "

The president coughed and shifted uneasily in his seat. "I am glad that the coroner took such a sensible view of the matter. Had he been a recalcitrant individual and raised objections we should have come in for considerable unpleasant publicity. I shudder whenever I see a reference to the Museum in the popular press. It is always the morbid and sensational aspects of our work that they stress and there is never the slightest attention paid to accuracy."

For a moment Doctor Scollard was silent. Then he cleared his throat, and recapitulated, in a slightly more emphatic form, the question that he had put to Algernon originally. "But you said in your letter that Ulman's nose revolted and sickened you—that it had become a loathsome greenish trunk almost a foot in length which continued to move about for hours after Ulman's heart stopped beating. Could—could your operation hypothesis account for such an appalling anomaly?"

Algernon took a deep breath. "I can't pretend that I wasn't astounded and appalled and—and frightened. And so lost to discretion that I made no attempt to conceal my perturbation from the coroner. I could not remain in the room while they were examining the body."

"And yet you succeeded in convincing the coroner that he could justifiably render a verdict of natural death!"

"You misunderstood me, sir. The coroner *wanted* to render such a verdict. My explanation merely supplied him with a straw to clutch at. I was trembling in every limb when I made it and it must have been obvious to him that we were in the presence of something unthinkable. But without the plastic surgery assumption we should have had nothing whatever to cling to."

"And do you still give your reluctant assent to such an assumption?"

"Now more than ever. And my assent is no longer reluctant, for I've succeeded in convincing myself that a surgeon endowed with miraculous skill could have affected the transformation I described in my letter."

"Miraculous skill?"

"I usé the word in a merely mundane sense. When one stops to consider what

astounding advances plastic surgery has made in England and America during the past decade it is impossible to disbelieve that the human frame will soon become more malleable than wax beneath the scalpels of our surgeons and that beings will appear in our midst with bodies so grotesquely distorted that the superstitious will ascribe their advent to the supernatural.

"And we can adduce *more* than a surgical 'miracle' to account for the horror that poor Ulman became without for a moment encroaching on the dubious domain of the super-physical. Every one knows how extensively the ductless glands regulate the growth and shape of our bodies. A change in the quantity or quality of secretion in any one of the glands may throw the entire human mechanism out of gear. Terrible and unthinkable changes have been known to occur in the adult body during the course of diseases involving glandular instability. We once thought that human beings invariably ceased to grow at twenty-one or twenty-two, but we now know that growth may continue till middle age, and even till the very onset of senility, and that frequently such growth does not culminate in a mere increase in stature or in girth.

"Doubtless you have heard of that rare and mysterious malady known as Acromegaly. I believe that authorities differ as to its precise causation, some holding that it can be traced to a thyroid and others to a pituitary disturbance, but we know, at any rate, that it is basically a glandular disease of unsurpassable malignancy. It is characterized by an abnormal growth of the skull and face, and occasionally, of the extremities, and its victims become in a short time no longer recognizably human. The face swells and distends and becomes a monstrous caricature and the skull elongates and widens till it dwarfs the dimensions of macrocephaly. In exceptional cases the face has been known to attain a length of nearly a foot. But it is not so much the size as the revolting shape of the face which sets the victims of this hideous disease so tragically apart from their fellows. The features not only grow, but they assume a repellent ape-like cast, and as the disease advances even the skull waxes revoltingly simian in its conformation. In brief, the victims of Acromegaly become in a short while almost indistinguishable from very primitive and brutish types of human ancestors, such as *Homo neandertalensis* and the unmentionable, enormous-browed caricature from Broken Hill, Rhodesia, which Sir Arthur Keith has called the most unqualifiedly repulsive physiognomy in the entire gallery of fossil men.

"The disease of Acromegaly is perhaps a more certain indication of man's origin than all the 'missing links' that anthropologists have exhumed. It proves incontestably that we still carry within our bodies the mechanism of evolutionary retrogression, and that when something interferes with the normal functioning of our glands we are very apt to return, at least physically, to our aboriginal status.

"And since we know that a mere insufficiency or superabundance of glandular secretions can work such devastating changes, can turn men virtually into Neandertalers, or great apes, what is there really unaccountable in the alteration I witnessed in poor Ulman?

"Some Oriental diabolist merely ten years in advance of the West in the sphere of plastic surgery and with a knowledge of glandular therapeutics no greater than that possessed by Doctors Noel Paton and Schafer might easily have wrought such an abomination. Or suppose, as I have hinted before, that no surgery was involved, suppose this fiend has learned so much about our glands that he can send

men back and back through the mists of time—back past the great apes and the feral marsupials and the loathsome saurians to their primordial sires! Suppose—it is an awful thought, I know—suppose that something remotely analogous to what Ulman became was *once* our ancestor, that a hundred million years ago a loathly batrachian shape with trunk-like appendages and great flapping ears paddled obscenely through the warm primeval seas or stretched its fetid length on banks of Permian slime!"

MR. SCOLLARD turned sharply and plucked at his subordinate's sleeve. "There's a crowd in front of the Museum," he muttered. "See there!"

Algernon started, and rising instantly, pressed the signal bell above his companion's head. "We'll have to walk back," he muttered despondently. "I should have watched the street numbers."

His pessimism proved well-founded. The bus continued relentlessly on its way for four additional blocks and then came so abruptly to a stop that Mr. Scollard was subjected to the ignominy of being obliged to sit for an instant on the spacious lap of an Ethiopian domestic.

"I've a good mind to report you," he shouted to the bus conductor as he lowered his portly person to the sidewalk. "I've a damn good mind——"

"Hush!" Algernon laid a pacifying arm on his companion's arm. "We've got no time to argue. Something dreadful has occurred at the Museum. I just saw two policemen enter the building. And those tall men walking up and down on the opposite side of the street are reporters. There's Wells of the *Tribune* and Thompson of the *Times*, and——"

Mr. Scollard gripped his subordinate's arm. "Tell me," he demanded, "did you put the—the statue on exhibition?"

Algernon nodded. "I had it carried to Alcove K, Wing C last night. After the inquest on poor Ulman I was besieged by reporters. They wanted to know all about the fetish, and of course I had to tell them that it would go on exhibition eventually. They would have returned every day for weeks to pester me if I hadn't assured them that the million-headed beast would be given an opportunity to gibber and gape at it.

"Yesterday afternoon all the papers ran specials about it. The *News-Graphic* gave it a front-page write-up. I remained at my office until eleven, and all evening at half-minute intervals some boob would ring up and ask me when I was going to exhibit the thing and whether it really looked as repulsive as its photographs, and what kind of stone it was made of and—oh, God! I was too nervous and wrought-up to be bothered that way and I decided it would be best to satisfy the public's idiotic curiosity by permitting them to view the thing today."

The two men were walking briskly in the direction of the Museum.

"Besides, there was no longer any necessity of my keeping it in the office. I had had it measured and photographed and I knew that Harrison and Smithstone wouldn't want to take a cast of it until next week. And I couldn't have chosen a safer place for it than Alcove K. It's roped off, you know, and only two paces removed from the door. Cinney can see it all night from his station in the corridor."

By the time that Algernon and Mr. Scollard arrived at the Museum the crowd had reached alarming proportions. They were obliged to fight their way aggressively through a solid phalanx of mumbling boobs and submit for fully fifteen minutes to appalling encroachments on their personal dignity. And even in the vestibules they were repulsed with discourtesy.

A red-headed policeman glared savagely at them from behind horn-rimmed spectacles and arrested their progress with a threatening gesture. "You've got to keep out!" he shouted. "If you ain't got a police card you've got to keep out!"

"What's happened here?" demanded Algernon authoritatively.

"A guy's been bumped off. If you ain't got a police card you've got to——"

Algernon produced a calling-card and thrust it into the officer's face. "I'm the curator of archeology," he affirmed angrily. "I guess I've a right to enter my own museum."

The officer's manner softened perceptibly. "Then I guess it's all right, buddy. The chief told me I wasn't to keep out any of the guys that work here. How about your friend?"

"You can safely admit him," murmured Algernon with a smile. "He's president of the Museum."

"Oh yeh?" The policeman regarded Mr. Scollard dubiously for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders and stepped complacently aside. "I guess it's all right, buddy," he repeated sententiously. "The chief didn't say anything about presidents, but I guess you can both go in."

An attendant greeted them excitedly as they emerged from the turnstile. "It's awful, sir," he gasped, addressing Mr. Scollard. "Cinney has been murdered—knifed, sir. He's all cut and mangled. I shouldn't have recognized him if it weren't for his clothes. There's nothing left of his face, sir."

Algernon turned pale. "When—when did this happen?" he gasped.

The attendant shook his head. "I can't say, Mr. Harris. It must've been some time last night, but I can't say exactly when. The first we knew of it was when Mr. Williams came running down the stairs with his hands all bloodied. That was at eight this morning, about two hours ago. I'd just got in, and all the other attendants were in the cloak room getting into their uniforms. That is, all except Williams. Williams usually arrives about a half-hour before the rest of us. He likes to come early and have a chat with Cinney before the doors open."

The attendant's face was convulsed with terror and he spoke with considerable difficulty. "I was the only one to see him come down the stairs. I was standing about here and as soon as he came into sight I knew that something was wrong with him. He went from side to side of the stairs and clung to the rails to keep himself from falling. And his face was as white as paper."

Algernon's eyes did not leave the attendant's face. "Go on," he urged.

"He opened his mouth very wide when he saw me. It was like as if he wanted to shout and couldn't. There wasn't a sound came out of him."

The attendant cleared his throat. "I didn't think he'd ever reach the bottom of the stairs and I called out for the boys in the cloak room to lend me a hand."

"What happened then?"

"He didn't speak for a long time. One of the boys gave him some whisky out of a flask and the rest of us just stood about and said soothing things to him. But he was trembling all over and we couldn't quiet him down. He kept throwing his head about and pointing toward the stairs. And foam collected all over his mouth. It was awful—minded me of a dog with rabies.

" 'What's wrong, Jim?' I said to him. 'What did you see?'

" 'The worm of hell!' he shrieked. 'The Devil's awful mascot!' He said things I can't repeat, sir. Horrible, impious things. I'm a God-fearing man, sir, and there are blasphemies I daren't

soil my mouth with. But I'll tell you what he said when he got through talking about the worm out of hell. He said: 'Cinney's upstairs rottin' on his belly and there ain't a drop of blood in his veins.'

"We got up the stairs quicker than lightning after he'd told us that. We didn't know just what his crazy words meant, but the blood on his hands made them seem awful important. They kind of confirmed what we feared, sir, if you get what I mean."

Algernon nodded. "And you found Cinney—dead?"

"Worse than that, sir. All black and shrunken and looking as though he'd been wearing clothes about four sizes too large for him. His face was all *gone*, sir —all eaten away, like. We picked him up—he wasn't much heavier than a little boy—and laid him out on a bench in Corridor H. I never seen so much blood in my life—the floor was all slippery with it. And the big stone animal you had us carry down to Alcove K last night was all dripping with it, 'specially its trunk. It made me sort of sick. I never like to look at blood."

"You think some one attacked Cinney?"

"It looked that way, Mr. Harris. Like as if some one went for him with a knife. It must have been an awful big knife—a regular butcher's knife. That ain't a very nice way of putting it, sir, but that's how it struck me. Like as if some one mistook him for a piece of mutton."

"And what else did you find when you examined him?"

"We didn't do much examining. We just let him lie on the bench till we got through phoning for the police. Mr. Williamson did the talking, sir." A look of relief crept into the attendant's eyes. "The police said we wasn't to disturb the body further, which suited us fine. There wasn't one of us didn't want to give poor Mr. Cinney a wide berth."

"And what did the police do when they arrived?"

"Asked us about a million crazy questions, sir. Was Mr. Cinney disfigured in the war? And was Mr. Cinney in the habit of wearing a mask over his face? And had Mr. Cinney received any threatening letters from Chinaman or Hindoos? And when we told them no, they seemed to get kind of frightened. 'If it ain't murder,' they said, 'we're up against something that ain't natural. But it's got to be murder. All we have to do is get hold of the Chinaman."

Algernon didn't wait to hear more. Brushing the attendant ungratefully aside he went dashing up the stairs three steps at a time. Mr. Scollard followed with ashen face.

THEY were met in the upper corridor by a tall, loose-jointed man in shabby, ill-fitting clothes who arrested their progress with a scowl and a torrent of impatient abuse. "Where do you think you're going?" he demanded. "Didn't I give orders that no one was to come up here? I've got nothing to say to you. You're too damn nosy. If you want the lowdown on this affair you've got to wait outside till we get through putting the attendants on the grill."

"See here," said Algernon impatiently. "This gentleman is president of the Museum and he has a perfect right to go where he chooses."

The tall man waxed apologetic. "I thought you were a couple of newspaper Johns," he murmured confusedly. "We haven't anything even remotely resembling a clue, but those guys keep popping in here every ten minutes to cross-examine us. They're worse than prosecuting attorneys. Come right this way, sir."

He led them past a little knot of at-

tendants and photographers and finger-print experts to the northerly part of the corridor. "There's the body," he said, pointing toward a sheeted form which lay sprawled on a low bench near the window. "I'd be grateful if you gentlemen would just take a squint at the poor lad's face."

Algernon nodded, and lifting a corner of the sheet peered for an instant intently into what remained of poor Cinney's countenance. Then, with a shudder, he surrendered his place to Mr. Scollard.

It is to Mr. Scollard's credit that he did not cry out. Only the trembling of his lower lip betrayed the revulsion which filled him.

"He was found on the floor in the corridor about two hours ago," explained the detective. "But the guy who found him isn't here. They've got him in a straitjacket down at Belleview, and it doesn't look as though he'll be much help to us. He was yelling his head off about something he said came out of hell when they put him in the ambulance. That's what drew the crowd."

"You don't think Williams could have done it?" murmured Algernon.

"Not a chance. But he saw the murderer all right, and if we can get him to talk——" He wheeled on Algernon abruptly. "You seem to know something about this, sir."

"Only what we picked up downstairs. We had a talk with one of the attendants and he explained about Williams—and the Chinaman."

The detective's eyes glowed. "The Chinaman? What Chinaman? Is there a Chinaman mixed up in this? It's what I've been thinking all along, but I didn't have much to go on."

"I fear we're becoming involved in a vicious circle," said Algernon. "It was your Chinaman I was referring to. Willy said you were laboring under the impression that all you had to do to solve this distressing affair was to catch a Chinaman."

The detective shook his head. "It ain't so simple as that," he affirmed. "We haven't any positive evidence that a Chinaman did it. It might have been a Jap or Hindoo or even a South Sea Islander. That is, if South Sea Islanders eat rice!"

"Rice?" Algernon stared at the detective incredulously.

"Yeh. In a bowl with long sticks. I'm no authority on et-eternalogy, but it's my guess they don't use chopsticks much outside of Asia."

He went into Alcove K and returned with a wooden bowl and two long splinters of wood. "All those dark spots near the rim are blood stains," he explained, as he surrendered the gruesome exhibits to Algernon. "Even the rice is all smeared with blood. It's nasty-looking gooey—the kind of stuff a yellow ripper *would* fill his guts with."

Algernon shuddered and passed the bowl to Scollard, who almost dropped it in his haste to return it to the detective.

"Where did you find it?" the president spoke in a subdued whisper.

"On the floor in front of the big stone elephant. That's where the murder was pulled off. There's blood all over the elephant — if it's supposed to be an elephant."

"It isn't, strictly speaking, an elephant," said Algernon.

"Yeh? Well, whatever it is, it could tell us what Cinney's murderer looked like. I'd give the toes off my left foot if it could talk."

"It doesn't talk," said Algernon decisively.

"I wasn't wisecracking," admonished the detective. "I was simply pointing out that that elephant could give us the low-down on a mighty nasty murder."

Algernon accepted the rebuke in silence.

"There ain't no doubt whatever that a Chinaman or Hindoo or some crazy foreigner sneaked in here last night, set himself down in front of that elephant and began eating rice. Maybe he was in a church-going mood and mistook the beast for one of his heathen gods. It kind of looks like a heathen statue—like one of those grinnin' Buddhas they put in all the windows at Van Tine's."

Algernon smiled ironically. "But unquestionably unique," he murmured.

"Yeh. Larger and uglier-looking, but a heathen statue for all that. I bet it actually was worshipped once."

"Yes," admitted Algernon, "it is indubitably in the religious tradition. For all its hideousness it has all the earmarks of a quiescent Eastern divinity."

"There ain't anything more dangerous than interfering with an Oriental when he's saying his prayers," continued the detective. "I've been in Chinktown raids, and I know. Now here's what I think happened. Cinney is standing in the corridor and suddenly he hears the Chinaman muttering and mumbling to himself in the dark. He's naturally frightened and so he rushes in with his pocket light where an angel would be fearing to tread. The light gets in the Chink's eyes and sets him off.

"It's like putting a match to a ton of TNT to throw a light on a Chink when he's squatting in the dark in a worshipful mood. So the Chink goes for the poor kid with a knife. A white man would have made a quick job of it, but you can't count on what a Chink will do when something frightens and upsets him. They're a cruel, unreasoning race. The cutting, mutilating impulse is in their blood. It's a sort of second nature with them to want to torture people. And if something prevents them from getting back at you when you set them off they'll do a hari-kari before your eyes. I've watched them try it. A crazy, mad crew. And Hindoos are just as bad. If it ain't a Chinaman it's got to be a Hindoo."

Algernon nodded impatiently. "There may be something in your theory, sergeant. But there's a great deal it doesn't explain. What was it that Williams saw?"

"Nothing but Cinney lying dead in the corridor. Nothing but Cinney looking up at him without a face and that awful heathen animal looking down at him with blood all over its mouth."

Algernon stared. "Blood on its mouth?"

"Sure. All over its mouth, trunk and tusks. Never seen so much blood in my life. That's what Williams saw. I don't wonder it crumpled the kid up."

THERE was a commotion in the corridor. Some one was sobbing and pleading in a most fantastic way a few yards from where the three men were standing. The detective turned and shouted out a curt command. "Whoever that is, bring him here!"

Came an appalling, ear-harassing shriek and two plain-clothes men emerged around a bend in the corridor with a diminutive and weeping Oriental spread-eagled betwixt their extended arms.

"The Chinaman!" muttered Scollard in amazement.

For a second the detective was too startled to move, and his immobility somehow emboldened the Chink to break from his captors and prostrate himself on the floor at Algernon's feet.

"You are my friend," he sobbed. "You are a very good man. I saw you in green-fire dream. In dream when big green animals came down from mountain I saw you and Gautama Siddhartha. Big green animals all wanted blood—all very much

wanted blood. In dream Gautama Siddhartha said: 'They want you! They have determined they make you all dark fire glue.'

"I said, 'No! *Please,*' I said. Then Gautama Siddhartha let fall jewel of wisdom. 'Go to museeum. Go to big museeum round block, and big green animal will eat you quick. He will not make you dark fire glue. He will eat you quick—before he make American man dark fire glue.'

"All night I have sat here. All night I said: 'Eat me. *Please!*' But big green animal slept till American man came. Then he moved. Very quickly he moved. He gave American man very bad hug. American man screamed and big green animal drank all American man's blood."

The Chinaman was sobbing unrestrainedly. Algernon stooped and lifted him gently to his feet. "What is your name?" he asked, to soothe him. "Where do you live?"

"I'm boss big laundry down street," murmured the Chinaman. "My name is Hsieh Ho. I am a good man, like you."

"Where did you go when—when the elephant came to life?"

The Chinaman's lower lip trembled convulsively. "I hid back of big white lady."

In spite of the gravity of the situation Algernon couldn't repress a smile. The "big white lady" was a statue of Venus Erycine and so enormous was it that it occupied almost the whole of Alcove K. It was a perfect sanctuary, but there was something ludicrously incongruous in a Chinaman's seeking refuge in such a place.

One of the detectives, however, confirmed the absurdity. "That's why we found him, sir. He was lying on his back, wailing and groaning and making faces at the ceiling. He's our man, all right. We'll have the truth out of him in ten minutes."

The chief sergeant nodded. "You bet we will. Put the bracelets on him, Jim. Chinks are wormy customers."

Reluctantly Algernon surrendered Hsieh Ho to his captors. "I suggest you treat him kindly," he said. "He had the misfortune to witness a ghastly and unprecedented exaggeration of what Eddington would call the random element in nature, but he's as destitute of criminal proclivities as Mr. Scollard here."

The detective raised his eyebrows. "I don't get it, sir. Are you suggesting we ain't to put him on the grill?"

Algernon nodded. "If you try any of your revolting third-degree tactics on that poor little man you'll answer in court to my lawyer. Now, if you don't mind, I'll have a look at Alcove K."

The detective scowled. He wanted to tell Algernon to go to hell, but somehow the inflection of authority in the latter's voice glued the invective to his tongue, and with a surly shrug he escorted the group into the presence of Chaugnar Faugn.

SANGUINARY baptism becomes some gods. Were the gracious figures of the Grecian pantheon to appear to us with blood upon their garments we should recoil in horror, but we should think the terrible Mithra or the heart-devouring Huitzilopochtli a trifle unconvincing if they came on our dreams unbespattered with the ruddy vintage of sacrifice. Not that Great Chaugnar destitute of gore had seemed unconvincing. It was so hideous in all truth that no blood was needed to proclaim its inherent malignancy. But now it seemed more than malign. It was as though some dark hidden horror of inner earth had come up from its foul lair with all its feastings ignobly clinging to the hair about its mouth. It was as though the hyena had shouldered its kill, as though the vulture

had gone flapping through the sky with all its glut dispersed in vomit on its loathsome breast.

Algernon did not at first look directly at Chaugnar Faugn. At first he studied the tiled marble floor about the base of the idol and tried to make out in the gloom the precise spot where Cinney had lain. The attempt proved confusing. There were dark smudges on almost every other tile and they were nearly all of equal circumference.

"Right there is where we found the corpse," said the detective impatiently. "Right beneath the trunk of the elephant."

Algernon's blood ran cold. Slowly, very slowly, for he feared to confront what stood before him, he raised his eyes until they were level with the detective's shoulders. The detective's shoulders concealed a portion of Chaugnar Faugn, but all of the thing's right side and the extremity of its trunk were hideously visible to Algernon as he stared. He spoke no word. He did not even move. But all of the blood drained out of his lips and left them purple.

Mr. Scollard was staring at his subordinate with frightened eyes. "You act as though — as though — good God, man, what is it?"

"It has moved its trunk!" Algernon's voice was vibrant with horror. "It has moved its trunk since—since yesterday. And most hideously. I can not be mistaken. Yesterday it was vertical—today it is bent at an angle of forty-five degrees!"

Mr. Scollard gasped. He felt an appalling horror churning and fussing at the back of his head. "Are you sure?" he muttered. "Are you wholly certain that the trunk wasn't upraised when the god arrived here?"

"Yes, yes. Until today. In the excitement no one has noticed it, but if you will call the attendants—wait!"

The president had started to do that very thing, but Algernon's admonition brought him up short. "I shouldn't have suggested that," he murmured in Scollard's ear. "The attendants mustn't be questioned. It's all too unutterably ghastly and inexplicable and—and mad. We've got to keep it out of the papers, seek a solution secretly. I know some one who may be able to help us. The police can't, and we mustn't even let them suspect what we think, what we fear. We've got to hush it up. For the Museum's sake."

The detective was staring at them pityingly. "You gentlemen better get out of here," he said. "You ain't used to sights like this. I used to say queer things myself. When I was new at this game I went balmy over corpses. I couldn't stand the sight of 'em, used to get down on my knees and pray—when no one was watching. Never let on, of course. But we're all like that at first."

With an effort Algernon mastered his agitation. "You're right, sergeant," he said. "Mr. Scollard and I acknowledge that this business is a little too disturbing for sane contemplation. So we'll retire, as you suggest. But I must insist again that you refrain from putting poor Hsieh Ho 'on the grill'."

In the corridor he drew Mr. Scollard aside and conversed for a moment urgently in a low voice. Then he approached the detective and handed him a card. "If you want me within the next few hours you'll find me at this address," he said. "Mr. Scollard is returning to his home in Brooklyn. You'll find his phone number in the directory, but I hope you won't disturb him unless something really grave turns up."

The detective nodded and read aloud the address on Algernon's card. "Dr. Henry C. Imbert, F. R. S., F. A. G. S."

"A friend of yours?" he asked impertinently.

Algernon nodded. "Yes, sergeant. The foremost American ethnologist. Ever hear of him?"

To Algernon's amazement the sergeant nodded. "Yes. I got kind of interested in eternalogy once. I was on a queer case about two years ago. An old lady got bumped off by a poisoned arrow and we had him in for a powwow. He's clever all right. He gave us all the dope soon as he saw the corpse. Said a little nigger had done it—one of those African pigmies you read about. We followed up the tip and caught the murderer just as he was giving the little fellow a cyanide cigarette to smoke. He was a shrewd dago. He got the pigmy in Africa, hid him in a room down on Houston Street and sent him out to bump off and rob old ladies. He was as spry as a monkey and could shinny up a drainpipe on the side of a house in ten seconds. If it hadn't been for Imbert we'd never have got our hands on the guy that owned him."

Mr. Scollard and Algernon descended the stairs together. But in the vestibule they parted, the president proceeding down the still crowded outer steps in the direction of a bus whilst Algernon sought his office in Wing W.

"When Imbert sees this," the youth murmured, as he extracted a photograph of Chaugnar Faugn from his chaotically littered desk, "he'll be the most disturbed ethnologist that this planet has harbored since the Pleistocene Age."

Great Chaughnar goes ravening into the world in next month's shivery chapters of this powerful story.

The Necromantic Tale

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Sir Roderick Hagdon's life was tied to the personality of an infamous, long-dead ancestor

IN ONE sense, it is a mere truism to speak of the evocative power of words. The olden efficacy of subtly woven spells, of magic formulas and incantations, has long become a literary metaphor; though the terrible reality which once underlay and may still underlie such concepts has been forgotten. However, the necromancy of language is more than a metaphor to Sir Roderick Hagdon: the scars of fire on his ankles are things which no one could possibly regard as having their origin in a figure of speech.

Sir Roderick Hagdon came to his title and his estate with no definite expectation of inheriting them, nor any first-hand knowledge of the sort of life and surroundings entailed by his inheritance. He had been born in Australia; and though he had known that his father was the younger brother of Sir John Hagdon, he had formed only the vaguest idea of the ancestral manor; and the interest that he felt therein was even vaguer. His surprize was little short of consternation when the deaths of his father, of Sir John Hagdon and Sir John's only son, all occurring within less than a year, left clear his own succession and brought a letter from the family lawyers informing him of this fact—which otherwise might

have escaped his attention. His mother, too, was dead; and he was unmarried; so, leaving the Australian sheep-range in charge of a competent overseer, he had sailed immediately for England to assume his hereditary privileges.

It was a strange experience for him; and, strangest of all, in view of the fact that he had never before visited England, was the inexplicable feeling of familiarity aroused by his first sight of the Hagdon manor. He seemed to know the farm-lands, the cottages of the tenants, the wood of ancient oaks with their burdens of Druidic mistletoe, and the old manor-house half hidden among gigantic yews, as if he had seen them all in some period that was past recollection. Being of an analytic trend, he attributed all this to that imperfect simultaneousness in the action of the brain-hemispheres by which psychologists account for such phenomena. But the feeling remained and grew upon him; and he yielded more and more to its half-sinister charm, as he explored his property and delved in the family archives. He felt also an unexpected kinship with his ancestors—a feeling which had lain wholly dormant during his Australian youth. Their portraits, peering upon him from the never-dissipated shadows of the long hall wherein they hung, were like well-known faces.

The manor-house, it was said, had been built in the reign of Henry the Seventh. It was mossed and lichened with antiquity; and there was a hint of beginning dilapidation in the time-worn stone of the walls. The formal garden had gone a little wild from neglect; the trimmed hedges and trees had taken on fantastic sprawling shapes; and evil, poisonous weeds had invaded the flower-beds. There were statues of cracked marble and verdigris-eaten bronze amid the shrubbery; there were fountains that had long ceased to flow; and dials on which the foliage-intercepted sun no longer fell. About it all there hung an air of shadow-laden time and subtle decadence. But though he had never known anything but the primitive Australian environment, Hagdon found himself quite at home in this atmosphere of Old World complexities—an atmosphere that was made from the dissolving phantoms of a thousand years, from the breathings of dead men and women, from loves and hates that had gone down to dust. Contrary to his anticipations, he felt no nostalgia whatever for the remote land of his birth and upbringing.

Sir Roderick came to love the sunless gardens and the overtowering yews. But, above and beyond these, he was fascinated by the manor-house itself, by the hall of ancestral portraits and the dark, dusty library in which he found an amazing medley of rare tomes and manuscripts. There were many first editions of Elizabethan poets and dramatists; and mingled with these in a quaint disorder, were antique books on astrology and conjuration, on demonism and magic. Sir Roderick shivered a little, he knew not why, as he turned the leaves of some of these latter volumes, from whose ancient vellum and parchment arose to his nostrils an odor that was like the mustiness of tombs. He closed them hastily; and the first editions were unable to detain him; but he lingered long over certain genealogies and manuscript records of the Hagdon family, filled with a strange eagerness to learn as much as he could concerning these shadowy forebears of his.

In going through the records, he was struck by the brevity of the mention accorded to a former Sir Roderick Hagdon, who had lived in the early Seventeenth Century. All other members of the direct line had been dealt with at some length; their deeds, their marriages, and their

various claims to distinction (often in the rôle of soldiers or scholars) were usually set forth with a well-nigh vainglorious unction. But concerning Sir Roderick, nothing more was given than the bare dates of his birth and death, and the fact that he was the father of one Sir Ralph Hagdon. No mention whatever was made of his wife.

Though there was no obvious reason for more than a passing surmise, the present Sir Roderick wondered and speculated much over these singular and perhaps sinister omissions. His curiosity increased when he found that there was no portrait of Sir Roderick in the gallery, and none of his mysterious unnamed lady. There was not even a vacant place between the pictures of Sir Roderick's father and son, to indicate that there ever had been a portrait. The new baronet determined to solve the mystery, if possible: an element of vague but imperative disquietude was now mingled with his curiosity. He could not have analyzed his feelings; but the life and fate of this unknown ancestor seemed to take on for him a special significance, a concern that was incomprehensibly personal and intimate.

At times he felt that his obsession with this problem was utterly ridiculous and uncalled-for. Nevertheless, he ransacked the manor-house in the hope of finding some hidden record; and he questioned the servants, the tenants and the people of the parish to learn if there were any legendry concerning his namesake. The manor-house yielded nothing more to his search; and his inquiries met with blank faces and avowals of ignorance: no one seemed to have heard of this elusive Seventeenth Century baronet.

At last, from the family butler, James Wharton, an octogenarian who had served three generations of Hagdons, Sir Roderick obtained the clue which he sought. Wharton, who was now on the brink of senility, and had grown forgetful and taciturn, was seemingly ignorant as the rest; but one day, after repeated questioning, he remembered that he had been told in his youth of a secret closet behind one of the book-shelves, in which certain manuscripts and heirlooms had been locked away several hundred years before; and which, for some unknown reason, no Hagdon had ever opened since that time. Here, he suggested, something might be found that would serve to illumine the dark gap in the family history. There was a cunning, sardonic gleam in his rheumy eyes as he came forth with this tardy piece of information, and Sir Roderick wondered if the old man were not possessed of more genealogical lore than he was willing to admit. All at once, he conceived the disquieting idea that perhaps he was on the verge of some abominable discovery, on the threshold of things that had been forgotten because they were too dreadful for remembrance.

However, he did not hesitate: he was conscious of a veritable compulsion to learn whatever could be learned. The bookcase indicated by the half-senile butler was the one which contained most of the volumes on demonism and magic. It was now removed; and Sir Roderick went over the uncovered wall inch by inch. After much futile fumbling, he located and pressed a hidden spring, and the door of the sealed room swung open.

It was little more than a cupboard, though a man could have concealed himself within it in time of need. Doubtless it had been built primarily for some such purpose. From out its narrow gloom the moldiness of dead ages rushed upon Sir Roderick, together with the ghosts of queer exotic perfumes such as might have poured from the burning of unholy censers in Satanic rites. It was an effluence of mystery and of evil. Within, there

were several ponderous brazen-bound volumes of mediæval date, a thin manuscript of yellowing parchment, and two portraits whose faces had been turned to the wall, as if it were unlawful for even the darkness of the sealed closet to behold them.

SIR RODERICK brought the volumes, the manuscript and the portrait forth to the light. The pictures, which he examined first, represented a man and woman who were both in the bloom of life. Both were attired in Seventeenth Century costumes; and the new Sir Roderick did not doubt for a moment that they were the mysterious couple concerning whom the family records were so reticent.

He thrilled with a strange excitement, with a feeling of some momentous revelation that he could not wholly comprehend, as he looked upon them. Even at a glance, he saw the singular resemblance of the first Sir Roderick to himself—a likeness otherwise unduplicated in the family, which tended to an almost antinomian type. There were the same falcon-like features, the same pallor of brow and cheek, the same semi-morbid luster of eyes, the same bloodless lips that seemed to be carven from a marble that had also been chiselled for the long hollow eyelids. The majority of the Hagdons were broad and sanguine and ruddy: but in these two, a darker strain had repeated itself across the centuries. The main difference was in the expression, for the look of the first Sir Roderick was that of a man who has given himself with a passionate devotion to all things evil and corrupt; who has gone down to damnation through some inevitable fatality of his own being.

Sir Roderick gazed on the picture with a fascination that was partly horror, and partly the stirring of emotions which he could not have named. Then he turned to the woman, and a wild agitation overmastered him before the sullen-smiling mouth and the malign oval of the lovely cheeks. She, too, was evil, and her beauty was that of Lilith. She was like some crimson-lipped and honey-scented flower that grows on the brink of hell; but Sir Roderick knew, with the terror and fearful rapture of one who longs to fling himself from a precipice, that here was the one woman he might have loved, if haply he had known her. Then, in a moment of reeling and whirling confusion, it seemed to him that he *had* known and loved her, though he could not remember when nor where.

The feeling of eery confusion passed; and Sir Roderick began to examine the brass-bound volumes. They were written in a barbarous decadent Latin, and dealt mainly with methods and formulas for the evocation of such demons as Acheront, Amaimon, Asmodi and Ashtoreth, together with innumerable others. Sir Roderick shuddered at the curious drawings with which they were illuminated; but they did not detain him long. With a thrill of actual trepidation, like one who is about to enter some awful and unhallowed place, he took up the manuscript of yellowing parchment.

It was late afternoon when he began to read; and rays of dusty amber were slanting through the low panes of the library windows. As he read on, he gave no heed to the sinking of the light; and the last words were plain as runes of fire when he finished his perusal in the dusk. He closed his eyes, and could still see them:

"And Sir Roderick Hagdonne was now deemed a moste infamous warlocke, and hys Ladye Elinore a nefandous witche. . . . And both were burned at the stake on Hagdonne Common for their crimes against God and man. And their sorcerous deedes and practices were thought so foule a blotte on ye knighthoode of England, that no man speaks thereof, and no grandam tells the tale to the children at her knee. So, by God Hys mercy, the memorie of thys foulnesse shall haply be forgotten; for

surely itte were an ill thing that such should be recalled."

Then, at the very bottom of the page, there was a brief, mysterious footnote in a finer hand than the rest:

"There be those amid the thronge who deemed that they saw Sir Rodericke vanish when the flames leaped high; and thys, if true, is the moste damnable proof of hys compact and hys commerce with the Evill One."

Sir Roderick sat for a long while in the thickening twilight. He was unstrung, he was abnormally shaken and distraught by the biographical record he had just read—a record that had been written by some unknown hand in a bygone century. It was not pleasant for any man to find a tale so dreadful amid the archives of his family history. But the fact that the narrative concerned the first Sir Roderick and his Lady Elinor was hardly enough to account for all the spiritual turmoil and horror into which he was plunged. Somehow, in a way that was past analysis, that was more intimate than his regard for the remote blot on the Hagdon name, he felt that the thing concerned himself also. A terrible nervous perturbation possessed him, his very sense of identity was troubled, he was adrift in a sea of abominable confusion, of disoriented thoughts and capsizing memories. In this peculiar state of mind, by an automatic impulse, he lit the floor-lamp beside his chair and began to reread the manuscript.

ALMOST in the casual manner of a modern tale, the story opened with an account of Sir Roderick's first meeting, at the age of twenty-three, with Elinor D'Avenant, who was afterward to become his wife.

This time, as he read, a peculiar hallucination seized the new baronet. It seemed to him that the words of the old writing had begun to waver and change beneath his scrutiny; that, under the black lines of script on yellowing parchment, the picture of an actual place was forming. The page expanded, the letters grew dim and gigantic; they seemed to fade out in midair, and the picture behind them was no longer a picture, but the very scene of the narrative. As if the wording were a necromantic spell, the room about him had vanished like the chamber of a dream; and he stood in the open sunlight of a windy moor. Bees were humming around him, and the scent of heather was in his nostrils. His consciousness was indescribably dual; somewhere, he knew, one part of his brain was still reading the ancient record; but the rest of his personality had become identified with that of the first Sir Roderick Hagdon. Inevitably, with no surprize or astonishment, he found himself living in a bygone age, with the perceptions and memories of an ancestor who was long dead.

"Now Sir Roderick Hagdonne, being in the flower of hys youth, became instantlie enamoured of the beauteous Elinore D'Avenant, whenas he mette her of an Aprile morn on Hagdonne heathe."

Sir Roderick saw that he was not alone on the moor. A woman was coming toward him along the narrow path amid the heather. Though clad in the conventional gown and bodice of the period, she was somehow foreign and exotic to that familiar English landscape. She was the woman of the portrait which, in a later life, as another Sir Roderick, he had found in a sealed room of the manor-house. (But this, like much else, he had now forgotten.) Walking with a languid grace amid the homely blossoms of the heath, her beauty was like that of some opulent and sinister lily from Saracenic lands. He thought that he had never seen any one half so strange and lovely.

He stood to one side in the stiff growth, and bowed before her with a knightly courtesy as she passed. She nodded slight-

ly in acknowledgment, and gave him an unfathomable smile and an oblique flash of her dark eyes. From that time, Sir Roderick was her slave and her devotee: he stared after her as she disappeared on the curving slope, and felt the mounting of an irresistible flame in his heart, and the stirring of hot desires and curiosities. He seemed to inhale the spice of a languorous alien perfume with every breath of the homeland air, as he walked onward, musing with ingenuous rapture on the dark, enigmatic beauty of the face he had seen.

Now, in that queer necromantic dream, Sir Roderick seemed to live, or re-live, the events of an entire lustrum. Somewhere, in another existence, another self was conning briefly the paragraphs which detailed these events; but of this he was conscious only at long intervals, and then vaguely. So complete was his immersion in the progress of the tale (as if he had drunk of that Lethe which alone makes it possible to live again) that he was untroubled by any prevision of a future known to the Sir Roderick who sat rereading an old manuscript. Even as it was written, he returned from the moor to Hagdon Hall with the vision of a fair stranger in his heart; he made inquiries concerning her, and learned that she was the daughter of Sir John D'Avenant, who had but recently received his knighthood for diplomatic services, and had now taken up his abode on the estate near Hagdon that went with his title. Sir Roderick was now doubly impelled to call on his new neighbors; and his first visit was soon repeated. He became an open suitor for the hand of Elinor D'Avenant; and, after a wooing of several months, he married her.

The passionate love with which she had inspired him was only deepened by their life together. Always her allurement was that of things but half understood, of momentous revelations eternally half withheld. She seemed to love him truly in return; but ever her heart and soul were strange to him, ever they were mysterious and exotic, even as the first sight of her face had been. For this, mayhap, he loved her all the more. They were happy together; and she bore him one child, a son whom they named Ralph.

Now, in that other life, the Sir Roderick who was reading in the old library came to these words:

> "No man knew how it happed; but anon there were dreade whispers and foule rumours regarding the Ladye Elinore; and people said that she was a witch. And in their time these rumours reached the eare of Sir Roderick."

A horror crept upon the happy dream —a horror scarce to be comprehended in this modern age. There were formless evil wings that came to brood above Hagdon Hall; and the very air was poisoned with malignant murmurs. Day by day, and night by night, the baronet was tortured with a vile, unholy suspicion of the woman he loved. He watched her with a fearful anxiety, with eyes that dreaded to discern a new and more ominous meaning in her strange beauty. Then, when he could bear it no longer, he taxed her with the infamous things he had heard, hoping she would deny them and by virtue of her denial restore fully his former trust and peace of mind.

To his utter consternation, the Lady Elinor laughed in his face, with a soft, siren-like mirth, and made open avowal that the charges were true.

"And I trow," she added, "that you love me too well to disown or betray me; that for my sake, if need be, you will become a veritable wizard, even as I am a witch; and will share with me the infernal sports of the Sabbat."

Sir Roderick pleaded, he cajoled, he commanded, he threatened; but ever she answered him with voluptuous laughter

and Circean smiles; and ever she told him of those delights and privileges which are procurable only through damnation, through the perilous aid of demons and succubi. Till, through his exceeding love for her, even as she had foretold, Sir Roderick suffered himself to become an initiate in the arts of sorcery; and sealed his own pact with the powers of evil, that he might in all things be made forever one with her that he loved so dearly.

It was an age of dark beliefs and of practises that were no less dark; and witchcraft and sorcery were rampant throughout the land, among all classes. But in the Lilith-like Elinor there was a spirit of soulless depravity beyond that of all others; and beneath the seduction of her love the hapless Sir Roderick fell to depths wherefrom no man could return, and made mortgage of his soul and brain and body to Satan. He learned the varying malefic usages to which a waxen image could be put; he memorized the formulas that summon frightful things from their abode in the nethermost night, or compel the dead to do the abominable will of necromancers. And he was taught the secrets whereof it is unlawful to tell or even hint; and came to know the maledictions and invultuations which are lethal to more than the mortal flesh. And Hagdon Hall became the scene of pandemonian revels, of rites that were both obscene and blasphemous; and the terror and turpitude of hellish things were effluent therefrom on all the countryside. And amid her coterie of the damned, amid the witches and sorcerers and incubi that fawned upon her, the Lady Elinor exulted openly; and Sir Roderick was her partner in each new enormity or baleful deed. And in this atmosphere of noisome things, of Satanic crime and sacrilege, the child Ralph was alone innocent, being too young to be harmed thereby as yet. But anon the scandal of it all was a horror in men's souls that could be endured no longer; and the justice of the law, which made a felony of witchcraft, was called upon by the people of Hagdon.

It was no new thing for members of the nobility to be tried on such a charge before the secular or ecclesiastical courts. Such cases, in which the accusations were often doubtful or prompted by mere malice, had sometimes been fought at length. But this time the guilt of the defendants was so universally maintained, and the reprobation aroused thereby so profound, that only the briefest and most perfunctory trial was accorded them. They were condemned to be burnt at the stake; the sentence to be carried out on the following day.

IT WAS a chill, dank morning in autumn when Sir Roderick and Lady Elinor were borne to the place of execution and were tied to their respective stakes, with piles of dry fagots at their feet. They were set facing each other, so that neither might lose any detail of their mutual agony. A crowd was gathered about them, thronging the entire common—a crowd whose awful silence was unbroken by any outcry or murmur. So deep was the terror wrought by this infamous couple, that no one dared to execrate or mock them even in the hour of their downfall. Sir Roderick's brain was benumbed by the obloquy and shame and horror of his situation, by a realization of the ultimate depths to which he had fallen, of the bitter doom that was now imminent. He looked at his wife, and thought of how she had drawn him down from evil to evil through his surpassing love for her; and then he thought of the frightful searing pangs that would convulse her soft body; and thinking of these he forgot his own fate.

Then, in a dim, exiguous manner, he remembered that somewhere in another century there sat another Sir Roderick who was reading all this in an old manuscript. If he could only break the necromantic spell of the tale, and re-identify himself with that other Sir Roderick, he would be saved from the fiery doom that awaited him, but if he could not deny the spell, he would surely perish, even as a falling man who reaches bottom in a dream is said to perish.

He looked again, and met the gaze of the Lady Elinor. She smiled across her bonds and fagots, with all the old seduction that had been so fatal to him. In the re-attained duality of his consciousness, it seemed as if she were aware of his intention and had willed to deter him. The ache and anguish of a deadly lure was upon him, as he closed his eyes and tried very hard to picture the old library and the sheet of parchment which his other self was now perusing. If he could do this, the whole diabolical illusion would vanish, the process of visualization and sympathetic identification which had been carried to an hallucinative degree, would return to that which is normally experienced by the reader of an absorbing tale.

There was a crackling at his feet, for some one had lit the fagots. Sir Roderick opened his eyes a little, and saw that the pile at Lady Elinor's feet had likewise been lit. Threads of smoke were rising from each pile, with tiny tongues of flame that grew longer momently. He did not lift his eyes to the level of Lady Elinor's face. Resolutely he closed them again, and sought to re-summon the written page.

He was aware of a growing warmth underneath his soles; and now, with an agonizing flash of pain, he felt the licking of the flames about his ankles. But somehow, by a desperate effort of his will, like one who awakens voluntarily from a clutching nightmare, he saw before him the written words he was trying to vizualize:

"And both were burned at the stake on Hagdonne Common for their crimes against God and man."

The words wavered, they receded and drew near on a page that was still dim and enormous. But the crackling at his feet had ceased; the air was no longer dank and chill, no longer charged with acrid smoke. There was a moment of madly whirling vertigo and confusion; and then Sir Roderick's two selves were re-united, and he found that he was sitting in the library chair at Hagdon, staring with open eyes at the last sentences of the manuscript in his hands.

He felt as if he had been through some infernal ordeal that had lasted many years; and he was still half obsessed by emotions of sorrow and regret and horror that could belong only to a dead progenitor. But the whole thing was manifestly a dream, albeit terrible and real to a degree that he had never before experienced. He must have fallen asleep over the old record. . . . But why, then, if it were only a dream, did his ankles still pain him so frightfully, as if they had been seared by fire?

He bent down and examined them: beneath the Twentieth Century hose in which they were attired, he found the upward-flaring marks of recent burns!

THE GALLEY SLAVE

By

LIEUTENANT EDGAR GARDINER



"I see once more that monster with his single baleful eye hurling the great rocks through the air."

The man in the club was strangely gifted—or cursed—by a vivid memory of the voyage of Odysseus

IT WAS good of you, a stranger, to accept my invitation, sir, and share with me the comparative solitude of this inglenook. In all this crowded yet exclusive club there is no one that I know—you see, I am a guest here only, and my friend who brought me was called away suddenly by an urgent telegram that brooked of no delay.

Until you came and took pity on me I seemed doomed to spend the evening in lonely solitude, though surrounded by hundreds of my fellow men, and that would be the worst possible thing that might befall me, for tomorrow is my wedding day.

Oh, I should be the happiest man alive instead of the most miserable! When a man has won the hand of such a priceless treasure as is my fiancée, Fortune's cup should be brimming over. And yet—and yet—my heart is filled with gloomy forebodings. Would to God that I could shut out forever from my memory those scenes that recur monotonously over and over, turning present joys to dust and ashes in my mouth.

You start. You look about this clubroom in bewilderment. No; I assure you I am not drunk, though I have reason enough for such a state. You seemed so friendly, so balanced, of such an understanding nature, that I was immediately drawn to you. You seemed so like my father who died long years ago; you seemed so like that other that I knew in the days that——

My name on that bit of cardboard in

your hand can mean nothing to you. Yes, I must admit that I am the William Arnold mentioned so frequently in the social news of the metropolis and who for the past week has appeared so often in the newspapers of this city as well, where I am almost a total stranger; while your card—indeed I know you as an antiquarian, as the foremost authority on the lore of ancient, almost forgotten civilizations! And to you—it seems that the hand of destiny drew me to you—to you what I am going to tell should prove of absorbing interest, for you are the most eminently fitted to interpret it aright.

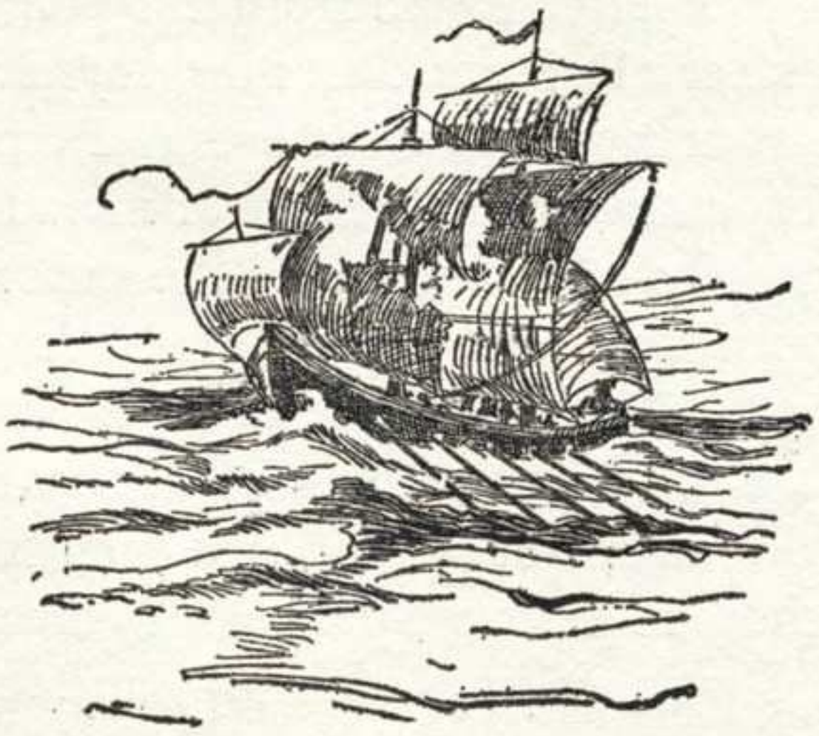
But I perceive that I have said either too much or too little. Your pardon, but I must talk to some understanding soul—must pour out my story lest I go mad. You are sure that you don't mind? You would be delighted to help if that were possible? I knew that I was not mistaken, I knew that my intuitions had not played me false; though as for helping me—I wonder if in all this world there is any help for me. But if you will bear with me, sir——

I trust this vintage is to your liking; it is very favorably known, and I can assure you—— Then that is quite all right.

And now, let me ask a question of you, not to be inquisitive, but merely to clear the atmosphere. Do you hold with most moderns that there is a hereafter, another life beyond the grave? It is a common, a universal belief, widely scattered as to both time and place. Perhaps, like most moderns, you have put that hereafter in Heaven; that, too, is almost a commonplace. You have! Now, having gone so far, let me ask you yet another question. We will take for the moment one of those who lived in the ages long since passed, one who also believed in a hereafter, in another life after death. There is no difference, say you, whether he lived now or in dim distant ages? Perhaps not; we still agree. But I ask you to go back to that one long since dead; might not his hereafter be now? Absurd! Impossible! And I ask you, who are still sputtering—I ask you one little word: Why?

Aha! I have you there! You frown! you rant! I ask you to give me one logical reason against it—just one! You can not do it! You only shout, "Nonsense!" Is it, then? Give me facts to prove your stand. No? Give me, at least, plausible reasons—what! You can not? No, you can only give me noise—and noise, my dear sir, comes from any drum when it is beaten, just because that drum is empty.

Transmigration of souls! Why yes, I believe it is so called. It is a doctrine believed in by teeming millions in this day and age, though it is not so much the fashion among such as you and me; but I assure you, my dear sir, it is quite as logical and even more plausible than the tenets which you hold. There is no need to sit there and glare at me, nor any need to pound upon the table and ask me for proofs. That, my dear fellow, is the very thing I shall now try to give you. Oh, ho! That shaft touched home, did it? Proof you shall have—proof you can not doubt. Thrice lucky for me that you are an authority on ancient cultures. But enough of this.



It grows late, my dear sir, and there is much to tell. Attend me carefully. The pad I placed at your elbow is for such notes as you might care to make during my tale, and I give you leave to ask such questions as you will. I ask but one thing of you—a little thing after all: Inasmuch as its publication might prove embarrassing now, will you hold such notes as you may make until I give you leave to publish or until—— Ah, yes; you understand! A post-mortem statement: yes, that is the term, I believe, that you moderns use, though you borrowed it from us who have been gone these long ages. I beg you to forget that last remark; it is of no importance, a mere digression as it were.

LET us take up the subject of transmigration in the abstract—as a theory only, I hasten to add. All these myriads who died believing in another life hereafter—— Very well, I accept the correction. We will say, then, another life in Heaven. They died through the ages —well and good! They shall reappear in Heaven. That can not offend you. But you cramp me. I must begin in a different way.

Let us take a newborn life upon this earth. You can not tell me, nor can any other man, from whence that life comes. You can not definitely assure me that this newborn life is appearing for the first time on this earth. Aha! you squirm!

By its very ignorance and its having to learn every least thing pertaining to this life, it proves in itself conclusively that it can have had no previous existence here. That is very well put. Nor shall I bring up against you what we may call instinctive knowledge.

I will not ask you that troublesome question: What is gone from a dead body that was within it when it was still alive? I shall be equally silent about where that missing thing has gone when we view the dead body, for your answer must take into consideration that nothing is ever lost from this globe: it is merely transformed into something else. After all, I am not trying to convert you to my theory of transmigration.

We come into this world and we leave it again, and it is all a great mystery. The Psalmist has said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We still think so. But you are impatient.

"Give me one clear-cut case to prove the point or forever hold your peace!" you say.

Very well. I shall try to do just that, and on your own head be the consequences. That example shall be—myself. Smoke up, my friend! Fill that pad with notes to your heart's content!

The theory held in highest repute by us believers in transmigration is that after each return journey to this earth there is a door closed in our memory that shuts up forever all knowledge of that former existence on this terrestrial globe. Could we find but one single mind where those doors, or even but one of them, were open, to no matter what slight degree, then we would have something on which to go ahead, and at that very point we have met constant failure. By the way, that is the very point you wished to use to refute me, is it not?

You must bear with me for the liberal sprinkling of first person pronouns that I am compelled to use from this point on, for, after all, I am dissecting myself before your keen scientific eyes. I am going back now to the period of my adolescence, when I first noticed the difference between me and my fellows. It was, perhaps, when I was eleven or twelve years old. Night after night I awoke in a cold sweat of terror, the bedclothes clutched in a death-grip, as I dreamed that I was falling—falling—and often

the shriek from my fear-constricted throat that awakened me, awoke my more prosaic elder brother who slept in the same room.

You say that the falling dream is very common to us humans, and especially to the young. You say that it is the impression made on the race by the countless thousands of our arboreal ancestors who swung through the treetops in great bounding swoops; that it comes from those who crashed through the maze of slender branches and caught their hold again. Those who failed to save themselves crashed to their death and left no memories—nor posterity, either, for that matter. Very good. We must perforce drop that line.

Let us go on, now, to three years ago when I first saw the mountains—saw them and loved them at once; so much so that I resolved never to leave them. Yes, I had dwelt before always in the plains. That, too, is a common thing, you say, that love of the high places by those who have dwelt always in the lowlands. I do not know. But attend me closely.

I came at last to a place that was vaguely familiar; no, more! Though I had never been there before to my knowledge, yet as the train swung around each bend, I knew just what we should find spread before our eyes; every grim lichened boulder and aspiring forest giant; every tumbling brook; nor was I ever deceived—not once!

Explain that to me, if you can! Telepathy? Bah! Yet I am very sensitive that way. I get a great deal from others that does not come in words—even as I get your hostile attitude. Very well. We shall drop that line also, though I could give you a multitude of strange facts about that country in which I have dwelt almost constantly since.

Now let us go back to yet another thing. I shall take you back to my fourteenth year, when at school we took up the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It was my first contact with that period and its ancient culture and it stirred me tremendously. Yes, it has stirred the whole world quite as much as it swayed me. I agree with you there. I made perfect grades in those subjects under a teacher who was notorious for her low marks.

For the first time in my life I wanted to draw; I drew sketches of all that glorious adventure. My books were filled with them, and other sheets of paper as well. Rude enough they were for the most part, yet some of them were considered worthy of a place in the school's annual exhibit, and after that was over, they went out as a part of a national school children's exhibit and I had no little trouble to get them returned to me, but get them back I did. If you will come with me to my room I will show them to you. Thank you.

Let us take them up in order. I agree with you; some of them are hopelessly crude, but let us take up some significant points about them as a whole. Remember, I had read only the unadorned English text that we studied and I had absolutely no background reading of that period. Bearing that in mind, does not something about them strike you as important. No?

They are very ordinary sketches of that period! Quite so. That was the general comment when they were viewed. But authorities on that period noted one very significant fact—just one; and they *all* noted it! As far as they could tell from all their exhaustive esearches of that age these sketches were absolutely true in every minute detail!

Whence came that fidelity to the life of those old dim ages? I had nothing but the poor, inadequate English text to guide me, yet manners, customs, dress—look at those shields, the spears, the

ships, the architecture—see the fidelity to those things as they really were! The texts that guided me were not so exact and definite but that they would allow many mistakes in all this mass of detail.

Let me tell you why, my friend, you who are now so frankly puzzled and baffled. I was drawing a life that I knew quite as intimately and thoroughly as if I had lived it. Utter rot, isn't it? I would scrawl and scribble most of the period while that gorgon of a teacher glowered at me. She shot questions at me, sly, tricky questions out of her college-trained mind that had absorbed more about that period and about those two books than most common mortals, for they were a passion with her. And always my answer was ready, and always it was right!

ONE day—we were deep in the *Odyssey* then—she shot a question at me and I never looked up as I answered her. I knew my answer was right. She gave a gasp, jumped to her feet and—screamed!

Odd? Yes, indeed! For her question was couched in classic Greek! And my answer was in the common vulgar Greek of the lower classes—an ancient Greek tongue of which she could understand just enough to get the astounding fact with full force. I? I went on drawing; I never knew that both question and answer had not been given in English!

The poor woman was so upset that she dismissed the class then and there! Only as we swarmed out into the hallway and the boys crowded around me demanding to know what we two had said, did I realize that neither of us had spoken English, but it was not until after school when she and I had a long, earnest talk together that I began to understand.

We two talked then, so deep in that deathless old story that the building might have burned about our heads and we should never have noticed it, or rather, she did most of the talking while I scrawled aimlessly on the blackboard. What I scrawled on that black surface that afternoon was to come back to me most vividly two years later. But we will leave that for the present and come back to it again.

Do you remember that part of the story that depicts the loss of one of the ships? Ah, you do? . . . Yes, that's the very passage! When we came to that we got another recess, but it was my fault this time, instead of the teacher's. She had caught me scribbling again and she made me describe the sinking of that ship in my own words.

I must have done so with a will, for as I told the class of those waves crashing over the side and leaping down upon the rowers chained to their benches, I fainted dead away and I only came to my senses again when I lay on the floor out in the hall, gasping; dripping with the water they had poured over me. Four of the boys still had me gripped by as many different parts of my anatomy and it had taken all of them to bring me from the recitation room.

What was that? How did the waves look as they broke upon that sinking ship? How odd of you to ask that! I have had to answer that very question many times in the past few years, but it is very easy to answer; the scene has been indelibly etched upon my memory. There was a sudden lurch; the stout planking dropped swiftly beneath us, while for a single instant the waves stood still in a thin green and white line above us; then they leaped down—oh, Zeus! . . .

Thank you, sir. . . . I feel better now. I'm very sorry. It was most inconsiderate of me to faint like that. What's that, sir? You say you were aboard the *Matsonia* when she went down off the New-

foundland Banks with a heavy loss of life? You saw the waves looking precisely like that for just a split second! You will never forget it! Neither will I. It *is* unforgettable, isn't it?

I beg your pardon, sir. You asked me what I had scrawled upon the blackboard that day and you want to know how it fits into this puzzle? The teacher had made no mention of it at the time, but she had copied it very carefully on paper and she sent it to her old university professor, who was an authority on ancient Greece and its languages, both written and spoken. His name? Why, yes; Talbert. Perhaps you know him. You do? You say he is indeed the foremost authority upon things of that time and that he has done a deal of research work on the very site of that deathless story? I had heard so myself.

OUR family moved away from that city the same week that I so thoroughly demoralized the class and, naturally, I never finished class work upon the *Odyssey*. But the teacher kept in close touch with me through her letters; long letters that contained a minimum of school gossip and a maximum of questions about that tremendous voyage of Odysseus; questions that I answered most religiously and often voluminously. I did not know that for a period of two years or more an exact copy of my letters went to Professor Talbert at that Eastern university or that the entire mass of correspondence was later published as a monograph. Nor did I know that it rocked the classic world and its students to their foundations. There was a map, for example, that I had drawn; quite accurate enough in its way, that showed the location of some of the long-lost cities; cities that were little more than names. They have since been excavated in part and found to lie just where I had located them.

What did I write upon that blackboard? How impatient you are! I had scrawled several lines of Greek thereon; that vulgar ancient form of which I have spoken. Professor Talbert's translation showed that it was a fairly vivid word-picture of that famous scene of which I spoke before, and especially graphic was the description of that monster who tossed the rocks that sank us.

But let us get back to our premise: the return of a soul from that dim historic past to this earth at the present time. I have shown you a sixteen-year-old lad, born in the Middle West, who could not have had any previous knowledge of a time so far back in the dawn of history. He could not have read of the things he told, for most of them were new even to those who had spent long years tracing down such fragmentary facts as the world then possessed of that dim distant age. The things he told, as published in that epochal monograph, upset many of their preconceived notions, though later researches proved him surprizingly correct and the antiquarians themselves at fault.

How came that knowledge to him? How? Unless one of those doors had indeed been left unlocked; unless he was really one of that heroic band come back to life in our commonplace workaday world! Fantastic and absurd! Impossible! Yet, can you give a more likely explanation?

You say that there is only my unsupported word! Then I have failed! Failed where I had hoped so greatly! But perhaps you still have some questions to put to me. What of my knowledge of the rest of that voyage? I have none. I must have died when that ship went down under the barrage of great stones. What impressions are most vivid? Naturally, that last one stands out above all the rest, and next to that—I have awakened times without number, wearied to

exhaustion over the eternal rowing—endless, ceaseless rowing, with the intolerable pain of the chafing leg-irons——

Yes, indeed! Those oars were manned by slaves shackled to their benches. Nowhere in the text of that great trip is such a thing mentioned, yet it seems now quite well authenticated as a fact. What of my fears?—why should this thing make any difference in my life?—you call them hallucinations. Perhaps that is what they are, after all, though to me they seem real enough.

I can not explain that fear, though it is ever present. Let me elucidate. There was the time when, a lad in school, I described the scene—and fainted. The boys told me what a struggle they had with me at the time, how they fought to bring me back to life. You, too, had some little experience a short time ago. It has been like that every time the thing has come into my mind, and that has been rather too often. Always there has been such a struggle, and I am afraid that it will happen just once too often and I shall go—go out into that unknown void, to reappear, perhaps, under more auspicious circumstances at another date. But I perceive that once more I have offended you. True, you said nothing, neither did your appearance change in the slightest, but I caught your thoughts as plainly as though you spoke them openly.

I fear for myself every time the mists clear away and I see once more that monster with his single baleful eye hurling the great rocks through the air. The first falls short and drops into the sea with a mighty splash; the next goes far beyond us. A third goes through our great sail, riving it from top to bottom, while we struggle madly with the great ash oars. They are out at last!

While the captain of the rowers runs up and down his runway between the banks of seats lashing furiously at our naked, unprotected backs, we find the rhythm; faster and faster! The water boils backward from our churning blades, the vessel leaps forward and the spearsmen upon the high stern can no more hurl their puny weapons at his vast bulk. We draw farther and farther away; we shall yet escape! But no! He tears loose a great gray rock from the water's very edge; his mighty thews and sinews crack as he heaves it far beyond the rest of his casts! It crashes through our decks, leaving a sickening welter of jagged splinters and pulpy arms and legs and crushed bodies that spout great gouts of blood into the inrushing flood! The ship quivers with her death blow; the deck sinks beneath our frenzied feet to the echo of our mad yells for freedom from our chains! For a single moment the sea stands rimmed about us, then the waves dash madly down between our ranks—— Oh, Poseidon; hold thy hand! Zeus! Father Zeus! Spare——

* * * * * * *

THE above is the exact transcript of the stenographic notes I made during my chat and brief visit with William Arnold at the time of his sudden demise. The young man, an utter stranger, had asked me to dine with him, had told me the strange story here set down, that had such a fatal termination. He was unquestionably insane. While his sudden end caused much speculation, it was undoubtedly due to heart failure, so called.

I noticed but one peculiar feature—a point entirely overlooked by the medical practitioner whom the club governors called in and who certified to his death from natural causes: the young man's lungs were filled with water as are those of a drowned person.

Where it came from I do not know. The quantity seemed too great to have

been the glassful that I dashed into his face in my first efforts to revive him before the doctor arrived.

As to the theory he sought to prove, it can have no basis in fact; well informed as he unquestionably was on the ancient culture of pre-Homeric Greece, this has all been threshed out in the journals devoted to those subjects, and especially in the monumental work of Professor M. T. Talbert, briefly alluded to in the above account.

The mass of drawings that he entrusted to me is being carefully studied, as well as the Greek inscriptions upon them. I consider them copies of ancient scrawls dating possibly from pre-Mycenean times, though I am at a loss to explain where the young man could have found the originals.

The Portal to Power

By GREYE LA SPINA

A cult of devil-worshippers in a hidden valley of the Rocky Mountains menaces the world with a frightful doom

The Story Thus Far

DR. PEABODY, taking to California a mysterious talisman entrusted him by a reputed witch on her death-bed, accepts the apropos invitation of Job Scudder, airship magnate, to fly west. He finds that Quint, his recently discharged employe, has been taken on the "Queen" as mechanic, and foresees trouble, since Quint is a secret emissary of certain initiates who wish to gain possession of the talisman. Leda, Scudder's pretty niece, appears deeply disturbed at the presence of Henry Winch, secretary to a guest on the "Queen." Quint gets control of the "Queen" and kidnaps the entire party. His associates have already brought the god Pan into materialization, and propose to make Leda high priestess. Larry Weaver, pilot of the "Queen," suggests a plan for escape. Dr. Peabody entrusts the talisman to Leda, who finds a pistol is no protection against Pan, and at the Goat-man's threat to deliver up her friends to death unless she gives him the talisman, promises to do so at a ceremony that night.

CHAPTER 15

"MAY I come in?" asked the high priest, addressing Leda.

The girl nodded with hauteur, and drew herself upright like a queen on her throne.

"I thought it best to come myself," he explained, as he approached her and seated himself, at her gesture, on the nearest divan. "I have had a long talk with my grandson. . . . You will pardon me, I know, if I seem distrait, but I've just had a most saddening disillusion. . . . a disappointment. . . ."

The entire party looked curiously at the old man as he all at once bowed his face into his hands, while his shoulders shook convulsively. Slowly Leda's eyes sought Henry Winch's puzzled, thoughtful face.

"My grandson—I—I only discovered it today—is not at heart one with us here in our dedication to the higher happiness of the world. He is young and ambitious," said the priest apologetically.

"In a word," interrupted Doctor Peabody dryly, "you have found that your grandson wishes power to gratify his own ambitious projects, whatever they may be?"

The high priest nodded, lifting his face from his hands. The fire had gone from his eyes, that all at once looked tired and worn.

"I have actually been obliged to warn the initiates that under no circumstances

This story began in WEIRD TALES for October

shall they obey his slightest command. This has been, as you may well understand, a most severe and painful ordeal for me."

"Are *all* the initiates with you?" asked Henry Winch with sudden penetration. "If they are, all may yet be well with your plans. But isn't it possible that Quint may have among them certain adherents who incline to his way of thought?"

"This I have already considered, although it is difficult for me to believe that an initiate can do other than work toward world betterment selflessly. Still, Quint's example is enough to startle me into believing that there may well be, as you say, others——"

The old doctor's lips compressed. He looked fixedly at the high priest's apparently honest face, then nodded as if satisfied with what he read there.

"How do you manage to open those solid glass walls?" burst in Larry, as if unable longer to control himself.

"That is easy, my son," said the high priest, and he spoke in a lighter tone, as if glad to abandon a topic of conversation that could not but be painful to him. "It can be done very simply, even by comparatively untrained minds, by directing at the wall one of those bulb-tipped wands you have seen in the hands of our people.

"You point the bulb at the wall, direct your thoughts along it until they reach the tip, and if you have succeeded in putting all else out of your mind for a few seconds except the one thought that the wall must open to you, the thing is done. Simple?"

Larry Weaver smiled triumphantly. The rest of the party knew why he was so pleased. The way out had been found. It would be easy to get one of the bulb-tipped wands from an attendant. . . .

"But how did you make the glass plateau?" pursued Larry. "I must say that's beyond me."

"Very much in the same manner, but the details are too many for me to explain just now," wearily answered the priest. "To make a long story short, all that exists comes from the same basic material, and it in turn is merely different arrangements of molecules and atoms vibrating at various rates. The knowledge of how to control that rate of vibration, gained by deep study and deeper occult experience, gives the power to control the rate of vibration which produces matter in all its various forms."

"Then you created that glass plateau, the walls, this city, by your force of will, and your knowledge how to direct it?"

"To bring into material form this glass fortress was the least of our tasks," replied the priest, and he smiled slightly.

"About our getting away from here," Larry began again, briskly taking the initiative for the party, "I understand from Miss Scudder that you are perfectly willing that we should all go."

"All but the young lady herself," hastily said the priest. "She must be detained, for she is absolutely necessary for our further progress in our experiments. Up to her graduation last June, I may remark, we had her watched constantly, to make sure of her indomitable will, her strong character, her tendencies, her——"

"Good Lord!" Larry interrupted piously. "Spied upon all the time . . . how pleasant! Well, as to the rest of us, you are willing that we should go?"

"Why not? You may go whenever you so desire," acceded the priest earnestly. He turned to Leda. "Are you perfectly resigned, maiden, to your high part in what is to take place?"

Leda nodded shortly, and he appeared satisfied.

"The 'Queen' shall be ready on the plateau whenever you say. You people

can all go this afternoon, if you choose."

"I would like to go up to see that the ship is in perfect order for flying," Larry said craftily, with a dark glance under his heavy brows. This too ready compliance had evidently aroused his suspicions.

"Go with me when I leave here, and fly her up yourself, if you please," offered the high priest quickly, meeting suspicion with frankness. "She is helicopter-equipped, and you from your experience would have no difficulty in getting her out above the river and up to the plateau. In fact," he added, thoughtfully, some sudden idea evidently striking him with misgivings, "I think it might be better for you to take her out, instead of—instead of my grandson," he ended, a kind of break in his voice, and he dropped his eyes unhappily.

"That's all O. K., then," agreed Larry, his alert glance running around the party. "And then I come down here again?"

Leda took a hand at this point, her face serious.

"Let them all go now," said she firmly, avoiding their eyes.

"What?" cried Henry Winch, Larry and old Job simultaneously.

"I am afraid their presence might distract me," Leda complained to the high priest with disarming simplicity.

Her uncle gave a loud groan. He knew what she was trying to do. She would sacrifice her own possible escape in order to get the rest of them their liberty.

"I shall not go one step," said he with determination, meeting the high priest's sad eyes, "until I've seen the whole ceremony, whatever it is. I shall not leave my niece until I've seen with my own eyes that she has truly accepted her part in your plans, and that it is indeed a part that will protect her from harm."

Loud exclamations of agreement arose from the rest of the party, and Leda was obliged to subside gracefully, with a shrug of her young shoulders.

"I only want it understood," said she, "that I am taking on myself, willingly, the part of high priestess to the Higher Powers. I believe that you," and she addressed the priest, "and your initiates are sincere in wishing for the world's happiness, and being sane, I would like to see such a desire succeed."

THE old priest smiled at her. For the first time in the interview something like tranquillity came into his face. His eyes remained on the girl's face hopefully.

"Now that you have willingly dedicated yourself to this most tremendous service to mankind, I personally shall see to it that no harm touches you or yours. With all that my misguided grandson has gained in knowledge of secret things, yet am I more powerful, more learned," he declared earnestly. "Trust yourself to my guidance, maiden, and you will become the most renowned human being who has yet lived on this sad earth. You will become the instrument for the highest good and the utmost happiness to the human race."

"I can not see," all at once cried out Gemma, "how you dare say that you only want to do good to the world, when you have let loose upon it the terrible Pan. He is cruel, sensuous, without any moral sense——"

She had put her finger directly upon a weak spot, and the entire party looked expectantly at the high priest.

"It was our first attempt at drawing a higher power down into mortal form," he admitted unwillingly. "And we had not, then, the Portal to Power," he added. "We were unable to raise our invocations in vibration to a high enough pitch, and then maintain them there, without the talisman. Now that we have it, we are prepared to make entry for powers that

stagger the attempt at description," he finished enthusiastically.

"He actually believes it himself," whispered Larry to Henry Winch, who nodded without removing his fixed gaze from the old priest's face.

The pilot addressed himself to the priest again.

"If there is nothing more you can tell us, you might take me along now to get the 'Queen'."

"Then your plans——?"

"We will attend the ceremonies tonight, by all means," decided the doctor with firmness, looking not at the priest but at Leda as he spoke. "We intend to see with our own eyes this calling down onto the Earth Plane of higher powers. After the ceremonies are over, and we know that the young lady is safe and that the happiness of the world has been secured," said he with a slightly ironical intonation, "we will go on our way . . . unless we find it to the world's greatest benefit to cast in our lots with you."

"Perhaps you may do that, indeed," cried the priest, with every appearance of pleasure at the idea. "There are great souls among you; I can feel that intuitively. It would mean but little preparation for you, sir, for example," said he to the doctor, "to prepare yourself for fuller initiation, and hence for a high post in the coming dispensation."

"Does not the Bible say something about him who would be first?" hinted the doctor significantly.

The priest had the grace to color a little.

"We shall, of course, have to await the word of the Higher Powers as to any appointments," he replied with dignity, "but I felt that, being at the head of this tremendous movement, and next in authority to our future high priestess, I might have some little influence with Them."

"It all sounds to me, sir, like a decidedly earthly revolution," observed Doctor Peabody tartly.

"It has to begin with Matter, doesn't it?" retorted the high priest. "When we have opened Matter to the influx of Spirit, we can start living on a more spiritual plane."

"You may be right, but you sound all wrong to me," the doctor sighed. "Well, tonight should show us much of interest."

"Tonight you shall see this maiden lifted into higher power and veneration than any earthly woman has ever been raised," promised the priest solemnly. "And you shall see the beginning of a new world. I promise you. I know it *must* be so. My faith, my desire, my will, all—all are engaged in this high emprise."

"Let us hope that all will come to pass as God may will," returned the doctor dryly.

Gemma's voice cried out at them then.

"You are all talking and talking," she exclaimed, "and you've forgotten poor Captain. If we're going to leave here, we shouldn't forget him."

"She's right," Leda said briskly. "He doesn't amount to much, certainly, but he must come with us. That is," she corrected herself as the priest gave her a sharp glance, "that is, he must be sent to join us now and remain with the party until they go."

"Righto," Henry Winch seconded her.

"He can come back with me," said the pilot.

The priest rose. "Then all is satisfactorily explained and arranged?"

A half-smile flitted over Larry's face. Henry Winch scowled.

"All that is necessary for now," said the doctor gravely.

"Then it might be well if the maiden

took some sleep, for the ceremonies will start just before midnight."

Beckoning to Larry to follow, the high priest went out.

The old doctor drew a breath of relief.

"Well, it looks as if things were turning out to our advantage, in spite of the probable loss of the talisman," said he.

"What made you block my plans?" whispered Leda crossly. "You could have sent police—lots of people—for me later, if you'd gone away right now."

"Yes?" sarcastically answered Henry Winch. "If you think we are going to leave here for the hours it might take us to get help, and meantime abandon you to the questionable mercy of these—well—lunatics, you've got another guess coming, Leda."

Doctor Peabody intervened.

"You'd better try to eat something, my child, and get a good sleep," he suggested gently. "In fact, I imagine if we all took turns in keeping short watches—although I hardly think it necessary now—we could all get some sleep. We need it. And we may have severe strains on our bodies and minds before this night is over and we are in actual safety again."

Gemma fell to sobbing hysterically again.

CHAPTER 16

IT LACKED an hour to midnight when Quint, at the head of a gorgeously apparelled cortege, appeared as escort for Leda's gilded litter. She, it appeared, was to head the procession, and behind her special bodyguard the rest of the party might walk.

Old Job kissed his niece with particular tenderness as he and Henry Winch assisted her into the litter. Doctor Peabody, however, observed that it was to the secretary that the parting pressure of her hand was given, although her eyes did not meet the young man's beseeching gaze.

The ebon-skinned bearers lifted the litter and moved slowly away with measured steps. Into line behind and about them fell the glittering cortege of attendants, each with a bulb-tipped spear. At these slender wands the greedy eyes of Larry Weaver looked longingly, and seeing this, the doctor was obliged to tap the pilot's arm in warning.

"Just the same," muttered Larry, "I'd like to get hold of one right now. Seems to me that if I sent my wishes along one, it might do a trifle of execution right here and now, besides opening glass walls."

"Your surmise may be right—and it may be wrong, young man," said the doctor severely, as the two strode along with the rest of the party, Captain limping somewhat in the rear on his small "foots," about which he occasionally uttered a mournful complaint.

"Oh, my foots, my foots! Mus' git me anudder spell."

"If I'm right, couldn't I send this bunch of fellows about their business and get us headed for the plateau? The 'Queen' is up there, all set and rarin' to go."

"You might succeed, Larry, and again, think what it would mean to us all if you didn't. It is within the limits of possibility that those spears are only to open walls," said the doctor dryly.

Larry made a wry face.

"Just the same, I'd like to make a try at it."

"Later it might be forced upon us to make a try at it," said the doctor, and sighed heavily as he walked along.

Henry Winch had attached himself to Job Scudder, and the two were talking earnestly in low tones as they marched behind Leda's litter.

"If ever we get out of here," the sec-

retary said in a slightly louder voice, his emotion overcoming his caution, "I'll——"

"Silence!" came from Quint at the head of the column. "We are approaching the inner temple of the Most High Gods."

The floors had changed from golden glass to opalescent and milky beauty that seemed indeed jewels of various hues sunken into invisible settings beneath their feet. Tall pillars of the same opal hues upheld the vaulted ceiling that completed the austerely simple interior of the inner temple.

Down a long aisle the procession marched, to a humming murmur from the throats of hundreds of kneeling men and women, who were scattered here and there in small groups between the columns of the temple. This murmur increased in volume as they proceeded, until it became almost intolerable to the ear, for it carried a regular rhythmic beat in its undertones, that hammered on the ear like the heavy pulsing measures of African-derived jazz.

In that shimmering, moon-like glow, the cortege passed upward on a slight incline that led to a mammoth portal, before which hung tall tapestries in silver, gold and jewels. At the approach of Leda's gilded litter, the curtains drew to one side and the doctor and Larry Weaver exchanged quick glances of comprehension; they had seen the foremost of the escort directing their bulb-tipped wands at the hangings as they drew near.

So it was that easy, said Larry's look, scornfully. But the old doctor's grave countenance did not look as triumphant as the airman's.

Into the slight opening made by the withdrawal of the curtains the procession continued, and at last the members of the party also marched within. Behind them the draperies dropped back into place silently, without touch of human hand. They were standing in a smaller room; floor, ceiling, walls, all of gloriously veined black marble. An altar of what appeared solid gold gleamed dully near the rear of the room. Behind it was a great gold and jewelled chair on such high legs that it had to be mounted by means of steps at one side. Beneath the chair a golden brazier stood, and from it curled upward spiral wreaths of pale bluish-gray smoke that twisted and swayed as the currents of air induced by the entrance of the company now set upon it from all sides.

"Oddly pungent odor," murmured Henry Winch to old Job, sniffing the air suspiciously. "It actually gives one a sort of exalted feeling, what?"

The magnate nodded slowly, his nostrils dilated, for the smell of that smoldering incense in the golden brazier reminded him of something that his mind vainly attempted to capture for several minutes. All at once he had it. . . .

"Delphic oracle!" he whispered portentously to the secretary. Then, "Do they actually intend to have Leda sit up there in those heavy fumes?"

Henry Winch, grasping the significance now of that strangely intoxicating perfume, and the strategic position of the brazier, felt the blood forsaking his tanned cheeks.

"That's—that's ghastly," he murmured *sotto voce* to Job. "We can't allow that. Those fumes turn one's head—it makes one — crazy. If that is what they mean——" and he lapsed into silence, but it was not the silence of realized impotency; for something about the way his lips writhed back from his even white teeth betrayed the thoughts that must have been passing in his mind.

"Yes—there's no doubt about it—that's exactly what they intend to do," groaned old Job, as he grasped the secretary's arm convulsively.

Henry Winch took a step forward, his lips parting as if he would cry out in protest. He found himself checked by the severe face of the old doctor, whose hand was warningly on his shoulder.

"Not so fast, young man. Not so fast," said the doctor's low voice.

"But to have them using Leda in their ghastly experiments!"

"Now is not the time to interfere," warned the doctor. "I give you my word as a medical man, that no harm will come to Leda from this exposure to the fumes of those herbs and spices. The whole thing is suggestible; she may not even yield to it, if her whole mind is set upon retaining her own consciousness. And in that case," said he thoughtfully, "I doubt if she will be chosen as high priestess, for the whole aim here is to undermine the personal will of the priestess, so that other outside wills can make their entry into her body to control her actions and her voice."

"Interesting, but not convincing enough to hold me back," the secretary replied in the same low voice. "So we are to wait here to see whether or not my poor girl succumbs to the influence of the incense?"

"*His* poor girl?" thought the doctor, but said nothing aloud.

"There is nothing to be done at this particular moment," Larry joined in softly. He had been listening to the others in silence. "How could we ever make our getaway through that bunch out in the big room, and with the rest of the bunch in here?"

Henry Winch nodded impatient acquiescence. Larry was right. There was nothing for it but to await the event. And the event was on the forward march.

FROM a doorway in the black marble toward the rear of the room a golden door swung open, and the high priest entered the room. For a moment he stood motionless, his arms raised in a benedictory manner; then he gestured to the men of the escort, who one by one slipped out into the main auditorium through the rich hangings, leaving in the inner sanctuary only the high priest, Quint, and the members of the little party from the "Queen."

Yet that there was some one else near at hand became evident, when from beyond the open doorway sounded the light tapping of Pan's hoofs.

Gemma, her eyes enormous with terror, hastily stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth to muffle her gasping sobs. Sir Hubert moved unobtrusively nearer her, his eyes on her pale face.

Behind them wilted the corpulent form of the black chef, his small eyes peering out from the folds of flesh, full of fear. That he understood something of the significance of the scene could not be denied, yet his fright had so robbed him of ability to use any mental processes that all he could do, apparently, was to stand there muttering beneath his breath: "Mus' git me anudder spell. Mus' git me anudder spell."

"Shut up, Captain," whispered Larry fiercely, shoving one doubled fist under the chef's snub nose.

Captain shrank back but continued to mutter softly, his eyes on the jewelled breastplate the high priest wore.

The priest, seeing that the last member of the escort had left the room, assisted Leda from the litter.

"Your place, maiden, is here," said he, indicating the tall golden chair. "You need do nothing but lean back quietly, and relax."

Hastily the old doctor bent his head over Gemma and whispered.

"Tell your mistress—quickly—in Italian—not to let go her hold on her conscious will for a single moment," he said

rapidly. "She understands Italian, doesn't she?"

The Italian girl nodded, and pulled the handkerchief from her mouth. A few words in her native tongue. . . .

Leda, mounting the steps to the tall chair, hesitated a moment and then made a slight—a very slight—affirmative movement of her sleek dark head.

The doctor drew a long sigh of relief. She had understood that the message was a warning for herself, for her eyes had been on his face as she gave that slow nod. But the high priest turned, his face disturbed, and cried out at Gemma to remain silent or she would be sent outside. Gemma subsided, whimpering, but meeting the doctor's half-smile, something of comfort must have stolen into her heart, judging from her expression.

"Lean back, maiden," the priest now directed Leda. "Relax. Let yourself go—go—go. . . ."

The low, hypnotic drawl continued, and the priest's smile told the doctor that the Pan-worshipper believed the girl had let herself go completely, for she had settled herself in the chair with an air of relief, her eyelids drooping mysteriously over her warm brown eyes as if heavy with luxurious abandonment. Still the old physician's faded blue eyes peered through his bifocals fixedly and at last he saw that one of her index fingers, resting on an arm of the chair, was tapping rhythmically, then irregularly. He drew in a sharp breath; she was doing, intuitively, exactly the right thing; keeping herself widely alert by a consciously directed physical movement.

"I believe everything is coming along all right," whispered the doctor then, to encourage Job, who was in turn patting the shoulder of the secretary in friendly fashion.

"Let's hope so," muttered Henry Winch from one corner of his mouth. His brows were set in a heavy scowl.

The Airedale, on its leash held by the secretary, sniffed, uneasily, and paid no attention to Suki, seated on his back. Plainly, Whiskers was most uncomfortable. More than once he had assumed the unmistakable attitude of one about to bay the moon, and had only been aroused and distracted from his intent by the jerking of the leash and his master's sharp, low order.

Now the high priest spoke again to Leda, removing as he spoke the jewelled breastplate, and laying it on the golden altar.

"Maiden chosen of the Most High Gods, this is the moment to deliver to the world the Portal of Power."

He stretched up a questing hand, and the girl, with the air of a sleepwalker, fumbled in her bosom and drew out the talisman. As she let it drop into the high priest's waiting palm, her whole manner that of one overcome by irresistible drowsiness, the old doctor eyed her with apprehension; only that index finger, tap-tapping on the arm of the chair, could reassure him.

"My admiration for Leda grows by leaps and bounds," whispered he to old Job. "That child is wonderful. . . ."

The air magnate's impatient jerk of heavy shoulders spoke of his proud acceptance of a tribute that he felt was deserved.

The high priest now bent over the altar and laid the talisman in the center of the breastplate. Then he lifted both arms and began to chant in a mixture of Latin and some other unknown tongue. The murmurs from the great hall without dropped when his voice rang out; at each pause, responses came in a thunderous roar of chanting voices that reverberated through the small room, echoing back and forth

loudly even when he began to speak again.

His eyes were fixed on the gleaming stone atop the altar. Occasionally he would bend over it as if addressing some part of his invocation directly to it. On such occasions it was plainly seen by all the strained eyes observing him that sparkles of brilliant light came from the stone, synchronizing with the resonant tones of the old man's ringing voice. At such times, also, the clouds of incense from the brazier appeared to thicken and pour upward more heavily, curling about the girl in the tall golden chair until she was momentarily hidden from sight. And when that happened, the convulsive grasp of Henry Winch on the arm of the old doctor became so unconsciously cruel that John Peabody winced.

Quietly—so quietly that they hardly noticed his advent—the Goat-man had entered the room and moved close to the golden chair above the smoking brazier. When he seated himself on one of the rungs by which Leda had mounted, and began surveying those present with his sly, cunning glances, the doctor found it difficult to restrain the secretary from springing away from the party and going to the other side of the altar, as if to be in readiness to protect Leda in case of need.

THE tone of the incantation was changing subtly. Something was stirring arout the room that could not be seen yet by mortal eyes, although it could now be felt by mortal senses. The rhythmic swing of the high priest's chant and the measured beat of the responses from the initiates in the great hall seemed now to shake the solid marble with regular vibrations.

"Am I imagining it, or is this marble actually vibrating under my feet?" demanded the secretary of the doctor softly.

"It *is* vibrating. It is the beginning of the end," replied the old doctor solemnly. "Their incantations are beginning to work."

"God, but it's uncanny!"

"It is the rousing of subtle, powerful influences from other planes that you are feeling now," whispered the doctor. "They are beginning to stir with life, with the hope of entering onto this plane once more, through the devotion of their worshippers and through the means afforded by the talisman."

As he spoke, the doctor regarded Leda with anxiety. As if in answer to his solicitude, he saw her heavy lids move ever so slightly, and the warm brown eyes, he could have sworn, regarded him earnestly. When one lid flickered in an unmistakable wink, he caught himself smiling dryly. The girl was awake, alert, signalling to him her constant watchfulness. He was satisfied that so far all was well with her.

The heavy thrumming vibrations increased steadily. It was now as if the entire room were swinging and moving in all directions simultaneously. Every molecule of marble appeared to be in rapid vibration. It was a sickening as well as a frightening feeling.

Gemma, forgetful of her antipathy for Sir Hubert, was hanging on his arm, her face a Greek mask of horror; eyes wide, mouth squared. Sir Hubert's countenance, on the contrary, was an odd mixture of consternation and sheepish bliss.

Now the high priest, his face shining, his whole mien that of one who welcomes the Joyful Incomprehensible, stepped closer to the altar with waving arms. Pan arose from his seat at the feet of the girl and moved toward the altar, but his eyes did not leave Leda's form, and there was a sniggering grin on his sly face.

"Behold! Great and beneficent powers that lie beyond the veil of our dull human senses, behold the willing sacrifice! Behold the virgin maid, who lays her chaste body upon your altar! Descend, high priestess, and deliver yourself up unto the Most High Gods' will!"

At that call, Leda Scudder's slender body trembled visibly, and Henry Winch uttered a strangely choked sound between tightly clenched teeth.

The girl arose slowly, dreamily, and went down the steps of the golden chair; moved toward the altar, behind which must also have been steps, for presently she mounted steadily, and stepped upon the altar, again with a shudder that they all could note.

"Most High Gods! The living sacrifice!"

"White, white flesh!" tittered Pan, his eyes leeringly on the girl's body.

"Red, gushing blood!" jerked as if unwillingly from the lips of Quint, whose hand was fumbling about his garments as if to seek something. His eyes were glowing with strange fires.

The high priest reached out and plucked a dagger from his grandson's girdle, and in a voice of high rebuke exclaimed, "No blood, I say! We serve the Good, not the Evil, Gods!"

The grinding of Quint's teeth could be heard in the silence that followed, for the chanting from without had died away to a low murmur of hammering rhythm. With a stamp of one foot, he turned his back to the party, and from under lowering brows regarded Pan fixedly.

Under that look the Goat-man's sly face wakened. His hairy hands reached out to seize the nearer corners of the altar and he lowered his tumbled head down upon it close to Leda's sandalled feet, as if to kiss them with his slobbering mouth.

Henry Winch uttered a low groan.

"I kiss the pure feet of her who is to bring us the messages of the Most High Gods," shrilled the high, tittering voice of Pan. "Virgin Maid, you are devoted now and consecrated to the will of the Most High Gods, and to the will of Pan."

The dark head moved forward until the rumpled black hair fell back from the forehead, exposing two shining knobby horns of black.

Henry Winch began shaking as if stricken by a palsy.

"Do you devote yourself, maiden, without a single personal reservation?" demanded the high priest's voice clearly, during a lull in the incantations from the initiates without.

Leda did not open her eyes wide, but seemed to assent sleepily.

The doctor was regarding her now with anxious solicitude.

"Your white flesh—your red blood—your virginity—all is at the service of the Most High Gods, maiden, in whatsoever mode they see fit to call upon them?" pursued the high priest.

Again Leda appeared to give assent.

"Then all is prepared," cried the priest jubilantly. "The way is cleared for the Gods to enter. Come! Come, High Gods! Enter this chaste tabernacle prepared for your delectation!"

"I say! This thing has gone far enough!" rang out the voice of Henry Winch.

"Silence, irreverent and rash fool!" shouted the priest.

Pan's head lifted from the altar. Inscrutable, sly eyes moved to the secretary's flushed, angry countenance, and rested there.

"Hush, boy, for God's sake!" begged the old physician.

"Hush nothing," retorted the secretary furiously. "Think I'm going to stand

here and let God knows what obscene forces take possession of my wife's body?"

Silence, heavy and ominous. . . .

The high priest, as if shot, turned incredulous eyes upon the secretary.

"Those are startling words," he said, with an effort, "words of ominous import, young man. *Wife*—did you say, *wife?*"

"No, no!" cried Leda passionately from the altar.

But the secretary paid no attention to her.

"I said 'wife'," he asserted, his blazing eyes going here and there as if daring any one to dispute his word.

"Our arts have shown this woman to be a virgin," declared the priest heavily. "It can not be that we have made any errors in our calculations. But—'wife'—that can mean but one thing. You must prove your statement," he flashed at the secretary.

"It is true. You dare not deny our marriage," cried out Henry Winch directly to Leda, whose lips compressed as she did not reply.

"Then it is true," whispered the high priest as if to himself, and leaned against the golden altar as if stupefied by the sudden revelation. "Wife! His wife!"

CHAPTER 17

"WIFE is what I said," repeated Henry Winch stubbornly. "Anybody got anything to say now?"

"That is no way to go about saving Leda, young man," John Peabody rebuked gravely. "Do you realize what you are saying?"

"Apparently my word isn't enough," said the secretary bitterly. "Mr. Scudder, be good enough to tell these incredulous people what you know about the situation."

Job Scudder looked, not at the rest of the party, but at his old friend, as he nodded reluctantly.

"I've seen their marriage certificate," said he unwillingly.

"Certificate? A certificate doesn't necessarily make a wife. You—Winch—how did this thing happen and how far has it gone?" Quint demanded significantly.

Turning not to Quint but to the old doctor, Henry Winch spoke rapidly, almost incoherently.

"I'd just graduated, and she came to the prom, and we—we fell in love. At least, *I* did. There was a bunch of us, making whoopee, and some one dared us to get married. And we did."

"I was spifflicated, Uncle Job. Honestly, I was," pleaded Leda from the altar, her face pitiful. "I've been so darn ashamed of myself since that I've thought I could just die when I thought about it. And he lied to me about his name," she declared with a hard look at the secretary, "or I think I might have forgiven him."

The secretary groaned aloud.

"I told her the truth; at least, half of it," said he wretchedly. "But she's been hating me because she blames me for not having held back from marrying her. How could I, when I was mad over her? When I told her my name was Hubert Wynne——"

"What made you lie to me? I'd stick to a man I loved even if he were a—a servant—if I thought him worthy of my love."

"I didn't lie, I tell you." Henry Winch—or Hubert Wynne—turned his face to her for a moment, then addressed the doctor again. "I'd just learned that I'd come into the title. My uncle from England, who'd come over for my graduation, had died of apoplexy, and I was afraid Leda might be influenced by the title. As it was, she accused me of being

an adventurer and said she never wanted to see me again. That was the morning after we were married, while the bunch of us were breakfasting at a Childs restaurant."

"Oh!" sighed the girl on the altar, sickly. "So you came after me, masquerading as a servant?"

"I hoped—oh, I know now that I was a fool!—that you might realize my devotion and learn to love me for myself. I see now that it was nothing but a crazy dream."

"I don't know about that," said the girl spiritedly.

"What do you mean? What——?"

Her cheeks were reddening but her smile must have held some happy message for Sir Hubert—the real Sir Hubert—upon whose countenance an answering brightness grew.

As the two stared at each other in the silence that still hung over the little room, the real Henry Winch's voice sprang into loud prominence.

"I tell you, Gemma, s'help me, you're the only girl I ever wanted to marry. See? You wouldn't believe me when I said my name was Henry, would you?"

"If you liked me so well, why did you go away after that night we met in the waiting-room at the prom? And never come back!"

"His fault. Whisked me off in a hurry, and then made me pretend I was him," muttered the valet. "Anyway, you didn't give me your address."

Gemma's mouth opened wide. "That's true, Henry. I forgive you."

"What is all this idiotic balderdash?" exclaimed Quint's voice impatiently. "Is Leda Scudder a wife, or not?"

"I tell you, I've seen her marriage certificate," retorted Job, with resentment.

Pan uttered a mighty shout most unlike his usual tittering laughter. It was the uproarious laugh of triumph.

"A wife! The high priestess is no high priestess! She is a wife!"

He reached up hairy arms and grasping Leda about the knees lifted her down from the altar, still uttering bellows of wild laughter.

"Good Lord! What is he trying to do?" demanded old Job, his eyes protruding with amazement and apprehension.

"There is no sacred virgin here!" shouted the Goat-man, with another great peal of mad laughter that rang and resounded in the little room. "Then she is mine for the taking! Come, girl, for Pan has much to teach you," and he tried to draw her away with him toward the golden door.

Leda struggled in his grasp as he held her tighter and gloated upon her with wild, beastly eyes in which glinted cruelty as well as mischief.

"Take your filthy hands off my wife!" shouted Sir Hubert, springing fiercely to the rescue.

HE HAD almost reached her side, when between himself and the girl he loved pushed something black, obscene, leering, horrible. . . . Like a huge gorilla, filled with pulsing power and animal emotions, the negro chef interposed himself with irresistible power in front of Sir Hubert, and seized the fainting form of Leda from Pan's suddenly yielding arms. The Goat-man retreated in a kind of astonished confusion.

"Doctor! Doctor! Did you see what Captain did?" cried out Larry into the doctor's ear.

"Don't talk. We've got to check this madness at once. Have you the pistol?" demanded Job Scudder.

'Blood must not be shed," declared the

doctor positively. "We must try to save her by some other means, if possible. There is Dread Evil abroad, and freshly shed blood would only call it closer."

"But — doctor — Captain — the fat fool——" stammered Larry excitedly. "He stole the talisman. Didn't you see him?"

"Good God!" ejaculated the doctor. "He stole it? Then heaven help us all, for the powers of evil may enter now, unobstructed. Even now——"

He started across the room, colliding on his way with the high priest. His ears, attuned to hear whatever might have the slightest bearing on the situation, were perhaps the only ones in the room to take in the priest's cry as the latter ran outside the hangings. It was a cry that bade the murmuring initiates stop their entreaties and reverse the spells they had started. It was a cry that told them that the entry onto the world-plane must be blocked at once to incoming powers. It was a cry that warned them of something unforeseen that had happened.

Captain—leering, horrible, his wide white teeth showing in a terrible grin of defiance—sustained the drooping form of Leda over his left arm, and with his clenched right fist, in which was the talisman, he held off the entire party now attacking him from various motives.

"Give me the talisman, you fat fool!" Quint was shouting in a furious voice. "Keep the girl, but give me the stone!"

"No, you don't, fella!" came Larry's voice, striking down the hand of Quint that reached out to snatch the talisman from Captain's fist. "Hey, Captain, old fellow, give it to me!"

Captain, however, had become in truth transformed. Like an ugly gorilla he stood at bay, now hugging Leda against his breast with an air of defiance. The small, deep-set eyes that squinted out at them held something more than a simple human will; they were sparkling with malevolent consciousness of power. . . .

About the negro chef surged and swirled those heavy vibrations that had been started into being by the incantations of the initiates. He had become, by his theft of the stone, a nucleus for the embodiment of evil powers. The sly leer of Pan, and his slightly disappointed air, spoke louder than words. Moreover, the air hung heavy with portent, thrumming and buzzing with the movement of intelligently directed forces, strange, uncanny. . . .

Sir Hubert, vainly attempting to wrest Leda's inert form from the possessed Captain, cried aloud in anguish. The Airedale, finding the leash loose, was nipping about Captain's ankles suspiciously, occasionally dodging a mighty kick directed at him by the growling, transformed negro chef.

"What a fool I am! God, what a fool!" Larry's voice rang out in a kind of frenzy.

Quint, still struggling to open the fat fist that held the talisman, fell back before the sudden approach of the airman, who had been fumbling in his pockets with very apparent excitement.

"What on earth did I do with it?" Larry was talking aloud as he fumbled. Then, his nervous look changing to one of triumph, he dashed at Captain confidently. "Captain, old chap, look! Give me that silly stone, old fellow. Look! I picked it up where you dropped it. Venus's rabbit's foot, Captain! I'll swap it for the stone."

The leering monster lowered upon Larry, who held something out eagerly and insistently. Still he made no move to deliver up the talisman.

Leda stirred. Opened her eyes. Managed to get her feet to the ground and stand, although still in the grasp of the

fat chef. Shuddering, she strained away from him, and at Larry's desperate insistence, she realized what had occurred.

"Take it, Captain," she murmured, her body trembling in his grasp. "Give the stone to Larry, Captain. He'll give you your Venus's rabbit foot, Captain. Take it, Captain. Give Larry the stone——"

At the continued repetition, Captain's leering face turned downward upon what lay in Larry's hand. He reached out his fist, opening it to drop the stone onto Larry's palm, at the same time grabbing at the furry talisman the pilot proffered. He let Leda go automatically, and an expression of bliss spread over his fat face, from which the ugly leer slowly faded.

Sir Hubert had drawn the girl into his arms, and she rested there supinely, her head against his breast. The young nobleman looked as if he were in Paradise; he was blind to whatever else was going on about them. His cheek rested on Leda's dark head, his eyes were half closed. Old Job, regarding the pair, felt moisture dimming his own eyes.

Muttering joyfully to himself, Captain waddled slowly to another part of the room, unobserved now that he was no longer the horrid center of attraction. Between his cupped palms he was holding the rabbit's foot.

The talisman in his left hand, Larry was confronting Quint, whose heavy and powerful body poised itself in the act of springing upon him.

"No, you don't!" warned Larry softly, and took out his automatic with a sardonic grin.

An ugly look darkened Quint's face. He hesitated.

"Makes you think, fella?" laughed Larry lightly. "Now you're going to think some more. March ahead of me to the curtains there, and call in one of those men with the spears."

Cold fury in Quint's eyes. . . .

"Hear me, fella? You march, and keep your trap shut or I'll bore a coupla holes in you," Larry threatened genially.

A moment later, Quint was gesturing the attendant to retire, and Larry, with a jerk of his head, beckoned the doctor to his side.

"Here's one of those things, doctor, to open the walls," said the pilot guardedly. "You'd better take it. You know something about these performances and I don't. Now we'd better vamoose. Which way is out, fella?" the airman asked of Quint.

Quint's smile was sardonic in turn.

"If you wish to walk around until the golden wall blocks your egress," Quint observed sarcastically, "you certainly are at liberty to do so, as far as I am concerned. You can reach the street from the corridor that door opens upon. From there you can easily see which way to go," and he uttered a short, scornful laugh.

"That'll be all, fella. Folks, attention! Doctor, for the Lord's sake, wake up these lovers," groaned Larry disgustedly, surveying the two absorbed groups.

Sir Hubert caught the tone and looked up slowly. Then his eyes became alert and he whispered to the girl in his arms.

"Friends," said the doctor's low but penetrating voice, "we must make haste, for we do not know how long we may be able to command our own actions. Listen. . . ."

The character of the measured, rhythmic humming from the great hall had altered subtly.

"Everybody on their way!" Larry directed, pointing to the exit. "I've got the gun, and I'll keep 'em off while the rest of you make the getaway."

"Larry, for God's sake, be careful," warned the air magnate apprehensively. "If anything happens to you, we'll all be

stuck on the plateau. The 'Queen' is useless without a pilot."

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Scudder. I understand and will be very careful," replied the airman.

His eyes sought those of Sir Hubert, who came toward him with Leda. The two men clasped hands for a moment, looking into each other's eyes in silent exchange of some secret message.

"After you, my dear Gaston," murmured Larry then, with a sharp glance at Quint who was lounging against the altar with apparent lack of interest in proceedings.

"Hurry, Larry," said the girl gently, and walked rapidly away, urged by Sir Hubert's hand under her elbow.

THE entire party disappeared through the door, and Larry could hear their echoing feet on the marble pavement. The Airedale was last to go, sniffing at Larry in a puzzled manner before frisking off through the door, Suki clinging to its back. The pilot gave his attention then to the indifferent lounging figure of Quint.

"Now," said he persuasively, "I wonder how long I've got to keep you here? Perhaps the best thing will be to march you ahead of me for a short distance? All right, fella. Forward, march!"

And with Quint, arms held high, marching ahead, the airman walked out of the altar room and down the long corridor, gained the street, holding his gun on Quint steadily.

Ahead, mounting the staircase that led to the golden glass wall, the rest of the party appeared, Whiskers scampering before them. Larry hastened his steps.

"Let you go back in a coupla minutes, fella," he announced, his eyes on the old doctor, who was holding a bulb-tipped wand toward the wall, while the balance of the party stood behind him motionless.

After a moment, Larry's grin became triumphant.

"Seems all right now, fella."

"Damnation!" exclaimed Quint venomously, seeing the golden glass recede in thick folds upon itself, opening the way to the party.

"For you, perhaps," retorted Larry, still cheerful. "Now you can get along back and do what you please, fella. I'm going with the rest of the bunch. It'll take you a while to get any of your people on our track, and before you can get to the plateau, we'll be on our way."

Quint dropped his arms as the airman passed him on a dead run. But the ugly vindictiveness of that heavily handsome face had never shown so clearly. He waited until Larry had slipped through the golden wall, then also running, followed speedily on the airman's heels.

CHAPTER 18

IT WAS not until Larry was ascending the tortuously winding staircase of glass that he became aware that Quint was following close behind.

"Keep off, fella!" he shouted once, and waved the automatic in warning.

Quint paused until a turn of the stairs hid him from view, then came on, gaining little by little on his quarry.

Hearing the approaching thud of the other man's feet on the glass behind him, Larry, panting with breathlessness, urged himself on, turning the sharp corners so fast that more than once he skidded and felt his heart fail him as he almost slipped backward down those glisteningly smooth steps.

When, upon turning an unusually sharp corner, he did stumble, the pilot did not stop to retrieve the automatic that had been jerked from his hand and had slid, bumping, down to the beginning of

the turn. Larry dared not stop. If he returned for the gun, he might very well collide with Quint before regaining it, or Quint himself might pick it up before Larry could do so. Also Quint was more than his match physically. He felt thankful that the jar had not made him lose his hold on the talisman which his left hand still held convulsively. He cursed himself inwardly for not having given the stone to the doctor.

Meantime, Quint came steadily on. And so it was that when Larry Weaver emerged under the midnight stars, it was with his pursuer directly on his heels.

The party had reached the "Queen" and were all anxiously watching the top of the stairs, with the exception of Captain, who had retired precipitately to his kitchenette, into which he had locked himself and his Venus's rabbit foot, relying quite as much upon a turned key, apparently, as upon the charm.

When the panting airman emerged, a low murmur of relief arose from the lips of all, a murmur that changed to one of dismay and apprehension as the squat and powerful form of Quint appeared almost simultaneously. The doctor and Sir Hubert started across the plateau at once. But, long before even their hurrying steps could have reached the two men, the duel was on.

There were no words spoken. Each man saved his breath for the struggle which he knew must end in death for one of them; their eyes said that plainly to each other as they came to grips, Larry incommoded by the talisman which he still held tightly in his left hand. Quint's utmost efforts were directed to seizing that hand and wresting from it the Portal to Power.

So the two men, pressed against each other like a single swaying unit, struggled, writhed, twisted, on the verge of the sheer descent to the canyon and the rushing, roaring waters of the Colorado below.

Panting, his left arm held high, Larry hopefully watched the rapid approach of his rescuers. But he was too badly handicapped. He knew that before they could reach him, Quint would have wrested the talisman from him and could only too easily be down the staircase and away. And below, in an angle of the stairs, lay Larry's automatic. . . . The cards were in Quint's hands.

"Keep it up, Larry. We'll be with you in a minute!" Sir Hubert was shouting as he ran.

"Throw it!" almost screamed the quick-witted old doctor. "Throw it to me!"

On the very verge of the precipice the two men battled grimly, in a dreadful silence. Larry's arm was in Quint's grasp. In another moment—— With a sudden burst of will-power, Larry jerked his arm from Quint's hold. His hand flew back over his head, then forward—a glittering, milky thing hummed through the air, to drop flashing at the doctor's feet like a fallen fiery comet.

The old doctor checked himself, picked up the talisman and quickly thrust it into a vest pocket. He would have hastened onward again, had he not been held back by the sudden stop of Sir Hubert, who as he paused gave voice to an involuntary groan of dismay and grief.

From the rest of the party no sound came, although even the dim starlight could not hide the outcome of the struggle from them.

Larry had lost his balance in that last frantic effort to keep the stone out of Quint's grasping hand. He staggered on the edge of the plateau; for a moment it looked as if he would regain his equilibrium. But the other man, with a callous fury, gave him a quick push.

The pilot went toppling out into space. But not alone. At the touch of that murderous hand, the airman made his last attempt. Disdaining to make a vain effort to regain his lost balance, he actually twisted his body in the air, and seized with a final straining effort the fingers that were condemning him to death.

A laugh of triumph from Larry's lips as he disappeared from sight, accompanied by a screamed curse from Quint, who found himself condemned to follow his victim into the whirling, dashing currents of the river below.

A SILENCE, heavy and mournful, reigned after those two cries of triumph and despair. The numbing knowledge of Larry's death, and the realization of what it meant to them all—apart from the grief with which the gallant young man's tragic end had oppressed them—bowed every member of the party in horror and dismay.

"Poor, gallant lad," said the old physician softly, as he stood at the edge of the plateau, straining his eyes vainly for any trace of the two who had disappeared an instant before. "Noble lad, loyal to the last."

"There could be no finer epitaph," agreed Sir Hubert, his voice trembling slightly. "I know that better than any one else here. You see, we had a long talk this afternoon, and I told him——"

Leda had run to them and interrupted, her voice shaky with the sobs she could hardly restrain.

"Hubert, don't you think that perhaps——?"

Sir Hubert shook his head.

"They have gone forever, dear. The descent is sheer at this point. Their bodies have been whirled miles away by this time. You do well to weep for him," he added, gently, "for he was a gallant man and he loved you nobly, Leda."

Job, coming up to them, whispered anxiously to the doctor.

"We are trapped here. Larry had the only weapon, and he's gone. And here we are, trapped."

"Trapped?" Sir Hubert asked.

"What good is the 'Queen' to us without a pilot?"

"Larry knew that I have a pilot's license. That is why he didn't try to save his life, but took the post of danger guarding our rear."

Sir Hubert's voice grew suddenly hoarse, and he turned his face away from his friends.

"Good-bye, dear Larry," whispered Leda, and kissed her hand tearfully downward into the darkness that had swallowed the airman.

Had there been human eyes observing later on, they would have seen the "Queen" hovering over the roaring torrent in the canyon, while her passengers prayed silently for the gallant young man who had met death so suddenly, so fearlessly.

And then, rising swiftly, she took her way to the western coast, bearing the Portal to Power on her wings.

[THE END]



The Avenging Shadow

By ARLTON EADIE

Practising forbidden arts in mediaeval Naples, Taso Vitelli sought to outwit the Prince of Darkness, but "He who sups with the Devil must have a long spoon"

IN SPITE of its imposing title, the Locanda del Leone d'Oro was but a mean, single-storied wine-shop half hidden away in one of the reeking alleys within a stone's throw of the Molo of Naples, and its landlord, through long years of residence amongst the lawless *lazzaroni* of that waterside district, had developed a wise and prudent indifference as to the character and occupation of the queer customers who patronized his house. Yet even he could not help casting more than one curious glance at the tall, black-browed stranger who for the past two hours had been slowly and thoughtfully sipping his wine in the darkest corner of the dimly illuminated room.

At first sight he had appeared to be one of the mercenary soldiers who at that period roamed the country, selling their services to any leader who was able and willing to give gold for steel; and this impression was heightened by the shirt of pliant chain-mail which covered the upper portion of the stranger's body, no less than by the very serviceable rapier and dagger that hung, within convenient reach, from his belt.

But the landlord's sharp eyes noted that the plume drooping from the wide brim of his slouched hat was too brilliant and many-colored to have been plucked from any bird native to Italy; that the roughly dressed leather of the high boots was still harsh with sea water; while the crimson hue of the wide, voluminous cloak had been bleached to a dingy brown, on its more exposed parts, by a sunshine ever more vivid than that which beats on the Tyrrhenian shore.

The man might be one of those daring adventurers who had sought to carve their fortunes with their swords from the El Dorado of the newly discovered continents beyond the Western Ocean. He might be one of the ruffians who provided the fighting material of the slave-driven galleys of Genoa, then recently enlisted under the white and gold banner of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain. He might be one of the officers of the swift, heavily-armed corvettes, flying any flag, or no flag at all, which lay in wait for the lumbering, deep-laden treasure-galleons bringing the spoils of the New World to fill the depleted coffers of the Old. He might be——

The landlord's sidelong glance encountered the gaze of two frowning eyes which glowed in the shadow of the stranger's low-drawn hat-brim, and something in the intensity of their fixed regard caused a shiver of superstitious fear to run down the beholder's spine. Under cover of the counter, the landlord closed the two middle fingers of his right hand, extending the remaining ones in the direction of the stranger and at the same time muttering a charm beneath his breath. Dread of the Evil Eye was very real and potent in those latter years of the Fifteenth Century.

A few seconds later the first strokes of midnight began to boom from the campanile of the Convent dell' Annunziata, and with a promptitude which suggested

that he had been awaiting the signal, the stranger drained his glass, and rose briskly to his feet.

"Your reckoning, Messer Host," he said in a deep, ringing voice, at the same time tossing a silver coin on the counter.

The landlord spat upon the coin and transferred it to the pocket of his greasy apron.

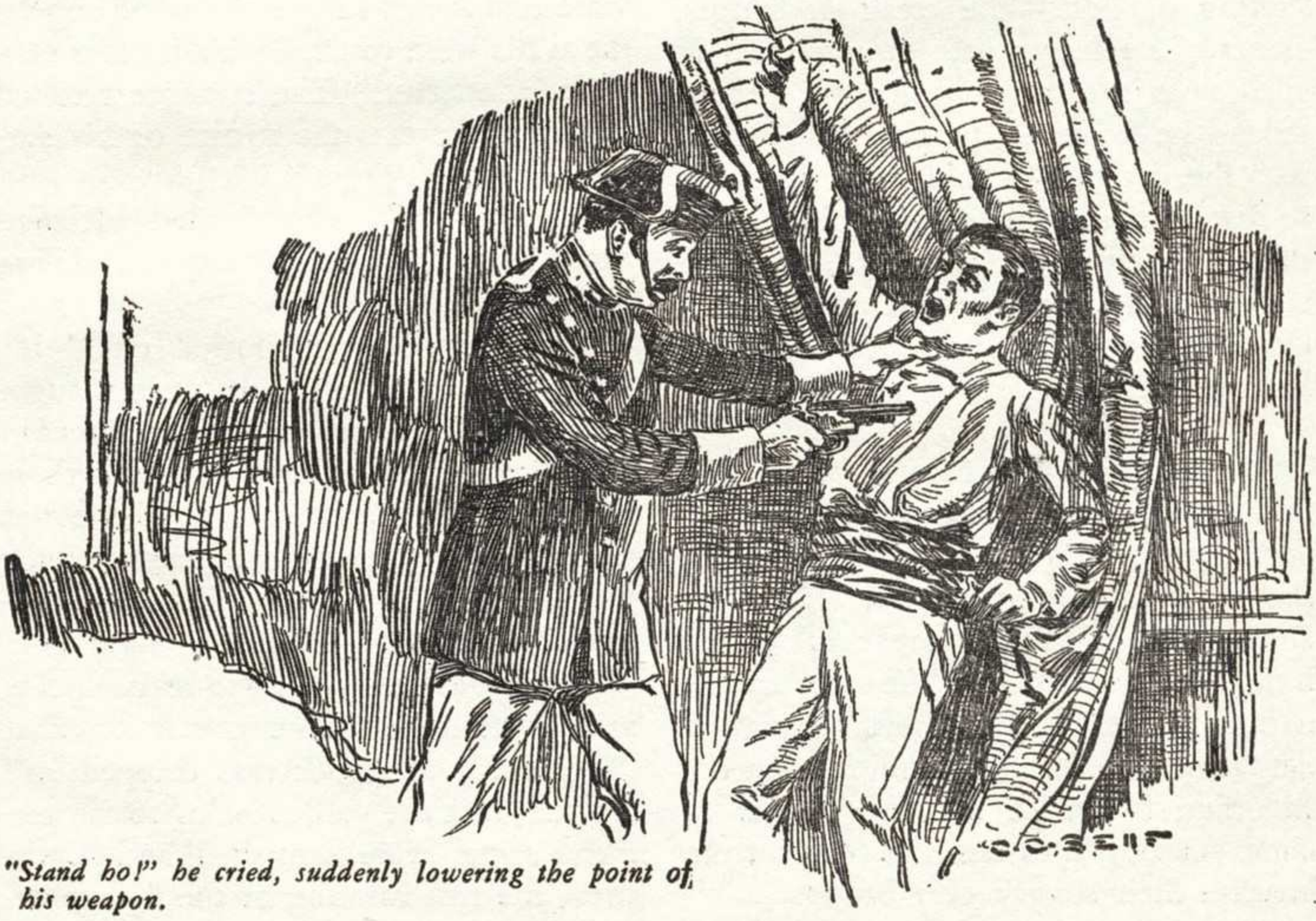
"Mille grazie, Eccellenze," he muttered, bowing his guest to the door with obvious relief. *"Addio, e buon' viaggio.* May the Blessed Madonna accompany you every step of your journey."

A contemptuous smile twitched the lips of the stranger as he noted that the pious wish was accompanied by the sign to avert the Evil Eye.

"Addio," he answered curtly, and passed out into the night.

A few rapid strides along the alley brought him into the wider Strada di Chiaja, where, passing beneath the lofty rock of Pizzofalcone, he began to mount the sloping path beyond. As he made his way upward, the huddled roofs of the waterside hovels sank beneath his range of vision, revealing the magnificent sweep of the Bay of Naples, its placid waters spread like a sheet of beaten silver beneath the moonlit sky. Directly before him, the distant Island of Capri appeared like the head of some fabled sea-monster rising from the deep; to his right, its smoke-crowned summit faintly tinged with red, the purple-gray mass of Vesuvius loomed in solitary grandeur.

Late though the hour was, a few signs of life and movement floated up from the streets below—the flash of lanterns and clink of armor as the watch went its prescribed rounds; the tinkle of a mandolin and the sound of a voice trolling forth the inevitable *"Funiculi-Funicula";* a burst of coarse revelry from a wine-shop; the sweet voices of the nuns as they chanted their midnight orisons in the chapel of the convent near by.



"Stand ho!" he cried, suddenly lowering the point of his weapon.

The latter sound seemed to awaken some dormant memory, for the man instinctively raised his hand to his forehead and began to make the sign of the cross —only to pause abruptly with a snarling curse as he recollected the errand on which he was bent.

"*Diavolo!* The whey-faced fools deem the world well lost for the sake of an empty dream!" he muttered as he turned to resume his way. "But I am wiser than they! Soon the world, with all its pomp, power and riches, will be at my feet!"

As if the thought had invested him with renewed energy, he hastened up the remainder of the slope at a run, and a few minutes later came to a halt before a low door that was deeply recessed in a wall of ancient stone. With a quick glance round to make sure he was unobserved, he thrust forward his sheathed sword and rapped on the panels with its hilt.

He had expected his summons to be answered by a whispered challenge—the grating of bolts—the creak of hinges. Instead, the heavy gate swung open as silently as a dissolving shadow. For a second he hesitated, peering suspiciously into the darkness within in an endeavor to discern the agency responsible for this unspoken invitation to enter. Then he stepped across the threshold, and the door closed behind him as mysteriously as it had opened.

THE house which loomed before him seemed devoid of life; no sound issued from within; no glint of light showed in its many windows. But as he approached, a slender spear of yellow light leapt to meet him. It came from a narrow grated peephole which pierced another door. Inside, illuminated by the flickering beams of a taper, a pair of dark, piercing eyes stared into his from beneath their shaggy gray brows.

"What seek ye, *Signorino?*" came in a hoarse, croaking whisper from the other side of the door.

"That which is forbidden," was the stranger's cryptic reply.

"Of whom do ye seek the thing which is forbidden?"

"Of him whose name must not be spoken."

"And where does he dwell, he whose name must not be spoken?"

"In air and in earth; in water and in fire; and in those unknown elements which boil and seethe deep beneath the foundations of the earth."

Apparently the whole series of questions and answers formed an elaborate countersign, for the old man immediately unlocked the door and motioned the stranger to enter.

Passing down a dark corridor, he led the way into a long, narrow, yet strangely lofty apartment. A row of slender Gothic arches ran down each side; the corbels which supported the groined roof were sculptured in the forms of angels; the walls were covered with frescoes of a sacred character. The stranger recoiled a pace as he saw the nature of his surroundings.

"A church?" The startled exclamation was accompanied by a quick, hissing intake of his breath.

"Aye, but an unhallowed one!" his guide answered with a reassuring laugh. "Fear not, *Signorino*, the Black Mass has been the only ritual chanted within these walls for many a long year. Time was when this was the private oratory of the noble family to whom this house belonged, but now—behold!"

He kindled a large lamp as he spoke, and by its light the newcomer saw that the carved stonework was chipped and cracked; that the golden halos of the pictured saints were tarnished and blackened; the rich coloring of the figures de-

faced by damp, or quite obliterated in the places where the plaster had peeled from the walls. Rough wooden shelves had been nailed up at a convenient height from the floor, and on these were arranged queer-looking instruments, earthenware jars, glass flasks and retorts. A furnace of blackened brickwork stood on the spot formerly occupied by the altar; before it stood a large table and an oaken press which groaned beneath the weight of the many huge, leather-bound volumes stacked upon it.

Seating himself in a high chair at the head of the table, the old man leisurely settled the folds of his long, fur-trimmed robe, his eyes fixed upon the other's face the while in a prolonged, hawk-like scrutiny.

"You are welcome, Taso Vitelli," he said at last. "As one who comes with the commendation of Ramon Ezaquiel, of Malaga——"

"Per Bacco!" The younger man's eyes were filled with an expression deeper than mere astonishment as he rapped out the words. "How know ye my name?—and that of the man who sent me hither? Malaga is in Spain—three hundred leagues, or more, from here. I came direct, yet it would seem as if the news of my coming has outrun me."

A slow and scornful smile showed faintly beneath the old man's beard.

"Think ye that I am but a bungling tyro in the art of necromancy that my only means of gaining knowledge is by written word, or messenger of flesh and blood? Know ye not that I have power to summon at my will aerial couriers more swift than the lightning flash? But marvel not at such a simple thing—ere long thou shalt know that such are but trifles light as wind-blown down, compared with the weighty, world-swaying powers vouchsafed to the masters of our craft. Let it suffice thee, for the present, to know that such knowledge as ye seek may be thine—*at a price!*"

An ominous gleam shot from the narrowed eyes of the master magician as he uttered the final words, but Vitelli appeared not to notice it as he eagerly thrust his hand into the bosom of his doublet and drew forth a leathern bag.

"The price is here, Messer Malecalchas!" he cried, opening the bag and pouring a stream of gold pieces on the table. "Will this suffice thee?"

Without answer, the other drew the glittering heap toward him, shuffling the coins with greedy fingers, occasionally taking one up and holding it nearer the lamp the better to observe it. Although all were of gold, the coins varied greatly, not only in size and weight, but also in the devices they bore. There were Dutch guilders, French louis d'or, English nobles, Spanish doubloons—even a few Turkish sequins and a battered disk bearing the half-obliterated chariot of ancient Syracuse.

"Methinks thy gold comes from many different countries, and they are all countries that send deep-laden ships from their ports," Malecalchas observed softly. "A man need not dabble in the Black Art to divine that 'twas on the sea that thy gold was won."

Vitelli's face darkened and he made an impatient movement.

"No matter where 't was won. Is it enough?"

The old man nodded his head slowly, swept the coins into the bag, tied the mouth securely and locked it away in an iron-bound chest.

"It is enough," he said, returning to his chair. "In return for it I agree to make thee proficient in the mystic arts. But"—he paused and stroked his long beard—"I have a—er—a kind of partner in my college, and he, too, must have his fee."

Taso Vitelli shrugged and turned away. "I have no more money."

Malecalchas held up a protesting hand.

"Nor is more needed. The fee demanded by my—er—fellow-instructor—is one that can not be paid in coin."

"How then?"

"Swear that thou wilt not divulge to a living soul what I am about to tell thee. Swear it by——" And he propounded an oath which caused cold beads of sweat to start from his hearer's forehead.

Among Taso Vitelli's late sea-roving companions he had been credited with fearing neither man nor devil; but now his voice was husky and shaking as he repeated the words of that soul-chilling compact.

"It is well," said Malecalchas at the conclusion. "Know then, that on the eve of the Feast of Saint Walpurgis, that is to say, the night between the last day of April and the first of May, all my students assemble in the courtyard of this house. There they compete in a race, starting at a given signal and running completely round the house, the goal being a narrow postern door leading to the vaults beneath this chapel. And then the old proverb becomes literally true, for 'the Devil takes the hindmost' in very sooth!"

The prospective student leapt up from his chair.

"You—mean——?" he faltered.

"That the body and soul of the last man to enter the door becomes forfeit to the Lord of Hell!"

VITELLI stood aghast as the dreadful nature of the bargain rushed upon his mind. Every instinct of his being shouted its horrified warning to shun even the remotest chance of paying such a price. Then his face grew more composed. After all, he was young, muscular, lithe of limb and fleet of foot; in a fair contest of speed and endurance he would stand as good a chance as any man—a better chance than most.

He turned with a sudden question: "How many of your students will take part in this race?"

"Counting yourself, a round score."

Vitelli's face brightened. Twenty to one!—he had taken more desperate chances than that in his reckless career, and had come through scatheless.

"I agree!" he cried. "Enroll me on your list of students now!"

Malecalchas laid a restraining hand on the other's arm.

"Softly, softly, young *signor*. First the agreement must be ratified in due form by the personage who is the other party to the compact. Follow me."

He began to lead the way toward a narrow flight of steps which led downward into inky darkness, but Vitelli hung back.

"Whither are you taking me?" he demanded.

"Into the presence of your future Lord and Master. Come!"

Half eager, half fearful, Vitelli suffered himself to be led down the winding stairs. Presently he found himself standing in what evidently was the ancient crypt of the chapel. Darkness reigned on every side.

"Here are flint, steel and tinder," said Malecalchas, thrusting the articles into his hand. "Strike fire."

"But the taper upstairs is burning," objected the other. "Will not that——?"

"Question not, but obey!" the old man interrupted harshly. "The fire must be virgin fire, struck by thine own hand from the cold elements of nature, otherwise the spell is of no avail."

Thus enjoined, the neophyte in magic busied himself with the implements, and after one or two attempts a tiny red line of fire began to creep among the tinder.

"Fan it with thy breath; then place it in this brazier," commanded the older man.

Vitelli obeyed, and presently a faint ruddy glow began to pervade the gloom. Taking a piece of white chalk from the pocket of his robe, Malecalchas drew a wide circle on the stone floor, completely enclosing the brazier and the spot on which they stood. At the four cardinal points he described weird cabalistic hieroglyphics, muttering the while words equally unintelligible. Rising to his feet, he again explored the depths of the capacious pockets of his robe, drawing forth four packets, each carefully sealed and bearing on its paper wrapping a number written in ink.

"Thy task will be to cast these into the brazier, one after another, as I shall call the numbers inscribed on them. And I charge thee, as you wish to quit this vault in human shape, to use the packets in their correct order. And on no account allow thy foot to pass beyond the mystic circle I have drawn—nay, not by so much as a hair's breadth! For beyond its protecting boundary there will soon be raging forces so strong and potent that even I have no power to control them. Art thou prepared?"

Taso Vitelli took a long breath before he answered.

"Aye!"

"Then, my fellow-traveler into the realm forbidden to the sons of mortal men, brace up thy courage and make strong thy heart. For anon thou shalt hear the voice that hath echoed through the Courts of Heaven, as well as the deepest depths of Hell; the voice that chanted with the angels of light before the fallen Lucifer raised it in mockery over the torments of the damned. Hast thou the packets set out in their proper order?"

"Aye," Vitelli answered, after assuring himself that it was so.

"Then begin with the packet marked—*one!*"

VITELLI cast the folded paper upon the glowing charcoal in the brazier, and instantly the flames changed to a pale greenish glow. At the same moment Malecalchas drew out a parchment scroll and began to read from it in a loud, sonorous voice.

Years of close association with the scourings of many nations, who had been his late shipmates, had given Taso Vitelli a smattering of many tongues; but Malecalchas' incantation was in a language quite unknown to him. Yet, in spite of their hidden meaning, the sustained roll of the measured periods had a strange wild music of their own. Suddenly Malecalchas paused.

"Two!" he commanded sharply, without turning his head.

Vitelli flung in the second packet, and the dying flames within the brazier leapt into renewed life; but now they sent forth a pale blue light which made the face of each man appear like that of a living corpse. Once more the deep-toned voice of the master magician rose in the unholy litany; once more it died away into silence.

"Three!"

A deep orange glow suffused the vault as the third package touched the smoldering embers. Vitelli dashed his hand across his forehead to wipe away the great drops which had of a sudden bedewed it. Was it merely the effect of the burning drugs, or was some stifling, heat-laden wind really circling round the vault? Every breath he drew seemed to come direct from a fiery furnace. A dull roaring filled his ears, through which the sound of the incantation came like a voice

heard through the mists of raging delirium.

"Arimanes! . . . Asmodeus! . . . Sammael! . . . Sathanus!"

The sorcerer raised his hands above his head as he uttered each dread name, and to Vitelli's reeling senses it seemed as though the flames in the brazier rose and fell in unison, as if fanned by a sudden breath. Beyond the charmed circle in which they stood, the air seemed full of beating wings. Confused sounds—sobs, wails, curses in a thousand different tongues mingled with shouts of demoniacal laughter—assailed his ears. A sultry wind began to stir the hair upon his head, its fiery breath searing deep into the brain beneath.

He fell upon his hands and knees, trembling in every limb, appalled at the coming of the fiend he had invoked. But the voice of Malecalchas, shrill as the scream of some unhallowed night-bird, recalled him to his duties.

"Four!"

Taso Vitelli's groping fingers found and closed upon the last package. Almost blindly he cast it into the flames, and saw them change to a dull blood-red; whilst from them issued dense black fumes that in an instant hid everything save that leering red eye. A low rumble of thunder followed, sounding faintly in the distance at first, but rapidly growing louder and nearer, until it burst in deafening crashes and peals about his ears.

Then, out of the sable cloud beyond the circle, a hand emerged and reached toward him.

But *was* it a hand? Vitelli shrank back as he fixed his staring eyeballs on the apparition. Long, slender but muscular; in color as black as soot save only the curved, blood-red claws with which each finger was armed—it was the hand of the Arch-fiend himself, extended to him to seal his terrible bargain!

Vitelli threw himself prone on the ground and hid his face in his hands. He felt his right hand seized in a vise-like grip—a pain like a red-hot iron pressed to his palm.

Then the din around him ceased abruptly, and when he took courage to open his eyes, it was to see Malecalchas calmly rolling up his scroll while he rubbed out the magic circle with the sole of his shoe. It seemed as if no sign of his diabolical assignation remained except the slender spiral of vapor which still trailed upward from the dying embers in the brazier.

It was not until Taso Vitelli reached the lighted room overhead that he saw on his palm the ineffaceable brand that was the seal of his pact with the Enemy of Mankind.

ONE evening, some ten months later, when the afterglow of the early spring sunset was still lingering in the western sky, a band of students trooped noisily into the Locanda del Leone d'Oro. At their head was the tall figure of Taso Vitelli, and this time the landlord did not eye him askance.

"Bring wine for these my friends—wine in plenty and of the best!" he ordered with a lordly air. "None of your wretched *Chianti* for us!—*Vino d'Asti* or *Lacryma Cristi*—no baser vintage will serve to gladden this night of nights!"

"Anon, anon, *Eccellenze!*"

Mine host disappeared into his cellar with the rapidity of a rabbit diving into its burrow, and returned almost as quickly laden with huge, dusty flagons. Glasses were filled, emptied, and filled again, and as the contents of the flagons fell lower, the noise of revelry rose higher, culminating in a chorus bawled so lustily as to

threaten to bring the crazy rafters tumbling about their heads:

"Amici, alliegre magnammo e bevimmo
Fin che n' ci stace uoglio e la lucerna:
Chi sa s'a l'autro munno n' ci vedimmo?
Chi sa s'a l'autro munno n' c' e taverna?"

It was but the common Neapolitan drinking-song, in which the tippler bids his friends eat and drink joyously as long as there is "oil in the lamp"; for who knows if we shall meet again in the next world, or that we shall find a tavern there?

But, in spite of the noisy mirth and wine-whipped excitement, there lay heavy on each heart a haunting dread which the fate-defying words of the song only seemed to accentuate. For it was St. Walpurgis' Eve, and ere many hours the race would be run which would decide which of them was to pay the Devil's debt.

Vitelli's laugh was loudest of any—but it did not extend farther than his lips. His eyes were very watchful as he swept his gaze round the circle of flushed faces, wondering which of them was destined to provide the Devil with his due. Would it be Haller, the heavily built, fleshy Teuton, whose natural scantiness of breath would not be improved by his present potations? Or Rodrigo, the Sicilian? Or Matteo, the gipsy, who had robbed a church to pay his entrance fee? Or Corenzio, who had sprained his knee a few days before?

His gaze remained fixed upon the rather handsome face of the last-named student. Yes, of a surety, Corenzio would be the last man to pass through the fatal door—what chance would a half-lame man stand in a race for such a desperate stake? A feeling of deep satisfaction came over Vitelli at the thought, for the removal of the handsome Corenzio would rid him of his only rival for the favors of the dark eyed Neinissa, the daughter—and heiress—of the richest banker in Naples. That he himself might prove to be the unlucky loser never for an instant crossed Vitelli's mind.

At eleven o'clock Taso rose to his feet. He had been careful to drink much less than his companions, preferring to keep a clear head and steady feet for the coming race; but he simulated the thickness of speech of a man far gone in liquor as he cried:

"Fill your glasses, comrades! There is time for one last toast before we go to keep our—little appointment."

Corenzio started to his feet with a drunken laugh.

"Let me fill the glasses, Taso—maybe 'tis the last service I'll be able to render to this company."

Secretly elated at the confirmation of his estimation of Corenzio's slender chance in the coming contest, Vitelli nodded indifferently. When each glass was full to the brim, he rose in his turn.

"Let each drink to his own success," he cried as he held the ruby goblet aloft. "And a pleasant damnation to the loser!"

A few minutes later the party were making their way back to the house on the hill, the merriest among them Taso Vitelli. But his laugh would have been less loud and his step less jaunty had he known of the tiny pellet which Corenzio had stealthily dropped into his wine as he had charged his glass for the final toast.

THAT night the coldly glittering stars looked down on a strange scene being enacted in the courtyard of Malecalchas' house. A score of men, stripped to shirt and trunk-hose, stood lined up with their backs against one of the encircling walls, their straining eyes fixed on the lantern held by the aged necromancer.

"The course of the race will be once round the house and through the narrow

door leading to the crypt," Malecaldas was explaining. "I will give the signal to start by blowing out the candle of this lantern. Then you will run in the darkness to the winning—or perhaps I should say the *losing*—post, for it will be from the last man that the penalty will be exacted. The patron of the race being who he is, any trick, any subterfuge, any artifice will be permissible; for the father of all knavery will not forbid his followers to practise his precepts in this momentous contest. It is each man for himself—and the Devil take the hindmost! Are you ready?"

A hoarse chorus of affirmation rose from the tense rank.

"Then watch the candle!"

Twenty pairs of straining eyes were fixed on him as he unfastened the door of the lantern, raising it until the flame of the taper within was but a few inches from his lips. For a full minute he stood motionless, his satyr-like features illuminated by the yellow glow. Each man crouched down for the first forward spring as they saw his lips purse up. Abruptly the light disappeared, and the next moment the darkened courtyard resounded with the noise of madly racing men.

Taso Vitelli, sure of his victory, ran easily at first. He had intentionally taken up his place next to Corenzio, so that he might enjoy to the full the despair of his rival. When the line of men dashed forward, Vitelli allowed the limping man to pass him, then fell in behind him, confident of being able to outstrip him any moment he chose. But it was not from choice that Corenzio ran so slowly; the pain in his sprained knee was getting worse. Unless the drug worked quickly, nothing could save him from being the last to pass the fatal threshold.

By this time they had rounded two of the corners of the house, and half the distance had been covered. Vitelli put on a little spurt of speed which brought him side by side with his rival; so little had the pace distressed him that he had breath to waste in a mocking laugh.

"How now, friend Corenzio, what ails thee?" he jeered. "Thou art running like a broken-winded mule that wears out its last days staggering round an oil-mill! You used not to be so tardy when hastening to the arms of your beloved Neinissa!"

A breathless curse broke from the lips of the other man.

"Wait—wait!" he gasped. "I will be lying in her arms when thou art howling in Hell!"

Vitelli's only reply was another laugh. Running abreast, with no sound save the quick patter of their feet and their deep breathing, they rounded the third corner of the house. Then Vitelli began steadily to draw ahead. Once he glanced back as a fragmentary gleam of moonlight through the drifting clouds lit up Corenzio's face, and the look of despair which he saw there told that the man had almost reached the end of his endurance.

"Farewell, Corenzio!" he called back. "In very sooth, thy race is nearly run! Give my respectful salutations to His Satanic Majesty when——"

His voice broke off in a little wondering gasp. What was this deathly lethargy that was stealing over him? A moment since, he had felt fit to run for miles; now his legs felt like lead, while a mist seemed to rise and eddy before his eyes, causing him to stagger like a drunken man. Corenzio saw him falter, and despair gave place to hope. With a painful effort, he increased his own speed until once more they were running level. Neck and neck, they rounded the last corner, Vitelli staggering blindly and only keeping to the track by occasionally stretching out his hand to feel the wall.

Corenzio saw his plight, and a laugh that was little more than a hoarse, gasping croak issued from his lips.

"Ha, Taso!—who is—the—broken-winded mule—now?"

"Maledizzione!"

Like lightning Vitelli's foot shot out, tripping up the other as he was about to pass him. Both men fell together in a confused, struggling heap. Corenzio threw off Vitelli's weakening grasp and strove to rise. But the other clung desperately to his leg, drew himself up, and, still struggling, the pair staggered toward the door which was the goal of the race.

Gasping, cursing, locked in an embrace which each feared to break lest the other should forestall him, they fought their way onward. The brilliant light from the open door lit up their swaying figures, throwing grotesquely elongated black shadows behind them. Together they reached the door, each striving to enter before the other. The violence of their struggles increased—they knew they fought for something even more precious than life itself.

For a time they remained wedged in the doorway, unable either to advance or retreat. Then with a mighty effort Corenzio dashed the other man's head backward against the stone. With his last remnants of strength he thrust the stunned and helpless form of his rival back, then pitched forward and literally fell through the doorway. To his swimming senses the harsh voice of Malecalchas sounded like the sweetest music as he declared:

"The last in the race is Taso Vitelli—and he must pay the price!"

THE following evening—that of the Feast of St. Walpurgis—a solitary wayfarer was making his way along the coast-road which skirts the southeastern shore of the Bay of Naples. Reaching the little village of Resina, he turned abruptly to his right and began slowly and painfully to mount the road which wound upward amongst the mounds and hillocks of gray lava. It was Taso Vitelli, on his way to keep his last tryst.

Many were the curious glances cast at his cloaked figure as he passed through the single street of the village, and one or two of the homeward-bound peasants wished him the customary *"buono viaggio."* But of these he took no heed. He looked neither to the right nor the left, walking for the most part with his eyes bent on the ground; only at rare intervals did he raise them, and then it was to gaze long and fixedly at the distant mass of Vesuvius which loomed ahead.

From a wretched, tumbledown *albergo* at the end of the village there issued, as if in bitter mockery, the chorus of the same drinking-song that he had shouted so defiantly but twenty-four hours before:

"Chi sa s'a l'autro munno n' ci vedimmo?
Chi sa s'a l'autro munno n' c' e taverna?"

With a shiver he realized the truth which lay beneath the epicurean sentiment, and he paused, half minded to join the merry company within. But a will other than his own seemed to control his movements. Mechanically he turned his back on the friendly twinkle of the lights and fixed his eyes on the flame-tinted cloud of smoke which crowned the cone of Vesuvius.

Gradually the path grew steeper and more difficult. The firm road gave place to a mere track over masses of loose ashes and blocks of lava which had once poured in a fiery torrent from the crater above. The air began to be tainted with the acrid fumes of sulfur. Thin streams of murky vapor began to sprout from the fissures in the crust of cooled lava on which he trod. The very fabric of the mountain trembled like a giant in the throes of

mortal agony. The heat became greater with every step he took.

But still he struggled upward, now making a detour to avoid some belching pit, now sinking knee-deep in fine black ashes. Panting, sweating in every pore, he gained the summit and threw himself flat on the ground to regain his breath.

When he raised his head and looked about him, he saw that he was standing on the brink of a vast pit, the furthermost lip of which was hidden by the rolling clouds of smoke which poured from it. Far below, a lake of white-hot lava heaved and eddied—a restless sea whose billows were tongues of fire, and its spray the deadly fumes of blazing sulfur. Unearthly bellowings, nerve-racking crashes, assailed his ears at intervals, and mingling with them was a bubbling roar like the boiling of a gigantic cauldron.

As he stood, faint and trembling, he became aware of a darker patch amid the whirling smoke. Slowly it took shape before his eyes, advancing toward him the while and forcing him to cringe back step by step to the verge of the fiery pit.

"Hold!" he screamed with a courage born of despair. "The race was not run fairly—I was beaten by a trick. Corenzio drugged my wine—otherwise he himself would have been the last to pass through the door."

A sound of mocking laughter issued from the cloud.

"Were you not warned beforehand that you must meet guile with guile?" said a hollow voice. "What? would you have me—the father of all knavery—discountenance the very tenets I advocate? Then indeed should I be a house divided against myself!"

Vitelli found himself forced back another step. Frenziedly he raised his voice above the roaring of the flames.

"Then, as you love trickery so much, you can not hold me to my bond!" he cried recklessly.

The advancing cloud paused.

"What mean ye?" asked the voice.

"All that the compact gives you is the last thing that passed through the door."

"And thy body, Taso Vitelli, was that last thing," said the voice. "And that I am about to claim for my own!"

"Nay!" Vitelli returned with a triumphant laugh. "*After my body came my shadow!* My shadow is the only thing to which you can lay claim—and that you are welcome to. Take it—and let me go!"

A mighty burst of laughter mingled with the subterranean thunders of the volcano. It seemed as though the Devil were not ill pleased with the artful quibble by which his disciple sought to evade his debt.

"So be it," he announced at length. "We will keep to the strict letter of the bond. From now onward thy shadow belongs to me. But"—the voice dropped to a menacing hiss as it continued—"full well thou knowest that till now no trickster has outwitted the Arch-trickster of all—myself! Thou shalt go forth into the world—a man without a shadow. But for thine own safety take heed that you confine your steps to the shady side of the street; or, better still, stir not out of doors until the sun hath set. For the Holy Inquisition is well served by its spies in Naples, and already they have cast a suspicious eye in your direction. All that, however, must be your affair. For my part thou art free!"

The cloud rolled back and Taso Vitelli staggered away from the crater.

"I thank thee, Sathanus!" he cried. "Farewell!"

"*Arrivederci!*" came the answer, with grim significance.

JOY lent wings to Vitelli's feet as he hurried from the accursed spot. He laughed aloud and sang in his delirious excitement. Had he not gained a new lease of life? Had he not outwitted the Arch-fiend himself?

The sight of the first houses of Resina caused him to moderate his transports, however, and silently as a ghost he stole through the deserted street. The moon peered out through a rift in the veil of clouds as he neared the gates of Naples, but when he glanced behind him, he saw that no familiar black outline showed on the white dust of the road. His shadow was already in the Devil's keeping!

"What of it?" he laughed aloud as he snapped his fingers in the air. "What is a shadow? Nothing—less than nothing! *Corpo di Bacco!* I wish the fiend joy of his bargain!"

Nevertheless, he waited until the moon was hidden before accosting the halberdier who guarded the city gate.

"Buona sera, amico," he said, slipping a coin into the fellow's palm. "Surely you will not refuse entry to a man who has tarried over-long with one of the fair damsels of Resina?"

The sentinel started at the sound of his voice.

"Stand ho!" he cried, suddenly lowering the point of his weapon until it was level with the other's breast. Then he raised his voice still louder. "Guard ho! Guard! Here is the very man we have been searching for!"

There was a rush of many feet and clashing of hastily caught-up weapons. Armed men emerged from the guard chamber, and an instant later Vitelli found himself surrounded by a ring of steel. Amazement at this unexpected reception gave place to dread as the officer of the watch stepped forward and touched him on the shoulder with his staff of office.

"Taso Vitelli, I arrest thee for breaking into the house of Gian Becchino, the banker, and murdering him!"

Vitelli staggered back with sagging jaw and staring eyes.

"I?" he gasped. "I murder Becchino? Art thou drunk, or moon-struck? Why, I have not set foot within the city walls since nightfall?"

The officer shrugged contemptuously.

"You had better invent a more plausible tale than *that,* when you appear before the judge!" he said grimly. "Know, then, that Neinissa was returning to the house when she heard her father's cries for help. Finding the front door locked, she roused the neighborhood and a crowd gathered. A hundred people are prepared to swear that they saw *your shadow* on the window blind at the very moment Becchino's death shriek rang out!"



Passing of a God

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

An uncanny story of surgery and the dark rites of the Black people in the land of Haiti

"YOU say that when Carswell came into your hospital over in Port au Prince his fingers looked as though they had been wound with string," said I, encouragingly.

"It is a very ugly story, that, Canevin," replied Doctor Pelletier, still reluctant, it appeared.

"You promised to tell me," I threw in.

"I know it, Canevin," admitted Doctor Pelletier of The U. S. Navy Medical Corps, now stationed here in the Virgin Islands. "But," he proceeded, "you couldn't use this story, anyhow. There are editorial *tabus,* aren't there? The thing is too—what shall I say?—too outrageous, too incredible."

"Yes," I admitted in turn, "there are *tabus,* plenty of them. Still, after hearing about those fingers, as though wound with string—why not give me the story, Pelletier; leave it to me whether or not I 'use' it. It's the story I want, mostly. I'm burning up for it!"

"I suppose it's your lookout," said my guest. "If you find it too gruesome for you, tell me and I'll quit."

I plucked up hope once more. I had been trying for this story, after getting little scraps of it which allured and intrigued me, for weeks.

"Start in," I ventured, soothingly, pushing the silver swizzel-jug after the humidor of cigarettes from which Pelletier was even now making a selection. Pelletier helped himself to the swizzel frowningly. Evidently he was torn between the desire to pour out the story of Arthur Carswell and some complication of feelings against doing so. I sat back in my wicker lounge-chair and waited.

Pelletier moved his large bulk about in his chair. Plainly now he was cogitating how to open the tale. He began, meditatively:

"I don't know as I ever heard public discussion of the malignant bodily growths except among medical people. Science knows little about them. The fact of such diseases, though, is well known to everybody, through campaigns of prevention, the life insurance companies, appeals for funds——

"Well, Carswell's case, primarily, is one of those cases."

He paused and gazed into the glowing end of his cigarette.

" 'Primarily?' " I threw in encouragingly.

"Yes. Speaking as a surgeon, that's where this thing begins, I suppose."

I kept still, waiting.

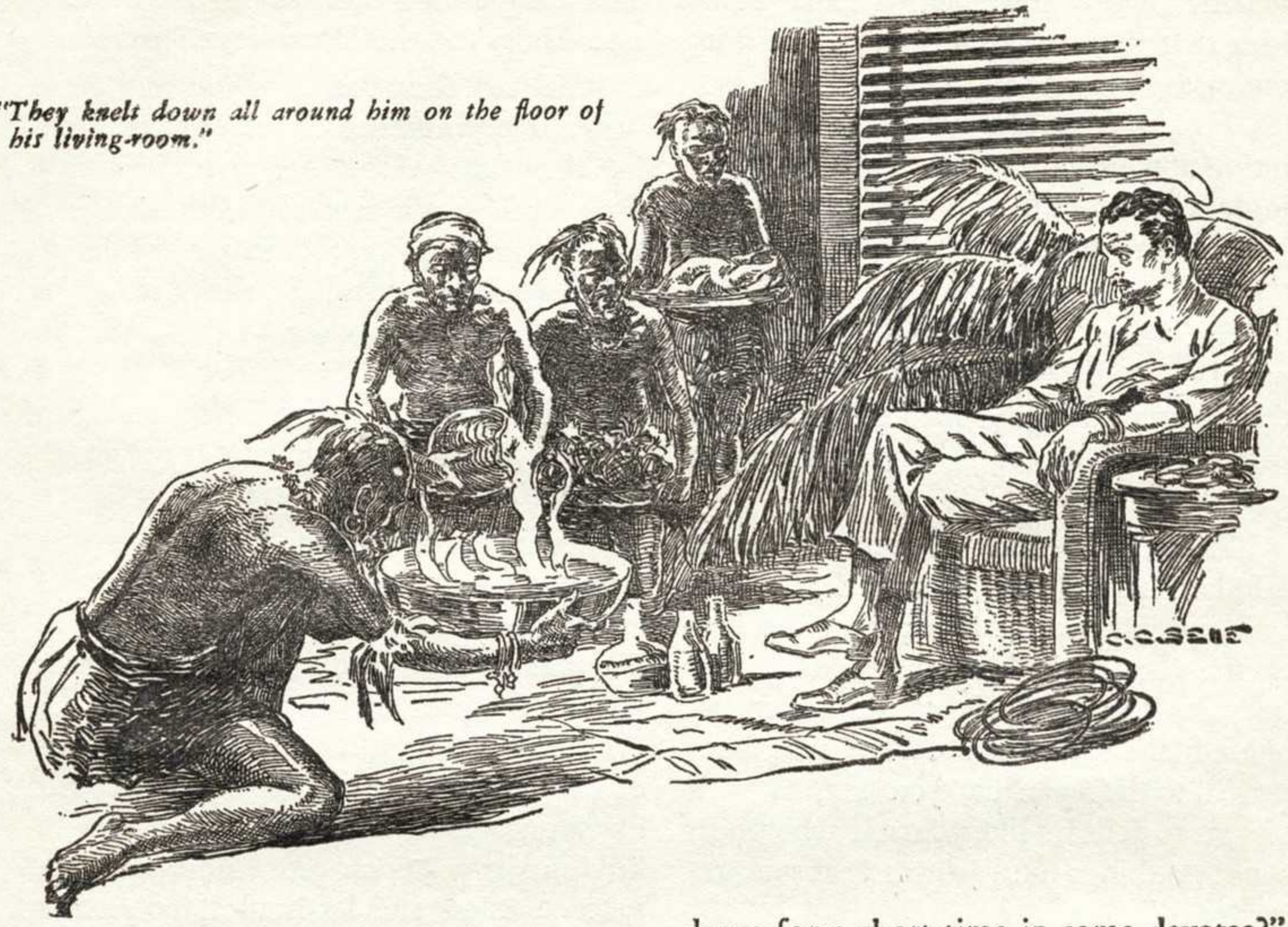
"Have you read Seabrook's book, *The Magic Island,* Canevin?" asked Pelletier suddenly.

"Yes," I answered. "What about it?"

"Then I suppose that from your own experience knocking around the West Indies and your study of it all, a good bit of that stuff of Seabrook's is familiar to you, isn't it?—the *vodu,* and the hill customs, and all the rest of it, especially over in Haiti—you could check up on a writer like Seabrook, couldn't you, more or less?"

"Yes," said I, "practically all of it was an old story to me—a very fine piece of work, however, the thing clicks all the

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"They knelt down all around him on the floor of his living-room."

way through—an honest and thorough piece of investigation."

"Anything in it new to you?"

"Yes—Seabrook's statement that there was an exchange of personalities between the sacrificial goat—at the 'baptism'—and the young Black girl, the chapter he calls: *Girl-Cry—Goat-Cry*. That, at least, was a new one on me, I admit."

"You will recall, if you read it carefully, that he attributed that phenomenon to his own personal 'slant' on the thing. Isn't that the case, Canevin?"

"Yes," I agreed, "I think that is the way he put it."

"Then," resumed Doctor Pelletier, "I take it that all that material of his—I notice that there have been a lot of story-writers using his terms lately!—is sufficiently familiar to you so that you have some clear idea of the Haitian-African demigods, like Ogoun Badagris, Damballa, and the others, taking up their residence for a short time in some devotee?"

"The idea is very well understood," said I. "Mr. Seabrook mentions it among a number of other local phenomena. It was an old negro who came up to him while he was eating, thrust his soiled hands into the dishes of food, surprized him considerably—then was surrounded by worshippers who took him to the nearest *houmfort* or *vodu*-house, let him sit on the altar, brought him food, hung all their jewelry on him, worshipped him for the time being; then, characteristically, quite utterly ignored the original old fellow after the 'possession' on the part of the 'deity' ceased and reduced him to an unimportant old pantaloon as he was before."

"That summarizes it exactly," agreed Doctor Pelletier. "That, Canevin, that kind of thing, I mean, is the real starting-place of this dreadful matter of Arthur Carswell."

"You mean——?" I barged out at

Pelletier, vastly intrigued. I had had no idea that there was *vodu* mixed in with the case.

"I mean that Arthur Carswell's first intimation that there was anything pressingly wrong with him was just such a 'possession' as the one you have recounted."

"But—but," I protested, "I had supposed—I had every reason to believe, that it was a surgical matter! Why, you just objected to telling about it on the ground that——"

"Precisely," said Doctor Pelletier, calmly. "It was such a surgical case, but, as I say, it *began* in much the same way as the 'occupation' of that old negro's body by Ogoun Badagris or whichever one of their devilish deities that happened to be, just as, you say, is well known to fellows like yourself who go in for such things, and just as Seabrook recorded it."

"Well," said I, "you go ahead in your own way, Pelletier. I'll do my best to listen. Do you mind an occasional question?"

"Not in the least," said Doctor Pelletier considerately, shifted himself to a still more pronouncedly recumbent position in my Chinese rattan lounge-chair, lit a fresh cigarette, and proceeded:

"CARSWELL had worked up a considerable intimacy with the snake-worship of interior Haiti, all the sort of thing familiar to you; the sort of thing set out, probably for the first time in English at least, in Seabrook's book; all the gatherings, and the 'baptism,' and the sacrifices of the fowls and the bull, and the goats; the orgies of the worshippers, the boom and thrill of the *rata* drums—all that strange, incomprehensible, rather silly-surfaced, deadly-underneathed worship of 'the Snake' which the Dahomeyans brought with them to old Hispaniola, now Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

"He had been there, as you may have heard, for a number of years; went there in the first place because everybody thought he was a kind of failure at home; made a good living, too, in a way nobody but an original-minded fellow like him would have thought of—shot ducks on the Léogane marshes, dried them, and exported them to New York and San Francisco to the United States' two largest Chinatowns!

"For a 'failure,' too, Carswell was a particularly smart-looking chap, smart, I mean, in the English sense of that word. He was one of those fellows who was always shaved, clean, freshly groomed, even under the rather adverse conditions of his living, there in Léogane by the salt marshes; and of his trade, which was to kill and dry ducks. A fellow can get pretty careless and let himself go at that sort of thing, away from 'home'; away, too, from such niceties as there are in a place like Port au Prince.

"He looked, in fact, like a fellow just off somebody's yacht the first time I saw him, there in the hospital in Port au Prince, and that, too, was right after a rather singular experience which would have unnerved or unsettled pretty nearly anybody.

"But not so old Carswell. No, indeed. I speak of him as 'Old Carswell,' Canevin. That, though, is a kind of affectionate term. He was somewhere about forty-five then; it was two years ago, you see, and, in addition to his being very spick and span, well groomed, you know, he looked surprizingly young, somehow. One of those faces which showed experience, but, along with the experience, a philosophy. The lines in his face were *good* lines, if you get what I mean—lines of humor and courage; no dissipation, no

let-down kind of lines, nothing of slackness such as you would see in the face of even a comparatively young beach-comber. No, as he strode into my office, almost jauntily, there in the hospital, there was nothing, nothing whatever, about him, to suggest anything else but a prosperous fellow American, a professional chap, for choice, who might, as I say, have just come ashore from somebody's yacht.

"And yet—good God, Canevin, the story that came out——!"

Naval surgeon though he was, with service in Haiti, at sea, in Nicaragua, and the China Station to his credit, Doctor Pelletier rose at this point, and, almost agitatedly, walked up and down my gallery. Then he sat down and lit a fresh cigarette.

"There is," he said, reflectively, and as though weighing his words carefully, "there is, Canevin, among various others, a somewhat 'wild' theory that somebody put forward several years ago, about the origin of malignant tumors. It never gained very much approval among the medical profession, but it has, at least, the merit of originality, and—it was new. Because of those facts, it had a certain amount of currency, and there are those, in and out of medicine, who still believe in it. It is that there are certain *nuclei,* certain masses, so to speak, of the bodily material which have persisted—not generally, you understand, but in certain cases—among certain persons, the kind who are 'susceptible' to this horrible disease, which, in the pre-natal state, did not develop fully or normally—little places in the bodily structure, that is—if I make myself clear?—which remain undeveloped.

"Something, according to this hypothesis, something like a sudden jar, or a bruise, a kick, a blow with the fist, the result of a fall, or whatnot, causes traumatism—physical injury, that is, you know—to one of the focus-places, and the undeveloped little mass of material *starts in to grow,* and so displaces the normal tissue which surrounds it.

"One objection to the theory is that there are at least two varieties, well-known and recognized scientifically; the carcinoma, which is itself subdivided into two kinds, the hard and the soft carcinomæ, and the sarcoma, which is a soft thing, like what is popularly understood by a 'tumor.' Of course they are all 'tumors,' particular kinds of tumors, malignant tumors. What lends a certain credibility to the theory I have just mentioned is the malignancy, the growing element. For, whatever the underlying reason, they grow, Canevin, as is well recognized, and this explanation I have been talking about gives a reason for the growth. The 'malignancy' is, really, that one of the things seems to have, as it were, its own life. All this, probably, you know?"

I nodded. I did not wish to interrupt. I could see that this side-issue on a scientific by-path must have something to do with the story of Carswell.

"Now," resumed Pelletier, "notice this fact, Canevin. Let me put it in the form of a question, like this: To what kind, or type, of *vodu* worshipper, does the 'possession' by one of their deities occur—from your own knowledge of such things, what would you say?"

"To the incomplete; the abnormal, to an *old* man, or woman," said I, slowly, reflecting, "or—to a child, or, perhaps, to an idiot. Idiots, ancient crones, backward children, 'town-fools' and the like, all over Europe, are supposed to be in some mysterious way *en rapport* with deity—or with Satan! It is an established peasant belief. Even among the Mahometans, the moron or idiot is 'the afflicted of God.'

There is no other better established belief along such lines of thought."

"Precisely!" exclaimed Pelletier, "and, Canevin, go back once more to Seabrook's instance that we spoke about. What type of person was 'possessed'?"

"An old doddering man," said I, "one well gone in his dotage apparently."

"Right once more! Note now, two things. First, I will admit to you, Canevin, that that theory I have just been expounding never made much of a hit with me. It might be true, but—very few first-rate men in our profession thought much of it, and I followed that negative lead and didn't think much of it, or, indeed, much about it. I put it down to the vaporings of the theorist who first thought it out and published it, and let it go at that. Now, Canevin, *I am convinced that it is true!* The second thing, then: When Carswell came into my office in the hospital over there in Port au Prince, the first thing I noticed about him —I had never seen him before, you see— was a peculiar, almost an indescribable, discrepancy. It was between his general appearance of weather-worn cleanliness, general fitness, his 'smart' appearance in his clothes—all that, which fitted together about the clean-cut, open character of the fellow; and what I can only describe as a pursiness. He seemed in good condition, I mean to say, and yet—there was something, somehow, *flabby* somewhere in his makeup. I couldn't put my finger on it, but—it was there, a suggestion of something that detracted from the impression he gave as being an upstanding fellow, a good-fellow-to-have-beside-you-in-a-pinch —that kind of person.

"THE second thing I noticed, it was just after he had taken a chair beside my desk, was his fingers, and thumbs. They were swollen, Canevin, looked sore, as though they had been wound with string. That was the first thing I thought of, being wound with string. He saw me looking at them, held them out to me abruptly, laid them side by side, his hands I mean, on my desk, and smiled at me.

" 'I see you have noticed them, Doctor,' he remarked, almost jovially. 'That makes it a little easier for me to tell you what I'm here for. It's—well, you might put it down as a "symptom".'

"I looked at his fingers and thumbs; every one of them was affected in the same way; and ended up with putting a magnifying glass over them.

"They were all bruised and reddened, and here and there on several of them, the skin was abraded, broken, *circularly* —it was a most curious-looking set of digits. My new patient was addressing me again:

" 'I'm not here to ask you riddles, Doctor,' he said, gravely, this time, 'but —would you care to make a guess at what did that to those fingers and thumbs of mine?'

" 'Well,' I came back at him, 'without knowing what's happened, it *looks* as if you'd been trying to wear about a hundred rings, all at one time, and most of them didn't fit!'

"Carswell nodded his head at me. 'Score one for the medico,' said he, and laughed. 'Even numerically you're almost on the dot, sir. The precise number was one hundred and six!'

"I confess, I stared at him then. But he wasn't fooling. It was a cold, sober, serious fact that he was stating; only, he saw that it had a humorous side, and that intrigued him, as anything humorous always did, I found out after I got to know Carswell a lot better than I did then."

"You said you wouldn't mind a few questions, Pelletier," I interjected.

"Fire away," said Pelletier. "Do you see any light, so far?"

"I was naturally figuring along with you, as you told about it all," said I. "Do I infer correctly that Carswell, having lived there—how long, four or five years or so?——"

"Seven, to be exact," put in Pelletier.

"——that Carswell, being pretty familiar with the native doings, had mixed into things, got the confidence of his Black neighbors in and around Léogane, become somewhat 'adept', had the run of the *houmforts,* so to speak—*'votre bougie, M'sieu'*—the fortune-telling at the festivals, and so forth, and—had been 'visited' by one of the Black deities? That, apparently, if I'm any judge of tendencies, is what your account seems to be leading up to. Those bruised fingers—the one hundred and six rings—good heavens, man, is it really possible?"

"Carswell told me all about that end of it, a little later—yes, that was, precisely, what happened, but—that, surprizing, incredible as it seems, is only the small end of it all. You just wait——"

"Go ahead," said I, "I am all ears, I assure you!"

"Well, Carswell took his hands off the desk after I had looked at them through my magnifying glass, and then waved one of them at me in a kind of deprecating gesture.

" 'I'll go into all that, if you're interested to hear about it, Doctor,' he assured me, 'but that isn't what I'm here about.' His face grew suddenly very grave. "Have you plenty of time?' he asked. 'I don't want to let my case interfere with anything.'

" 'Fire ahead,' says I, and he leaned forward in his chair.

" 'Doctor,' says he, 'I don't know whether or not you ever heard of me before. My name's Carswell, and I live over Léogane way. I'm an American, like yourself, as you can probably see, and, even after seven years of it, out there, duck-hunting, mostly, with virtually no White-man's doings for a pretty long time, I haven't "gone native" or anything of the sort. I wouldn't want you to think I'm one of those wasters.' He looked up at me inquiringly for my estimate of him. He had been by himself a good deal; perhaps too much. I nodded at him. He looked me in the eye, squarely, and nodded back. 'I guess we understand each other,' he said. Then he went on.

" 'Seven years ago, it was, I came down here. I've lived over there ever since. What few people know about me regard me as a kind of failure, I daresay. But—Doctor, there was a reason for that, a pretty definite reason. I won't go into it beyond your end of it—the medical end, I mean. I came down because of this.'

"He stood up then, and I saw what made that 'discrepancy' I spoke about, that 'flabbiness' which went so ill with the general cut of the man. He turned up the lower ends of his white drill jacket and put his hand a little to the left of the middle of his stomach. 'Just notice this,' he said, and stepped toward me.

"There, just over the left center of that area and extending up toward the spleen, on the left side, you know, there was a protuberance. Seen closely it was apparent that here was some sort of internal growth. It was that which had made him look flabby, stomachish.

" 'This was diagnosed for me in New York,' Carswell explained, 'a little more than seven years ago. They told me it was inoperable then. After seven years, probably, I daresay it's worse, if anything. To put the thing in a nutshell, Doctor, I had to "let go" then: I got out of a

promising business, broke off my engagement, came here. I won't expatiate on it all, but—it was pretty tough, Doctor, pretty tough. I've lasted all right, so far. It hasn't troubled me—until just lately. That's why I drove in this afternoon, to see you, to see if anything could be done.'

" 'Has it been kicking up lately?' I asked him.

" 'Yes,' said Carswell, simply. 'They said it would kill me, probably within a year or so, as it grew. It hasn't grown—much. I've lasted a little more than seven years, so far.'

" 'Come in to the operating-room,' I invited him, 'and take your clothes off, and let's get a good look at it.'

" 'Anything you say,' returned Carswell, and followed me back into the operating-room then and there.

"I had a good look at Carswell, first, superficially. That preliminary examination revealed a growth quite typical, the self-contained, not the 'fibrous' type, in the location I've already described, and about the size of an average man's head. It lay imbedded, fairly deep. It was what we call 'encapsulated.' That, of course, is what had kept Carswell alive.

"Then we put the X-rays on it, fore-and-aft, and sidewise. One of those things doesn't always respond very well to skiagraphic examination, to the X-ray, that is, but this one showed clearly enough. Inside it appeared a kind of dark, triangular mass, with the small end at the top. When Doctor Smithson and I had looked him over thoroughly, I asked Carswell whether or not he wanted to stay with us, to come into the hospital as a patient, for treatment.

" 'I'm quite in your hands, Doctor,' he told me. 'I'll stay, or do whatever you want me to. But, first,' and for the first time he looked a trifle embarrassed, 'I think I'd better tell you the story that goes with my coming here! However, speaking plainly, do you think I have a chance?'

" 'Well,' said I, 'speaking plainly, yes, there is a chance, maybe a "fifty-fifty" chance, maybe a little less. On the one hand, this thing has been let alone for seven years since original diagnosis. It's probably less operable than it was when you were in New York. On the other hand, we know a lot more, not about these things, Mr. Carswell, but about surgical technique, than they did seven years ago. On the whole, I'd advise you to stay and get ready for an operation, and, say about "forty-sixty" you'll go back to Léogane, or back to New York if you feel like it, several pounds lighter in weight and a new man. If it takes you, on the table, well, you've had a lot more time out there gunning for ducks in Léogane than those New York fellows allowed you.'

" 'I'm with you,' said Carswell, and we assigned him a room, took his 'history', and began to get him ready for his operation.

"WE DID the operation two days later, at ten-thirty in the morning, and in the meantime Carswell told me his 'story' about it.

"It seems that he had made quite a place for himself, there in Léogane, among the negroes and the ducks. In seven years a man like Carswell, with his mental and dispositional equipment, can go quite a long way, anywhere. He had managed to make quite a good thing out of his duck-drying industry, employed five or six 'hands' in his little wooden 'factory,' rebuilt a rather good house he had secured there for a song right after he had arrived, collected local antiques to add to the equipment he had brought along with him, made himself a real

home of a peculiar, bachelor kind, and, above all, got in solid with the Black People all around him. Almost incidentally I gathered from him—he had no gift of narrative, and I had to question him a great deal—he had got onto, and into, the know in the *vodu* thing. There wasn't, as far as I could get it, any aspect of it all that he hadn't been in on, except, that is, *'la chevre sans cornes'*—the goat without horns, you know—the human sacrifice on great occasions. In fact, he strenuously denied that the *voduists* resorted to that; said it was a *canard* against them; that they never, really, did such things, never had, unless back in prehistoric times, in Guinea—Africa.

"But, there wasn't anything about it all that he hadn't at his very finger-ends, and at first-hand, too. The man was a walking encyclopedia of the native beliefs, customs, and practises. He knew, too, every turn and twist of their speech. He hadn't, as he had said at first, 'gone native' in the slightest degree, and yet, without lowering his White Man's dignity by a trifle, he had got it all.

"That brings us to the specific happening, the 'story' which, he had said, went along with his reason for coming in to the hospital in Port au Prince, to us.

"It appears that his sarcoma had never, practically, troubled. Beyond noting a very gradual increase in its size from year to year, he said, he 'wouldn't know he had one.' In other words, characteristically, it never gave him any pain or direct annoyance beyond the sense of the wretched thing being there, and increasing on him, and always drawing him closer to that end of life which the New York doctors had warned him about.

"Then, it had happened only three days before he came to the hospital, he had gone suddenly unconscious one afternoon, as he was walking down his shell path to his gateway. The last thing he remembered then was being 'about four steps from the gate.' When he woke up, it was dark. He was seated in a big chair on his own front gallery, and the first thing he noticed was that his fingers and thumbs were sore and ached very painfully. The next thing was that there were flares burning all along the edge of the gallery, and down in the front yard, and along the road outside the paling fence that divided his property from the road, and in the light of these flares, there swarmed literally hundreds of negroes, gathered about him and mostly on their knees; lined along the gallery and on the grounds below it; prostrating themselves, chanting, putting earth and sand on their heads; and, when he leaned back in his chair, something hurt the back of his neck, and he found that he was being nearly choked with the necklaces, strings of beads, gold and silver coin-strings, and other kinds, that had been draped over his head. His fingers, and the thumbs as well, were covered with gold and silver rings, many of them jammed on so as to stop the circulation.

"From his knowledge of their beliefs, he recognized what had happened to him. He had, he figured, probably fainted, although such a thing was not at all common with him, going down the pathway to the yard gate, and the Blacks had supposed him to be 'possessed' as he had several times seen Black people, children, old men and women, morons, chiefly, similarly 'possessed.' He knew that, now that he was recovered from whatever had happened to him, the 'worship' ought to cease and if he simply sat quiet and took what was coming to him, they would, as soon as they realized he was 'himself' once more, leave him alone and he would get some relief from this uncomfortable set of surroundings; get rid of the necklaces and the rings; get a little privacy.

"But—the queer part of it all was that they didn't quit. No, the mob around the house and on the gallery increased rather than diminished, and at last he was put to it, from sheer discomfort—he said he came to the point where he felt he couldn't stand it all another instant—to speak up and ask the people to leave him in peace.

"They left him, he says, at that, right off the bat, immediately, without a protesting voice, but—and here was what started him on his major puzzlement—they didn't take off the necklaces and rings. No—they left the whole set of that metallic drapery which they had hung and thrust upon him right there, and, after he had been left alone, as he had requested, and had gone into his house, and lifted off the necklaces and worked the rings loose, the *next* thing that happened was that old Pa'p Josef, the local *papaloi,* together with three or four other neighboring *papalois,* witch-doctors from nearby villages, and followed by a very old man who was known to Carswell as the *hougan,* or head witch-doctor of the whole countryside thereabouts, came in to him in a kind of procession, and knelt down all around him on the floor of his living-room, and laid down gourds of cream and bottles of red rum and cooked chickens, and even a big china bowl of Tannia soup—a dish he abominated, said it always tasted like soapy water to him! —and then backed out leaving him to these comestibles.

"He said that this sort of attention persisted in his case, right through the three days that he remained in his house in Léogane, before he started out for the hospital; would, apparently, be still going on if he hadn't come in to Port au Prince to us.

"But—his coming in was not, in the least, because of this. It had puzzled him a great deal, for there was nothing like it in his experience, nor, so far as he could gather from their attitude, in the experience of the people about him, of the *papalois,* or even of the *hougan* himself. They acted, in other words, precisely as though the 'deity' supposed to have taken up his abode within him had remained there, although there seemed no precedent for such an occurrence, and, so far as he knew, he felt precisely just as he had felt right along, that is, fully awake, and, certainly, not in anything like an abnormal condition, and, very positively, not in anything like a fainting-fit!

"That is to say—he felt precisely the same as usual except that—he attributed it to the probability that he must have fallen on the ground that time when he lost consciousness going down the pathway to the gate (he had been told that passers-by had picked him up and carried him to the gallery where he had awakened, later, these Good Samaritans meanwhile recognizing that one of the 'deities' had indwelt him)—he felt the same except for recurrent, almost unbearable pains in the vicinity of his lower abdominal region.

"There was nothing surprizing to him in this accession of the new painfulness. He had been warned that that would be the beginning of the end. It was in the rather faint hope that something might be done that he had come in to the hospital. It speaks volumes for the man's fortitude, for his strength of character, that he came in so cheerfully; acquiesced in what we suggested to him to do; remained with us, facing those comparatively slim chances with complete cheerfulness.

"For—we did not deceive Carswell—the chances were somewhat slim. 'Sixty-forty' I had said, but as I afterward made clear to him, the favorable chances, as

gleaned from the mortality tables, were a good deal less than that.

"He went to the table in a state of mind quite unchanged from his accustomed cheerfulness. He shook hands good-bye with Doctor Smithson and me, 'in case,' and also with Doctor Jackson, who acted as anesthetist.

"CARSWELL took an enormous amount of ether to get him off. His consciousness persisted longer, perhaps, than that of any surgical patient I can remember. At last, however, Doctor Jackson intimated to me that I might begin, and, Doctor Smithson standing by with the retracting forceps, I made the first incision. It was my intention, after careful study of the X-ray plates, to open it up from in front, in an up-and-down direction, establish drainage directly, and, leaving the wound in the sound tissue in front of it open, to attempt to get it healed up after removing its contents. Such is the technique of the major portion of successful operations.

"It was a comparatively simple matter to expose the outer wall. This accomplished, and after a few words of consultation with my colleague, I very carefully opened it. We recalled that the X-ray had shown, as I mentioned, a triangular-shaped mass within. This apparent content we attributed to some obscure chemical coloration of the contents. I made my incisions with the greatest care and delicacy, of course. The critical part of the operation lay right at this point, and the greatest exactitude was indicated, of course.

"At last the outer coats of it were cut through, and retracted, and with renewed caution I made the incision through the inmost wall of tissue. To my surprize, and to Doctor Smithson's, the inside was comparatively dry. The gauze which the nurse attending had caused to follow the path of the knife, was hardly moistened. I ran my knife down below the original scope of that last incision, then upward from its upper extremity, greatly lengthening the incision as a whole, if you are following me.

"Then, reaching my gloved hand within this long up-and-down aperture, I felt about and at once discovered that I could get my fingers in around the inner containing wall quite easily. I reached and worked my fingers in farther and farther, finally getting both hands inside and at last feeling my fingers touch inside the posterior or rear wall. Rapidly, now, I ran the edges of my hands around inside, and, quite easily, lifted out the 'inside.' This, a mass weighing several pounds, of more or less solid material, was laid aside on the small table beside the operating-table, and, again pausing to consult with Doctor Smithson—the operation was going, you see, a lot better than either of us had dared to anticipate—and being encouraged by him to proceed to a radical step which we had not hoped to be able to take, I began the dissection from the surrounding, normal tissue, of the now collapsed walls. This, a long, difficult, and harassing job, was accomplished at the end of, perhaps, ten or twelve minutes of gruelling work, and the bag-like thing, now completely severed from the tissues in which it had been for so long imbedded, was placed also on the side table.

"Doctor Jackson reporting favorably on our patient's condition under the anesthetic, I now proceeded to dress the large aperture, and to close the body-wound. This was accomplished in a routine manner, and then, together, we bandaged Carswell, and he was taken back to his room to await awakening from the ether.

"Carswell disposed of, Doctor Jackson and Doctor Smithson left the operating-room and the nurse started in cleaning

up after the operation; dropping the instruments into the boiler, and so on—a routine set of duties. As for me, I picked up the shell in a pair of forceps, turned it about under the strong electric operating-light, and laid it down again. It presented nothing of interest for a possible laboratory examination.

"Then I picked up the more or less solid contents which I had laid, very hastily, and without looking at it—you see, my actual removal of it had been done inside, in the dark for the most part and by the sense of feeling, with my hands, you will remember—I picked it up; I still had my operating-gloves on to prevent infection when looking over these specimens, and, still, not looking at it particularly, carried it out into the laboratory.

"Canevin"—Doctor Pelletier looked at me somberly through the very gradually fading light of late afternoon, the period just before the abrupt falling of our tropic dusk—"Canevin," he repeated, "honestly, I don't know how to tell you! Listen now, old man, do something for me, will you?"

"Why, yes—of course," said I, considerably mystified. "What is it you want me to do, Pelletier?"

"My car is out in front of the house. Come on home with me, up to my house, will you? Let's say I want to give you a cocktail! Anyhow, maybe you'll understand better when you are there, *I want to tell you the rest up at my house, not here*. Will you please come, Canevin?"

I looked at him closely. This seemed to me a very strange, an abrupt, request. Still, there was nothing whatever unreasonable about such a sudden whim on Pelletier's part.

"Why, yes, certainly I'll go with you, Pelletier, if you want me to."

"Come on, then," said Pelletier, and we started for his car.

The doctor drove himself, and after we had taken the first turn in the rather complicated route from my house to his, on the extreme airy top of Denmark Hill, he said, in a quiet voice:

"Put together, now, Canevin, certain points, if you please, in this story. Note, kindly, how the Black people over in Léogane acted, according to Carswell's story. Note, too, that theory I was telling you about; do you recollect it clearly?"

"Yes," said I, still more mystified.

"Just keep those two points in mind, then," added Doctor Pelletier, and devoted himself to navigating sharp turns and plodding up two steep roadways for the rest of the drive to his house.

WE WENT in and found his houseboy laying the table for his dinner. Doctor Pelletier is unmarried, keeps a hospitable bachelor establishment. He ordered cocktails, and the houseboy departed on this errand. Then he led me into a kind of office, littered with medical and surgical paraphernalia. He lifted some papers off a chair, motioned me into it, and took another near by. "Listen, now!" he said, and held up a finger at me.

"I took that thing, as I mentioned, into the laboratory," said he. "I carried it in my hand, with my gloves still on, as aforesaid. I laid it down on a table and turned on a powerful light over it. It was only then that I took a good look at it. It weighed several pounds at least, was about the bulk and heft of a full-grown coconut, and about the same color as a hulled coconut, that is, a kind of medium brown. As I looked at it, I saw that it was, as the X-ray had indicated, vaguely triangular in shape. It lay over on one of its sides under that powerful light, and—Canevin, so help me God"—Doctor Pelletier leaned toward me, his face working, a great seriousness in his eyes—"it moved, Canevin," he mur-

mured; "and, as I looked—the thing *breathed!* I was just plain dumfounded. A biological specimen like that—does not move, Canevin! I shook all over, suddenly. I felt my hair prickle on the roots of my scalp. I felt chills go down my spine. Then I remembered that here I was, after an operation, in my own biological laboratory. I came close to the thing and propped it up, on what might be called its logical base, if you see what I mean, so that it stood as nearly upright as its triangular conformation permitted.

"And then I saw that it had faint yellowish markings over the brown, and that what you might call its skin was moving, and—as I stared at the thing, Canevin—two things like little arms began to move, and the top of it gave a kind of convulsive shudder, and it opened straight at me, Canevin, a pair of eyes and looked me in the face.

"Those eyes—my God, Canevin, those eyes! They were eyes of something more than human, Canevin, something incredibly evil, something vastly old, sophisticated, cold, immune from anything except pure evil, the eyes of something that had been worshipped, Canevin, from ages and ages out of a past that went back before all known human calculation, eyes that showed all the deliberate, lurking wickedness that has ever been in the world. The eyes closed, Canevin, and the thing sank over onto its side, and heaved and shuddered convulsively.

"It was sick, Canevin; and now, emboldened, holding myself together, repeating over and over to myself that I had a case of the quavers, of post-operative 'nerves,' I forced myself to look closer, and as I did so I got from it a faint whiff of ether. Two tiny, ape-like nostrils, over a clamped-shut slit of a mouth, were exhaling and inhaling; drawing in the good, pure air, exhaling ether fumes. It popped into my head that Carswell had consumed a terrific amount of ether before he went under; we had commented on that, Doctor Jackson particularly. I put two and two together, Canevin, remembered we were in Haiti, where things are not like New York, or Boston, or Baltimore! Those negroes had believed that the 'deity' had not come out of Carswell, do you see? *That* was the thing that held the edge of my mind. The thing stirred uneasily, put out one of its 'arms,' groped about, stiffened.

"I reached for a near-by specimen-jar, Canevin, reasoning, almost blindly, that if this thing were susceptible to ether, it would be susceptible to—well, my gloves were still on my hands, and—now shuddering so that I could hardly move at all, I had to force every motion—I reached out and took hold of the thing—it felt like moist leather—and dropped it into the jar. Then I carried the carboy of preserving alcohol over to the table and poured it in till the ghastly thing was entirely covered, the alcohol near the top of the jar. It writhed once, then rolled over on its 'back,' and lay still, the mouth now open. Do you believe me, Canevin?"

"I have always said that I would believe anything, on proper evidence," said I, slowly, "and I would be the last to question a statement of yours, Pelletier. However, although I have, as you say, looked into some of these things perhaps more than most, it seems, well——"

Doctor Pelletier said nothing. Then he slowly got up out of his chair. He stepped over to a wall-cupboard and returned, a wide-mouthed specimen-jar in his hand. He laid the jar down before me, in silence.

I looked into it, through the slightly discolored alcohol with which the jar, tightly sealed with rubber-tape and sealing-wax, was filled nearly to the brim. There, on the jar's bottom, lay such a thing as Pelletier had described (a thing

which, if it had been "seated," upright, would somewhat have resembled that representation of the happy little godling 'Billiken' which was popular twenty years ago as a desk ornament), a thing suggesting the sinister, the unearthly, even in this dessicated form. I looked long at the thing.

"Excuse me for even seeming to hesitate, Pelletier," said I, reflectively.

"I can't say that I blame you," returned the genial doctor. "It is, by the way, the first and only time I have ever tried to tell the story to anybody."

"And Carswell?" I asked. "I've been intrigued with that good fellow and his difficulties. How did he come out of it all?"

"He made a magnificent recovery from the operation," said Pelletier, "and afterward, when he went back to Léogane, he told me that the negroes, while glad to see him quite as usual, had quite lost interest in him as the throne of a 'divinity'."

"H'm," I remarked, "it would seem, that, to bear out——"

"Yes," said Pelletier, "I have always regarded that fact as absolutely conclusive. Indeed, how otherwise could one possibly account for—*this?*" He indicated the contents of the laboratory jar.

I nodded my head, in agreement with him. "I can only say that—if you won't feel insulted, Pelletier—that you are singularly open-minded, for a man of science! What, by the way, became of Carswell?"

The houseboy came in with a tray, and Pelletier and I drank to each other's good health.

"He came in to Port au Prince," replied Pelletier after he had done the honors. "He did not want to go back to the States, he said. The lady to whom he had been engaged had died a couple of years before; he felt that he would be out of touch with American business. The fact is—he had stayed out here too long, too continuously. But, he remains an 'authority' on Haitian native affairs, and is consulted by the High Commissioner. He knows, literally, more about Haiti than the Haitians themselves. I wish you might meet him; you'd have a lot in common."

"I'll hope to do that," said I, and rose to leave. The houseboy appeared at the door, smiling in my direction.

"The table is set for two, sar," said he.

Doctor Pelletier led the way into the dining-room, taking it for granted that I would remain and dine with him. We are informal in St. Thomas, about such matters. I telephoned home and sat down with him.

Pelletier suddenly laughed—he was half-way through his soup at the moment. I looked up inquiringly. He put down his soup spoon and looked across the table at me.

"It's a bit odd," he remarked, "when you stop to think of it! There's one thing Carswell doesn't know about Haiti and what happens there!"

"What's that?" I inquired.

"That—thing—in there," said Pelletier, indicating the office with his thumb in the way artists and surgeons do. "I thought he'd had troubles enough without *that* on his mind, too."

I nodded in agreement and resumed my soup. Pelletier has a cook in a thousand. . . .

Tales of the Werewolf Clan....

BY H. WARNER MUNN



3. *The Master Has a Narrow Escape*

1. The Leather Cannon

IT WAS noon of a pleasant October day in the year of our Lord, 1640. The sun in its course over northwestern Germany laid warm beams impartially upon warring Catholic and Lutheran alike. Many years of war had made their marks in deep impressions upon the countryside, and upon the countyfolk as well. Children had been born while war raged and grown up knowing no other sort of existence; the maiden to lead a life of shame in the train of one of the numerous armies, the strong man to become a pillager and rob others as his own heritage had been snatched from him. Life had grown crude and hard.

The sun passed on, illuminating charred towers, forsaken cities, plundered cathedrals; fields long fallen knew the healing glow, and little green things sprouting between the cobblestones of deserted villages rejoiced that the crushing foot of man no longer troubled them.

The noxious weed of intolerance which had sprouted on St. Bartholomew's Eve had flowered and cast its blight over all Europe, and its far-flung roots were thrust deep in German soil.

Directly over a small sandy hill the sunbeams streamed down into an excavation which had converted the elevation into a rude fortalice.

The pit was roughly twenty feet deep by thirty in length. Crude ladders led

here and there from the bottom of the pit to a firing-platform which ran around the sides of the hole, about five feet lower than the rim. In places the loose sand and turf had caved down, forming mounds of earth upon the platform. But even so, a man might yet crouch low and be unobserved by any one, for the hill was the highest point in the immediately surrounding country.

At two sides lay, crescent-like, a thick beech wood, and on the other, perhaps a mile distant, the ruins of a village flamed and crackled. A cloud of smoke drifted idly toward the hill in a faint breeze, which also bore the distant report of a musketoon or blunderbuss.

The sparse stubble of a cornfield pricked up, reaped before its time by starving soldiery, but it was a straggling crop that had sprung up by itself untended by man.

It had once been a field of battle, and in spots, more green than the rest, spikes of stalks grew up through the white ribs of contestants who had fallen there and had never been removed.

The sun moved on its course and an hour passed before any sound broke the stillness of the sandpit. An unmistakably feminine voice asked: "What news, Jorian? Are they coming back?"

A young man who had been lying very still beneath a low part of the rim, looking out toward the burning village, sighed heavily without answering, and crouching, limped toward one of the ladders. One leg was bandaged with bloody rags and he winced as his weight came upon it. He had been shot through the calf a week before and the wound had developed infection and was slow to heal.

He came across the pit and stood before his companion without raising his eyes from the sand at his feet, while he clicked his dagger nervously to and fro in its sheath.

She, a girl under twenty, with long fair hair in braids wound around her head, looked at him sharply with her large blue eyes.

"Speak, Jorian Yonge! What is the matter? Are they coming? Come! Do you think me a camp trull to tremble at bad news?"

This stung him and he raised his eyes. She saw that his face was haggard and strained, as he replied.

"They will never come, Hanne; the White Bears were stronger and my countrymen are dead!"

Without showing emotion, she said: "And that means?"

"Who knows? If they think to follow the tracks backward they will find us. We can not leave here until night or they will surely see us. If we are not noticed by then—there are still two horses in the beechwood——"

"And then——?"

"I have friends in the Spanish Netherlands; we will go there where there is no fighting. I will find you shelter and employment and you can go your way and I mine."

She looked at him quizzically.

"Jorian, you saved my life months ago, from the mercenaries who killed my family. You have since kept me at your side and saved me from harm in war and insult in camp. Comrades are we, Jorian! I have learned to fight beside you, to cook for you, to speak your language. You have never spoken a word of love to me, nor have I sought it. I do not seek it now.

"We are companions, Jorian, and you shall not put me from you! Jorian, there are no separations for us two; our ways lie together!"

The young man's face flushed under the tan and dirt; he was about to speak

when a noise upon the hill's outer slope startled him to silence.

He snatched up a short bell-mouthed gun from a small pile of similar weapons and scuttled up the ladder, hardly limping in his hurry.

The girl heard him call, "Stop where you are!" as he leveled his blunderbuss, but flying to his side, she paused.

High and shrill rang a childish cry. "Don't you hurt my father!"

JORIAN leapt over the rim and reappeared almost at once, supporting an aged man, swart and wrinkled in the face, gray-haired, eyes bloodshot and mumbling vacantly to himself as though stunned by horror. He staggered as he walked and a little girl, about ten years old, who followed him, clung tightly to his hand.

They looked toward the ruined village; nothing stirred there now and all seemed very quiet and peaceful, so they took the old man and child down the ladder.

Noticing how his eyes glistened at the sight of a lump of dark bread, partly ground bark powdered to a coarse flour and the rest rough corn meal, the girl broke it and shared between the oldster and the child their meager store.

After this had been disposed of and washed down with thin, sour wine which Jorian had discovered in a cask supposed to be water, as it was marked, they seemed much refreshed.

The oldster spoke to the younger man in rapid German, but, he understanding but little, the German girl, Hanne, made reply.

"Swedish?" asked the oldster, nodding toward Jorian.

"Yes," said the girl, "he was one of a company of Lutheran Swedes that were camped here this past week to rest and hide from a company of marauders who call themselves the White Bears. This morning, they heard such a doleful crying from yon village that they could not keep away. They would not let me go and Jorian was too lame."

"My poor dear," said the oldster, "your friends are all dead. I and my daughter were in the village when the White Bears attacked the defenseless people, and we escaped only because they had not reached the hut where I was hiding, before the Swedes came up. We ran into the bushes during the fighting and hid. Later when no one was looking our way we came this way to hide, not knowing that any one was here.

"I know the White Bears well. They are brigands without any discipline in their dealings with the helpless. They treat men and women like beasts. Those who have money are their enemies. Those who have none are punished because they have it not. Their leader is a grim brute called 'Bloody' Boris Balta.

"Once they served as mercenaries under Tilly and Pappenheim; now they fight for themselves and have committed unspeakable outrages everywhere. They have driven human being naked into the streets of their villages they have taken, after their flesh has been pierced with needles or cut to the bone with saws. Others they have scalded with boiling water and hunted with fierce dogs.

"People so poor that they are forced to live on grass, leaves and bones that they have broken to bits and boiled for food, are tortured to force them to disclose treasures which it is plain they have not.

"Do I think they will come here? Perhaps. Maybe not. Who can tell? They are very busy now.

"I supposed your Swedes came from the woods and I followed their tracks. The White Bears may do the same. We

ought to be preparing for them. Seven musketoons, you say? That is very good. I see you also have a Swedish leather cannon. Those are the most effective weapons of their size that I have ever seen. Let us mount it pointing at the village, so if they come we will be able to give them a hot welcome!"

Jorian agreed, and as the three older members were working, he said: "Did you ever see Lennart Torstenson, who invented that? No? He is the greatest of generals, and the quickest of wit, save only our hero king. He discovered that our artillery was too heavy and cumbersome to be placed quickly, so he had a number of pieces made like this.

"Of course you know that it is a light steel tube wrapped and bound with strips of wet rawhide. When the hide dries it tightens and the cannon is then strong enough for a smaller charge than that used in the regular artillery. They weigh about seventy-five pounds, and one is easily carried on a man's shoulder to places where no other cannon can go. Our company made this one and mounted it, as you see, upon a tripod of saplings. It has been a great help to us in a pinch when we had to retreat or advance quickly.

"Are you really afraid that they will come? There are two horses in the beeches down below, if we can leave here unseen after dark."

The girl, Hanne, translated and was answered.

"If you have horses, we can strike a bargain. I will help you, if you will help me. Let us go down into the shade while we talk. Achsah!"

The child came up the ladder.

"Yes, father?"

"Stay here and keep watch for us. If you see the bad men coming this way let us know at once."

THE sun had perceptibly declined toward the west, as the three took their seats at the shady end of the pit. Here were piled tier upon tier of iron-bound chests, and seating himself upon one, the oldster fished out a pipe from an inner pocket and began to fill it, when Hanne stopped him.

"Those chests are filled with gunpowder, Herr——?"

"Gunther," nodded the oldster, laying down his unlighted pipe, "Gottfried Gunther is my name, though my great-grandfather, whom I remember dimly, said that his father was French and had a French name, Gunnar. There were a lot of brothers then and a terrible thing happened which I was never told about, so that they separated and went to different countries, changing their names there to conform with the languages that they had to learn. I have never seen any of them but I heard from one somewhere in Russia, who had the name of Naakve Gunnarsson."

"That sounds Swedish or Danish," commented Jorian.

"Maybe it is," said Gunther, indifferently. "I only know he was somewhere in the North. He wrote me a long letter before the war and wanted me to come up and help him make trouble for some people in a place he hated. Ponkert, in Bohemia or Hungary, I don't remember which. Ever hear of it? He said that was where we all came from once."

The two shook their heads.

"Well, I was a stout burgher then in Magdeburg, and I wasn't going to drop everything to hunt the crane for nothing a day, so I stayed at home and minded my own business and never heard from him again. It was just a little after that when the trouble started.

"I was unmarried then, and had a small butcher shop of my own with no cares, debts or enemies as far as I knew.

It was back in 1618, when I began to suffer with nightmares. I began to dream that something dreadful was going to happen, was coming nearer and nearer all the time; I seemed to see a black cloud that wasn't altogether a cloud, but something alive like nothing I ever saw or heard of before!

"Just before this thing came near enough for me to make out what it was, I would always wake up, with a death sweat on me, and I thought it would pass and be forgotten.

"But one night I didn't wake up in time, or maybe I was awake and actually saw what I thought I dreamed about! God! I have prayed night after night that it was a dream, but even yet I don't know, for after that it never came again.

"I woke, or thought that I awoke, and saw a horrible little man in a black cloak, all huddled up on the foot of my bed. His eyes gleamed like phosphorus in the dark, and I could make out faintly that he had a very stern impressive look that commanded more respect than if he had been a giant instead of a dwarf.

"He said, 'Gottfried Gunther, I would have called upon you before, but I have been very much occupied in France and England, and have not been able to give Jean Gunnar's children the attention they deserve.' (My great-grandfather's father was named Jean, but I did not know that then, and that is why I do not know if I dreamed this thing.) 'I have just finished with France and mean to have a little sport here. Go where you wish, do what you may, you belong to me, Gottfried Gunther, and you can not escape. Know this also, wherever you go, calamity, death and sorrow will be your companions.'

"It has been as he said. I was about your age then, young man; I am fifty-five now and look as well as feel ninety. For twenty-five years I have been hunted over poor suffering Germany. I have tried to get out of the country and have always been turned back. I know that I am doomed to die here and I feel that not until my death is accomplished will my beloved land be free from wars and pestilence.

"I believe that the devil has got a hold upon me, but I can think of no reason that he should have power over me, based upon any act of mine.

"He called himself the Master and seemed very angry when I implied that I had never heard of him.

" 'You will!' he squeaked, in a very high voice, and his cloak lifted like a pair of great black wings. 'You will hear more than a little before you see me again. Mind now! Go to your window and you will see my sign of menace hanging in the sky!'

"Then it seemed that he grew bloated beneath his cloak, which quivered and twitched as his body puffed out; his face grew thin and pointed and before I realized what was taking place, a monstrous leather-winged bat huddled clicking its teeth at me, while sharp jet-black talons tore the bed coverings.

"Its bulk filled the window and it flew away. I thought I heard a high voice chirp, 'I am your Master and foe of all the world!' and I awoke.

"I ran to the window; a bloody hue suffused the sky where flamed a long-tailed comet. Then I believed my dream was true!

"You must know as well as I, that comets forecast terrible coming events. If ever there was a doubt, this comet would dispel it, as also the one which flamed on St. Bartholomew's bloody night. The great Luther himself says:

The heathen write that the Comet may arise from material causes; but God creates not one that does not foretoken a sure calamity.

"Perhaps you have heard the rime that a couple of Swiss Lutheran preachers put forth when this comet was first seen:

Eight things there be a Comet brings,
When it on high doth horrid range;
Wind, Famine, Plague and Death to Kings,
War, Earthquake, Floods and Direful Change.

"Just a little later the Protestants rose in rebellion in Bohemia and this terrible war began.

"You both were not born then, you know of no condition but war and so it seems natural to you; but to me who had lived in peace the change was dreadful. In the last few years I have been a wanderer and I have seen things that seem impossible. Three-quarters of the population of Germany are dead. You know how people are starving, how villages by hundreds are flat to their foundations, and others without an inhabitant, but do you know in places that men are no better than beasts? These very White Bears are cannibals! They eat the men and women they capture, if they lack other meat!

"I was in Worms when this very band was attacked and dispersed, as they were cooking in a great cauldron human legs and arms, which they had obtained from criminals cut down from the gallows. They are wild Croats, Bohemians, Wends, Wallons, renegades of all types, equal in nothing but ferocity and pitilessness.

"It did not take long for man to retrograde. Pestilence, the Black Death, followed the comet's trail. None but the vilest of men had sufficient contempt for death to dig the graves of the plague-infected and to tend the sick. Some were heartless enough to infect others that their business might continue, and they scattered infected matter along the streets to keep the pestilence at its height and themselves in luxury.

"Too, these ravens, as they were called, would seek people who had enemies and for a bribe would snatch these enemies away and hustle them off to some hospital, where they were herded in with plague sufferers and soon died from despair or sickness, unless they could pay more than the previous offer.

"If one resisted on the way, they shouted out that he was delirious from suffering, and no one would help!

"These grave-diggers and nurses were drawn from desperate criminals and released galley slaves, so weary of life that any other existence than that in the chains was acceptable.

"At Magdeburg in 1625, I lost my maid through these men. I had sent her to a public house to fetch beer, where she met a company of grave-diggers and plague attendants, one of whom seized her and forced her to dance with him.

"At the end of the dance he threw his cloak over her head, breathed in her face and said in a rough voice: 'Ha, wench, that will do for you; you will have to pay for it!' She was so terrified that she fell ill as soon as she returned home and died the night after.

"I was not married then. I met my wife during the siege of Magdeburg by Wallenstein in 1629. She was one of the peasant girls from outside the city, that had come in for shelter. We always kept our cattle inside the city walls and often inside the houses, besides which we had a large herd of swine. She used to come to my butcher shop for meat, and we talked and laughed and had fine times while the enemy was pounding at the walls.

"Let me tell you, young people, it is the peasants who suffer most in these wars. In the beginning they are poor and are glad to have the chance of enriching themselves by plunder, but they support themselves the while by their pay as mercenaries.

"The nobles, also, who are so numerous and grind us down, take advantage of the opportunity to indulge their private grudges and robberies.

"Then comes along some leader of ability like Wallenstein that can handle both nobles and peasants, and keeps them in his service by indulging their evil instincts. But afterward, what?

"Those of the peasants that hang onto their farms support all the rest. Their food is stolen, their women abused, their men taken to fight. No hospitals take care of them. It is cheaper to hire a new recruit than to cure an old one.

"And afterward again the peasant becomes a slave, not daring to lift his head and look his brutal lord in the face. It has been thus before, it will be so now. If you want to live and be happy, Europe is no place for you. You must seek some new land and begin all over again.

"Well, I wouldn't let the peasant girl go back again when the siege was over. We decided that the worst had come and gone, and that we would marry. So our love affair that had dragged along and made seven months of imprisonment happy ended with that. Not that we weren't happy then! Don't let me frighten you, young woman. It's just an old man's way of talking, that's all.

"Wallenstein gave up in disgust, and took his mercenaries away, and the next year was the happiest in my life. There were rumors of wars but none came near us.

"Gustavus Adolphus, your Swedish king, was avoiding a vast horde of men commanded by Pappenheim and Tilly. There were a number of Swedish soldiers in Magdeburg, at that time, and Tilly attacked our city to force the Lutherans to come to our assistance. Your fellow Swedes under Dietrich von Falkenburg swore to hold out to the death, and we burghers agreed with high enthusiasm and manned the walls.

"That was in March of 1631, and we held out against terrible odds until May twentieth. Our food was almost entirely gone at the beginning of the siege. At its end people were feeding upon grass and leaves. In one park at least, the very bark was stripped from the trees, and if some one should chance to trap a rat or small bird, a dozen were ready to snatch it from him.

"A woman was discovered to have fed upon her own child and the sharp edge of the headsman's ax sated her hunger. That was early in May; before the city fell, many starving wretches had maintained their worthless lives in similar manners.

"But we would not give in. That way meant death for all. Every day we looked for help, but none came. We could not know that it would never come; that the cowardly Elector of Saxony would not help your brave king, and so we fought on and grew weak and failed and Pappenheim took the city by storm.

"Day and night, went on an unceasing din of wild sounds, the clashing of swords, the shouting of battle cries, the groans of the dying and the crash of falling stones and timbers and crumbling walls. The air was full of smoke from fires started by the red-hot balls that were hurled among us. Crumbling mortar rained down from the ramparts where the missiles struck. They even rigged up an old stone-hurler like those the ancients used; some called it a trebuchet and some a mangonel, I don't know what the real name was. I was a butcher, not a scholar. But they hurled in dead men and dead horses over the walls, hoping to start an epidemic.

"We sent out a spy, in hopes that he could sneak through the lines and reach

Gustavus Adolphus, but they caught him and early the next morning we heard a screaming high in the air, where soared our spy, still living! They had bound him hand and foot and fired him into the city, where he struck on one of the towers of our beautiful cathedral and fell to the pavement below, crushed, leaving a blotch upon the fair masonry carvings.

"After that we sent out no more spies.

"I see your powder here is the corn (granulated) type. One of the more friendly disposed of our captors told me after the city had been captured, that they had been making their own powder on the spot. They said that this serpentine powder was very weak, but we within Magdeburg found it strong enough to beat down our walls; but before they did it, they suffered and so did we.

"They fired balls of granite, of iron and of lead. They heated iron balls red-hot and rolled them into their cannon muzzles, where they ignited the powder and the glowing missile was hurled among our narrow crooked streets and old wooden buildings.

"Eventually, however, a breach was made in the wall and Tilly's men rushed for it. We were ready and waiting. Plumes of smoke mounted high from the fires where we melted lead and pitch. We hurried the kettles to the edges of the gap, while other townsmen met the mercenaries and contested the way.

"Men shrieked in agony, burned and scalded also with boiling oil, and blinded by barrels of unslaked lime that we poured down upon them!

"Then there was a lull, but they came again and we had not time or material or men to beat them back. May 20th, they stormed the walls and Magdeburg fell. Mighty Magdeburg, which had laughed at Wallenstein and which we thought impregnable!

"TILLY'S mercenaries were crazy for plunder and rapine and knew no law or master, when they had conquered, except their own brutal desires. They wanted money and revenge for their dead. They were filled with blood-lust, and more than all the rest, they wanted women. All were to be found in Magdeburg.

"Against orders, the wild Croats rushed up and down the streets massacring every man they met and throwing firebrands into the houses until smoke and flame arose on all sides. The wood and plaster structures were destroyed; only our twin-spired cathedral, the churches and stonebuilt houses stood intact.

"My wife and I had fled with a large crowd of about four thousand people into the cathedral for shelter, and the doors were barred.

"The conquerors respected our sanctuary, but not that of the churches, one of which we could see, when they burst into it and killed many women huddled there.

"One whole day they plundered and killed. Tilly—the devil, the murderer—came into Magdeburg the following morning. He sat a bony charger before our refuge and promised us security, while looking over the ruins.

"He was a tall haggard-looking man, dressed in a short slashed green satin jacket, with a long red feather on his high crowned hat, with large bright eyes peering from beneath his deeply furrowed brow; a stiff mustache under his pointed nose.

"We had no choice in the matter. The cathedral doors were opened and we four thousand came out, pale, hungry and weak. We found that we were almost all that was left of the population. There were twenty thousand stark bodies in the streets, and the Elbe was lined with corpses of those who had fled fire and

sword, only to drown in the river. I heard Tilly remark to an officer near by, as we marched past, that 'no such a siege has been seen since the destruction of Troy and Jerusalem.'

"We went forth unharmed, under the protection of strict orders in our favor, and we scattered in search of food.

"Later I joined a small band of soldiers, while my wife became one of the many camp followers, with the difference that she was faithful to me alone, and did not sell her favors to any one, like most of the other women.

"Achsah there was born on the march one day; I lagged behind with her mother, and later rejoined my company. They followed still while we fighting men fought over most of Germany's bishoprics and palatinates at one time or another, and when she had grown to be eight years old, the three of us came back again to Magdeburg.

"Rude huts had been rebuilt around the Cathedral and we settled in one and tried to start life over. Soon dreams came again and I felt unsafe.

"Shortly after, our community was raided by brigands, and my wife was killed by a looter. We have since wandered in fear of our persecutor, the Master."

THE old man paused. His story, with numerous pauses for translations to Jorian, had lasted until the sun was near the western hills.

"Gunther," said Jorian, "did you ever here of Wineland, the fertile country in the West, which Leif Ericsson discovered? I have heard that it has been settled now by the English. Surely that is far enough away, so that if we could get there we would all be safe from this Master you fear."

"Wineland? Wineland?" Hanne knitted her brows, then suddenly smiled. "I know what you mean, Jorian, but it is called America, after Amerigus who discovered it."

"It is not," defended the young Swede stoutly. "This Amerigus is a cheat."

"Children, you are both wrong," Gunther put in. "America was discovered by Kristofer Kolon, but even there I would not feel safe. The Master would surely follow!"

The reaction to this statement was precipitating a very pretty quarrel, when suddenly a low call from the platform above hushed the three.

"Father! Bad men are coming!" The little girl came down the ladder.

At once the dispute was forgotten. Swarming up the ladders, the three crouched low and peered toward the village. Many men were visible, moving in little clumps and knots of fighters, that marched with two or three men armed with musketoons or arquebuses, in the center with perhaps a dozen others bearing pikes and halberds, surrounding for the gunners' protection while they reloaded their clumsy weapons.

It did not behoove men, in numbers or alone, to walk unwarily in Germany at that time.

They were moving steadily across the fallow fields toward the hillock, and Gunther wrung his hands in dismay.

"What are we to do? Where can my little girl be safe?" he moaned to himself, and then with sudden resolution turned to the others.

"Take Achsah," he said, "and flee to the beechwood, bending low that ye may not be seen, and by firing off these guns already loaded they will think that many men are here and will come slowly on, giving you three time to escape."

"How about yourself?" asked Hanne. "Are we to run like cowards and leave you to fight our battles? We will die

with you or flee with you, but we will not separate!"

Jorian nodded vigorously, when statement and answer were translated.

"We stick!" he said, succinctly, and lit the end of a piece of rope, blowing the coal in readiness for firing the cannon.

"Ah, you are brave!" Gunther smiled sadly. "Is it my fault that this curse lies upon me? Think upon our situation. Over yonder swarm the brigands. They are bound to capture us wherever we may flee. For reasons of my own, I know they are searching for me.

"Last night, too, I had another waking dream, in which I was marked today as the Master's prey. I think I can cheat him, and I am going to try. Somewhere he lurks, biding his time, until it is dark when he can strike! I have never seen him in daylight, which I believe he fears, so until actual sundown we are safe.

"I believe that I have a plan that will save you, and if you promise to take my little Achsah with you, somewhere that will be secure, where you can give her Christian upbringing and swear to guard her always, I will make you rich besides ridding you of immediate pursuit."

The two looked at each other. Hanne nodded slowly and Jorian replied.

"We are in poverty and have little choice. If it is your wish and you have money, give us enough to go to——"

Gunther raised a hand in a peremptory gesture for silence.

"Do not say whither ye go! Who knows where open wide the Master's ears for our speech? Here is money; go, and go at once!"

From his rags, he drew out a broad leather belt, which he handed to Hanne.

"Haste ye now to the beech grove!" he commanded.

She ran down the hill, darting from bush to thicket, bending low to avoid discovery from the brigands who straggled across the field.

"Hark ye, Yonge! Guard her well! Watch over my girl, as I guard ye today. That belt is filled with gold. Spend with care and run, Swede, run!"

Jorian leapt with the word and disappeared among the beeches.

The little maid had sat quietly in the pit below, and absorbed in her own amusements had not listened to the low conversation above; so she looked up in surprize as her father knelt and removed her scarlet coat. He strained her to his breast in a crushing passionate embrace, murmuring guttural words of endearment.

"Go thou into the beechwood, *liebchen,*" he said, after an agonized moment of yearning love. "Find the pretty lady and the big man."

"Oh, a game! A game!" she crowed ecstatically and would have set out at once over the edge of the sand-pit, but turned back.

"Come! You come too! You find!"

But Gottfried Gunther shook his large head. His brow was furrowed with anxiety; already he could hear the high conversation of the brigands and the sun's round edge was nicked ragged with the trees upon the western hills, but he forced a smile.

"Father will come and find you all, dear. Won't that be fun?"

She chuckled and climbed up the bank and sat there frowning.

"Men come, father!"

"I know, darling, hurry and find the pretty lady or she will be lost. Don't let the men see you or the game will be spoiled!"

She was gone.

GUNTHER staggered with the relief, but the weakness was momentary. The sun was a semicircle of garnet, on a purple base; a dark cloud was driving

toward him from the east, *against the wind*.

He heard the shout of the White Bears and knew that they had come upon his tracks in mud near a spring where the child had stopped to drink. He brought up an armful of the musketoons and arranged them upon the rim of the fortalice. Near the cannon the smoldering rope sent up a thread of bluish-gray.

With a great effort he picked up the leather cannon, tripod and all, and set it in a more strategic position.

Then came many men, pressing forward, crowding up the incline. He fired the charges of seven guns among them, but with little hesitation they came on.

In desperation, Gunther swung the cannon muzzle a trifle more toward a knot of men and ignited the charge. A pound and a half of ragged metal and pebbles tore into the thick of them, and the hesitation became a rout.

A hideous row of curses, threats, and cries of pain followed, but Gunther did not hear them.

The small cannon, too light for its charge, had recoiled from its insecure position in the sand and lay, with one leg of the tripod cracked, on the floor of the sand-pit. Gunther, half stunned, gasped close by.

To him there came the stirring notes of a trumpet and he knew the White Bears were regaining order. He stumbled to his feet and raised the cannon. An instant's scrutiny told him that the cannon was hopeless as an engine of defense with the ruined tripod, but an idea came to him as he stared wildly about, and quickly he arranged the child's scarlet cloak in a corner to resemble what he hoped might be mistaken at a quick glance for Achsah, asleep.

The sun was out of sight now, but as with haste and frantic fingers he reloaded the cannon with a smaller charge that was composed of powder and rags, he saw an oddly shaped cloud sweep darkly above, poise there, hover, and sink gradually down.

He felt its approach as a menacing presence, loathsome, huge; steadily dropping it came nearer until at last its shapeless horror assumed the alien shape of the Master as he had dwelt upon the planet Nithrys, as it spun in slow orbit about Algol, the Demon Star.

Lapsing then into merciful insanity, he threw back his head, and when the White Bears came over the lip of the hollow they were greeted with a neighing high-pitched mad laugh like a scream. They gathered about him as he stood there, looking up, still holding the smoking rope in his hand, and one seized him by the shoulder, as he babbled on, pointing above.

Boris Balta and the others looked up, but saw only that a cloud had crossed the sun and cast a shadow into the hollow, which was crowded with brigands.

He presented a daggar at Gunther's breast.

"Tell us this joke, cup-companion who dared to steal the money of the White Bears. Search him, Kaspar, while he tells us, so we may all laugh while we are killing him!"

For a second, Gottfried's wavering intelligence drifted back to his tired brain.

The jet talons of the Master were very near! He was about to pounce! In a second his body, vampire-blighted, would become a hideous night prowler and a dead-alive slave.

"Let's all laugh together in Hell!" he shouted and touched his burning rope to the leather cannon, which pointed into the open box of dull black grains which lay at the base of that great pile of powder chests.

And after that it mattered little to Gottfried Gunther or any of the White

Bears that the Master had once been close.

JORIAN and Hanne, holding the quivering child between them, deep in the shelter of the beechwood, saw a vast black shadow settle down upon the hill top. Otherwise the sky was cloudless!

They heard the shouts of men, the reports of musketoons and the boom of the cannon; they saw lance-points glint on the summit of the earthworks; then a deafening roar.

A rushing wind howled through the tree tops. The air was full of dirt and dust. A fountain of earth sprang up like the trunk of a thick dark tree, growing where the fortified hill had been. A pike, twirling end over end, no bigger than a straw in the blue above, came hissing down into the wood, followed by a thin drizzle of red mud and bits of unidentified things.

Then utter quiet.

The watchers, crouching low, saw a tattered shadow like a distant cloud fleeing, fast, fast, toward the east.

Over the head of weeping Achsah, the Swedish man and the German maiden kissed, soberly, without rapture.

"We will go to America?" said Hanne.

"To Wineland!" replied Jorian, smiling, and they turned toward the horses.

Though the Thirty Years War was to continue still for several years, its impetus was slowing down. Its guiding spirit had fled.

2. *Achsah Young—of Windsor*

The Authority

"THOU shalt not suffer a witch to live."—Exodus xxii, 18.

"And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits and after wizards . . . I will even set my face against that soul and will cut him off from among his people."—Deuteronomy xvii, 10-11.

The Presentment

"May it please yr Honble Court, we the Grand inquest now setting for the County of Hartford, being made sensable by testamonies duly billed to us, that the maid Achsah Young, of Windsor, is under the susspition of useing witchecraft, which is abomanable both in ye sight of God & man and ought to be witnessed against, we doe therefore (in complyance to our duty, the discharge of our oathes and that trust reposed in us) presente the above mentioned psson to the Honble Court of Assistants now setting in Hartford, that she may be taken in to Custody and proceeded against according to her demerits.

"Hartford, 20th Fby, 1647

"in behalfe of the Grnd Jury

"JOSIAH KELTON, foreman"

The Indictment

"Achsah Young thou standest here indicted by ye name of Achsah Young (of Windsor) as being guilty of witchcrafte for that thou not haveing the fear of God before thine eyes hast had familiaritie with Sathan the grand enemie of god and mankind and by his help hast thereby hurt the bodyes of divers of the subjects of our sovraigne Lord the King of which by the law of god and of this corporation thou oughtest to dye."

Note by Sec'y of Court

"Achsah pled not guiltie and refered herself to a tryall by the jury present."

Oath to Jury

"You doe sware by the great and dreadful name of the everliving god that you will well and truely try just verdict give and true deliverance make between

our sovraigne Lord the King and such prisoner at the barr given you in charge according to the Evidence given in Court and the lawes so help you god in our Lord Jesus."

Session entitled "A particular courte in Hartford upon the tryall of Achsah Young 28 Fby., 1647"

ADAM GRANT aged about 59 years testifieth that formerly going to reap in a meadow at Windsor, his land he was to work on lay near to John Young's land. It came to the thoughts of the said John Young's daughter, the present prisoner, to walk through the meadow and it fell that a poisonous snake stung him in the ancle as she came near.

Without balm applied, she bandaged the ancle saying you shall not suffer and he was shortly cured, which he is certain could not be, but by unnatural arts and magicks.

The deponent also saith that since nearly a year ago, his son Ansel has found no comfort in anything but being near the prisoner, which Adam Grant deemed not seemly and so sent him to live in Wethersfield.

Shortly after he being very well as to ye outward vew was suddenly taken very ill and moped about, not working or relishing his food upon which Adam Grant went to Achsah Young and bad her unbewitch his child or he would beat her hart out. Wherefore Achsah sayd God forbad she should hurt Ansel and wrote him something which Adam Grant could not read but when Ansel had received it he imediately after was well and would not say to his father what it was.

Adam Grant testifieth again saying that it is a matter of common knowledge in Windsor that the present prisoner has a yellow bird which was brought from the Canary islands and without doubt is her familiar spirit, she being seen often in its company talking and laughing to it like if it had a Christian soule.

Feb. 28, 47.

Attests Nehemiah Pratt Secy

GOODWIFE GRANT aged 47 years testifieth that before her son Ansel went to Wethersfield, that she slept a night at John Young's house being benighted by a storm of thunder and lightning. Although she knew by report that the prisoner was a sabbath breaker and one who told fortunes she went to bed with her but in great fear meaning not to slepe.

In the midst of the night she woke and heard a soft sound like a striking of wings against the windowe, but saw no thing there, but noticed that in a corner of the room a spinning wheel was turning slowly of itself. She then remembered that the prisoner had been said to have been able to spin so great a quantity of fine linen yarn as the deponent did never know nor hear of any other woman that could spin so much.

She shook the prisoner to wake her, crying out, then looking up she saw a light about the bignes of her too hands glance along the edge of the room near the floor to the harth ward and afterwards saw it no more.

She also testifieth that she told the prisoner she would report this and Achsah did beg her to say no thing and all would be well, but the next day having mentioned the matter to Mistress Kent, Goodwife Grant did go to slepe in dread of some hurt. Lying in bed, with a good fire giving such light that one might see all over that room where she then was, she heard a noise and presently something fell on her legs with violence and oppressed her stomach as if it would have pressed the breath out of her body. Then appeared an ugly shaped thing like a dog, having a head such that she clearly and

distinctly knew to be the head of Achsah Young. This dog growled fiercely that if she had her strength she would tear Goodwife Grant in peses and vanished.

Goodwife Grant then sat up in bed and saw a black face at the window, which looked like John Young's black slave Asaph, it grinned and nodded at her till she fell senseless and when she knew things again, morning had come.

Goodwife Grant also testifieth that a girl taken by John Young to work in the house, Achsah being ill, did tend Achsah and seeing a silk hood and blew apron in a closet would have tried them on, meaning them no hurt, but a noise frighted her away and she saw that Achsah was rolling about in bed, very hot and red and talking to herself in some strange speech which seemed to the girl not holy. She asked Achsah what she spoke and was answered German, following which Achsah began to sing a silly and useless song about love and Maytime and a lover who had gone away. She asked Achsah if she had sung what English she could, then sing German and then she sung that which she called German, but which the girl believed to be a witch's call, for something patted at the window and the girl said what creature is that with a great head and wings and no boddy and all black? Achsah said that is my father, and the girl sayd how your father, your father is aslepe downstairs, and Achsah sayd no thing after, but maide as tho she was aslepe.

Feb. 28, 47.
Attests Nehemiah Pratt, Secy

MISTRESS KENT, aged 73, testifieth that upon a Sunday when all others had left her alone in the house, she being bedridden, did look from the window across the field towards John Young's great barn and saw the present prisoner come from the direction of the village and enter the barn quickly like one who would not be seen, whereupon a boye, seemingly like Ansel Grant, did come also a little later and the barn doors did open before him without his having nede to touch them, so that he went in. Before the people came from the church, Achsah came out again and went into her house, but the boye she did not see more. Later when she mentioned it to Goodwife Grant, she was told by her that Ansel was in Wethersfield, so that she knew it could not be him, but the devill instead in the shape of a boye.

Mistress Kent, speaking of this matter to Achsah Young, was laughed at, Achsah saying Granny you can see no farther than the chickens in your yard and then she thought that if this girl was naught as folkes suspect, may be she will smite my chickens, and quickly after one chicken dyed and she remembred she had heard if they were bewitched, they would consume within, and she opened it and it was consumed in ye gisard to water and wormes, and divers others of them droped, she never having seen any chicken that was so consumed with wormes.

"Ye testor is redy to give oath to ye above written testimony when called therunto." Feb. 28, 47.

Attests Nehemiah Pratt, Secy.

JAMES FRYE, aged 41, testifieth that two years agone he had calfe very strangely taken after Achsah Young had passed by looking long on the calfe. It roared very strangely and unwonted for a space of six or seven hours, so he sent for her to see the calfe which he had tyed in the lott to a great post lying on the ground, and the calfe ran away with that post as if it had bine a fether and ran amonge Indian corne and pulled up many hills and stood still.

She followed and looked on the calfe and it set a running till it came to a fence

and gave a great cry in a lowing way and stood still.

He testified that he spoke harshly to her and named her witch, whereupon she wept much and begged him pity her for she was sorely tempted and he saying how? why are you tempted? she said no thing but went away and he saw her meet the black slave who patted her shoulder and made as if to comfort her.

That night he could not sleep and hearing a noyse about the house like a beast that was knoct with an axe, he got up and found the calf dead at the door, and when it was skinned it looked as if it had been bruised or pinched on the shoulders.

Feb. 28, 47.

Attests Nehemiah Pratt, Secy.

An insert by Nehemiah Pratt, Secy.

AFTER the above evidence was heard by the court, Achsah Young was taken to the common jail for safe keeping where she was questioned frequently, many times a day, for three weeks. Her proud bearing and spirit gradually broke because of the cold of her prison and her harsh treatment. Her watchman said he often heard her talking to herself or some one that he could not see and she pled often for mercy, but never called upon our Saviour, so that he knew she was accursed and would finally confess.

The watchman made noises all night that she might not slepe, and frequent visitors would question her at any hour.

Goody Pew, Mistress Knight and her daughter, and Goodwife Simonds all came the last night before the second hearing and pressed her to name any other witch in town and to receive consolation from the minister for the welfare of her soul.

The hardened prisoner protested that she was innocent and denied everything, saying "take heed the devile have not you!" and "I have sinns enough to answer for now and I will not add another" this reported in writing by Goody Pew.

"Pray, pray for me," she said, "and that will console me."

Goody Pew saying "we did not come to pray but to work!" held her tight and the other women then removed her clothing and searched for witch marks, pricking her with pins everywhere it seemed to them a mark might be, but as she felt the pain as was proved by her shrieks and cries, they saw that they would have to search farther and began to cut off the long hair of her head, but had great difficulty. A proof of her witchcraft being that though she was at other times a weak and light girl yet she was then so strong and extreme heavy that the four women had long work to cut off all her hair; Achsah crying bitterly as if she had been beaten all the time.

They found the spot she had tried to hide, a dark place, sunken in and which did not bleed and knowing that she was found out, she said to Goody Pew, "Yes, I am a witch, go away, go away and let me slepe!"

Goody Pew said to the other women, "we will be merciful and fair and prove her beyond doubt. Let us try her by water, and be sure!"

So they took her as she was to the duck pond bound hand and foot and put her on the water. She swam upon the water like a cork and when Goody Pew labored to press her down she buoyed up and they saw that the water refused to take her and knew her for a true witch and servant of the devill.

The Second Hearing

JONAS JESOP of Wethersfield, aged 60, testifieth that being warned by his friend Adam Grant that Achsah Young might come thence to pursue and lead

astray young Ansel Grant, he made every effort to kepe her off, but the boye being ill, Asaph, a small black slave belonging to John Young of Winsor brought the boye a letter, and showed him a glass to see his face in, as Jonas Jesop supposed, but the boye crying out Achsah, Achsah, he took away the glass and saw in it as through a window, the shape of a girl moving and smiling, which quickly faded when he took the glass.

The next day she rode there from Winsor and would not be kept from his room nor gott away when she was there, and one time Mistress Jesop bid her go away and thrust her from the boy, but she turned againe and said she would looke on him.

Mistress Jesop sayd you are a witch, you know you are. Why do you not let the boy alone? She sayd I am not malitious and do not mean mischiefe, why do they provoake me if they think I am a witch? Why do they not let me come into the church?

Dated March 1, 47. Wethersfield; taken upon oath before us Jabez Penhale, Zebulon Clawson. Exhibited in court, March 20, 47. Attests Nehemiah Pratt, Secy.

Here Achsah cried out, "they seek my innocent blood;" the magistrat replied who, she sayd every body. Being spoken to about triall by swiming, she sayd "the divill that caused me to come here can keep me up!"

The magistrat sayd, you admitted your guilt; she sayd well, well, if I did be done with the matter, do not make me suffer. Ye asked me before, Goody Pew, to name a witch, look in that corner where the black man of my father's is standing. There is the one to blame for this, take him and hang him too! The people looked where the slave was said to be, but he was not there to be seen, though she kept pointing there and saying can you not see him? How he is laughing! If you do not kill him you will be very sorry.

But Asaph the black slave was not to be found and has never been seen here since so that many take him for the devill in human shape as I think the magistrat did when he sayd to the jury before their verdict.

"Just as God has his human servants, his church on earth, so also has the devill. These witches and wizards are won by him by his appearance in many shapes; he deceives them and makes them his allies to ruin their fellows. We cannot reach the devill, but today we have his servant whom if we suffer her to live, will injure us again. Even though she may not be able to destroy the life of her neighbor by her incantations, still, if she intends to do so, it is right that she should hang!! As seen by the evidence the party accused has made a league with the devill and hath been at known practices of witchcraft. The devill cares nothing for witches as you can see by his allowing her to be taken; there are two reasons for this; his hatred and malice toward all men and his insatiable desire to have the witches not sure enough of his hatred till then. Bring in your judgement."

The Jury Foreman

"Ye party above mentioned is found guilty by ye jury and sentenced to be hung until dead."

Executioner's Warrant

To Geoffrey Croye Gentlmn high Sheriff of the County of Hartford Greeting.

Wheras Achsah Young of Windsor at a special court held at Hartford, March 20th for the County of Hartford before William Wheeler Esqe was indicted and arraigned upon five several indictments

for useing practising and exercising witchcraft upon various people dwelling in Wethersfield and Windsor; wherby their bodyes and property were afflicted wasted and tormented contrary to the form of the statute in that case provided. To which indictments the said Achsah Young pleaded not guilty and for Tryall thereof put herselfe upon God and her Country. She was found guilty of the ffelonyes and Witchcrafts wherof she stood indicted and sentence of death accordingly passed agt her as the Law directs execution whereof yet remaines to be done.

These are therefore in the name of his Majtie Charles now King over England to will and command you that upon Fryday next being the 25th day of this instant month of March to conduct the said Achsah Young from his Majties Goale at Hartford to Gallows Hill and there cause her to be hanged by the neck until dead and of your doings herein make returne to the Clerk of sd Court and precept. And hereof you are not to faile at your peril. And this shall be sufficient warrant. Given under my hand and seal at Hartford the 21st of March Annoque Dm 1647

WM. WHEELER.

March 25th 1647.

According to the within written precept I have taken the Bodye of the within named Achsah Young out of his Majties Goale in Hartford and Safely Conveighd her to the place provided for her Execution and Caused ye sd Achsah to be hanged by the neck till Shee was dead all which was according to the time within required and So I make return by me

GEOFFREY CROYE
Sheriff

Note by Nehemiah Pratt, Secy

A pathetic incident made me almost sorry for this abominable witch. A child was borne in the prison (probably a devil-chick) and bound out to Ansel Grant who had come of age and arrived in Hartford after the execution. He denied his parents when they sought to speak with him and pretended not to know them, but engaged himself to meinteine and well educate Achsah's sonne.

He has since disappeared and no one knows where he has gone to dwell. John Young likewise has sold his property and moved away, and thus ends the first case of witchcraft in Quohnectacut. God grant it may be the last!



THE GAME

By DOROTHY NORWICH

Mallory knew that he was being murdered by degrees, knew that it was useless to fight—yet he made sure that his killers would be robbed of the fruits of their crime

MALLORY rose from his bed and stumbled weakly across the bedroom floor to the bathroom adjoining. From the hall came the saccharinely sweet voice of his wife.

"What are you doing, dear?"

Something in the cloying tone irritated Mallory. "Getting a drink," he answered, pettishly.

"But I'd have gotten it for you."

"Get it myself," Mallory retorted, shortly. "I'm not dead—yet." He allowed himself to pause suggestively before uttering the word, "yet," so that it took on a grim significance utterly foreign to it.

With a nice precision, he dropped two white pellets into a glass. His lips lifted themselves in a snarling grin as he watched the water slowly cloud, and then become milky.

His unnaturally bright eyes fixed on the door, Mallory drained the glass, rinsed it thoroughly, and returned it to its holder. A giddiness came over him. At his cry, his wife, accompanied by the doctor, entered the room. Together they helped him into bed.

"I've warned you about undue exertion." The doctor's voice. Hypocrite! Mallory wanted to shout at him. Denounce him. Call him murderer. Instead, he lay still, veiling his eyes with half-closed lids, lest they betray his secret triumph.

Presently, he looked up at them, the little man and the large woman. The woman's white forehead; her peculiar-colored eyes that, actually small, somehow managed to give an impression of bigness; her lips, full, curved, and greedy.

There was a similarity, Mallory noted, between the woman and her lover, despite the man's inferior height and weak chin. The same furtiveness of eye was there, and the lips, full, curved, greedy.

The woman's voice interrupted his mental comparisons.

"A weak sleeping-potion, perhaps?" she was suggesting.

"Sleeping-potion!" Mallory could have shrieked his dreadful mirth. Fools! did they think he didn't know? Did they suppose him so utterly simple that he had not been aware this long time of the desperate game they were playing? But he was playing, too. They didn't know that. But he was.

The thought tickled Mallory, and for the moment, he actually smiled. Yes, he was playing. A sudden bitterness welled up in him. Alone, three miles from the nearest neighbor—five from the town, helpless, sick, old before his time, he sat in this strange game. He, against the other two, with the conspirators, until this very morning, holding the high cards.

The woman put her arm under his head and raised it slightly. His eyes met those of the doctor as he held the glass against his lips. There was fear in the furtive eyes, and strain. It pleased Mallory greatly. The man was breaking. A year and a half is a long time. They hadn't expected him to survive so many —sleeping-potions!

The glass emptied, Mallory lay back on his pillows. The room seemed darker than it had a few minutes ago. Ah, well, that last card of his would soon be played now.

And it had been luck, sheer luck—or had it been the machination of a tardy justice?—that had enabled him to see to its playing.

Hendricks, from the next farm, had been in to see him. Just passing by, he had said, and had dropped in to see how Mallory was getting along. It had taken but a minute to slip Hendricks the letter he had kept by him for months, and secure his promise to deliver it that same afternoon.

It might even have reached its destination now! The thought made Mallory's head swim. Fright seized him. He must keep his mind clear. He wasn't going to be cheated of living it all over again before he died. With difficulty, he marshaled his senses into some semblance of order.

He had been thinking of Hendricks. He *could* have said: "They are murdering me for my insurance money." But what would Hendricks have said? What would *they* have said? "Delirium." That's what they would have said. "His mind is going." Besides, he was too far gone for help.

He could have written it in his letter. But to what purpose? The electric chair for the pair of them, probably, and he'd have the woman's soul on his hands. Wasn't it enough to have endured ten years of her, here on earth, without having to bear with her in hell, as well?

No, the way he had chosen was best.

His thin body began to shake with repressed mirth. It was so grotesquely funny! And that insurance policy they had persuaded him to take out two years ago; the policy that an ordinary farmer had to sweat blood to keep up; that policy that meant ease for them, and spelled death for him. That *fat* insurance policy! If they only knew!

Unable to control himself longer, Mallory shouted his triumph, only it didn't sound like a shout. It was more like a rattle. His emaciated frame shook and trembled. His vision, slightly blurred now, beheld the faces of the lovers bending over him. A little shaken they looked, yet indecently eager.

Vultures! They wondered why he laughed. Or did they know he was laughing? Perhaps they thought it was the death paroxysm. No matter, they would know shortly.

It was hard, suddenly, to breathe. A crushing weight sat astride his chest. A stiff, snarling grin parted Mallory's lips, and froze upon them.

They would know very soon now.

THEY sat stiffly, uneasily, on the edges of their chairs, the little man, and the large woman. Beads of sweat dampened the man's forehead. He wiped them away, nervously, with the back of his hand. A pearly dew also sat upon the upper lip of the woman, and she dabbed at it with a handkerchief, limp with the perspiration from her large hands.

Their greedy, puzzled eyes were fastened upon the man behind the desk, their ears straining to catch every word. Oblivious of the tap of the typewriters, the murmur of voices that came to them, slightly muffled, from the outer offices of the great insurance company, they centered their attention upon the adjuster.

He was handing the woman a letter. She took it with hands that trembled a little. The doctor's anxious eyes followed the lines of the brief note over her shoulder.

I am committing suicide. You will find the box of poison tablets in the bathroom medicine chest. There will be two missing.

MALLORY.

Still uncomprehending, the lovers turned their gaze back to the insurance man. What was it he was saying? The policy contained an iron-bound suicide clause. Yes, they remembered that now. It hadn't seemed important then. They hadn't feared suicide.

The doctor's lips were suddenly dry, and he tried to moisten them with a tongue as hot and parched as a lizard's. The woman's mouth sagged.

"In event of the insured committing suicide, this policy becomes null and void." Not the exact words, but the gist of them.

The eyes of the man and woman met, understanding slowly dawning. That last, choking rattle of Mallory's! The sardonic gleam in his glazing eyes!

Emptily, they rose, and made their way out of the office, through the outer offices, with their efficient bustle, to the corridor.

Softly, as if fearing to disturb someone, they closed the door behind them, and upon the clicking of the latch came the laughter of the dead man, mocking, haunting.

They knew, now.

The Lost Lady

(Continued from page 31)

many, and I assure you it's very mystifying. A person, usually a child or young woman, will become the victim of a malignant spirit, the peasants believe, and this pelting ghost, or *poltergeist,* as they call it in German, will follow the poor thing about, fling dishes and light articles of furniture at her, snatch the bedclothes off her while she sleeps, and bite, pinch and scratch her. I've seen severe skin-wounds inflicted on unfortunate children who'd been selected by a *poltergeist* as its victim, and the parents assured me the injuries appeared by magic, while others looked on in broad daylight, yet no one could see the hand that inflicted the scratches or the teeth which bit the afflicted person. I'd set the whole business down as superstitious nonsense, but since I saw what happened to my wife this morning, I'm not so certain I wasn't laughing out of turn when I grinned at those German peasants."

"Say on, *Monsieur,* I listen," de Grandin answered.

"My wife was dressing this morning when she suddenly let out a shrill scream and half fell across the bench before her vanity. I ran to her, and when I reached her I saw across the white skin of her shoulders the distinct wale of a whip. I've seen just such marks on laborers in Cochin China when the overseer had lashed them. She was almost fainting when I got to her, and babbling something in Khmer which I couldn't understand. I picked her up and started to carry her toward the bed, and as I did so she emitted another cry, and crossing the first diagonal mark was a second wale, so heavy this time that I could see the little spots of blood starting through the skin where it had been bruised to the point of rupture.

"I laid her on the bed and ran into the bathroom to soak a towel in witch hazel to put across her shoulders." He paused a moment and looked challengingly at us. "Please remember she was lying on her back in bed," he continued with slow

NEXT MONTH

Don't miss this group of fine stories scheduled to appear in the February issue of WEIRD TALES on sale January 1.

Siva the Destroyer

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A thrilling novelette of super-science and a conflict of death with a genius that was threatening the world.

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by Henry S. Whitehead

A weird story of the Virgin Islands—the Blacks who came from Dahomey brought their eery superstitions with them.

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by Jane Scales

Weird death struck down the man who penetrated the bush country in search of the strange blue diamonds.

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by Seabury Quinn

Jules de Grandin, long known as a ghost-breaker, essays a new role, that of "ghost-helper."

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by Edmond Hamilton

In the heart of the great Arabian desert lay a vast, black-domed city of horror unspeakable, and into this city were drawn three aviators by the tremendous suction of the winds.

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by Francis Flagg

Crazy Jim was a hobo, shunned by his associates of the road as a bit cracked, but he attained to weird power unthinkable and dominated the destinies of nations.

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by Ben Belitt

A tale of horror in a Chinese antique shop.

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

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emphasis. "Her shoulders were pressing directly on the sheet; nothing, not even a bullet from a high-power rifle could have struck her from beneath through the thick layers of cotton-felt of the mattress, yet even as I was crossing the room to her she screamed a third time, and when I reached her there was another whip-mark crossing the first two at an angle on her shoulders. This happened just as I'm telling you," he concluded, then regarded us with an almost threatening glance as he awaited our expressions of polite incredulity.

"*Mais oui,* I believe you, my friend," de Grandin told him. "It is entirely possible. Indeed, I am not at all surprized. No. On the contrary.

"Are we arrived? Good, we shall examine these so strange marks upon your poor lady and do what we can to relieve her suffering.

"By the way," he added as we mounted the porch steps, "at what time did this most unpleasant experience befall *Madame?*"

Hildebrand considered a moment. "About eight o'clock, as near as I can remember," he answered. "We usually breakfast at eight, but we'd overslept this morning and were hurrying to get down to the dining-room before Rumsen, the cook, presented her resignation. She usually resigns if she has to wait a meal more than half an hour, and we were dressing with one eye on the clock when Thi-bah felt the first pain and the first mark showed on her skin."

"Eight o'clock," de Grandin repeated musingly. "At six they take her, at eight the phenomenon is observed. *Eh bien,* they wasted little time, those ones. Yes, it all fits together admirably. I was sure before, now I am certain."

"What's that?" Archy asked.

"I did but confirm my diagnosis, *Monsieur.* It is seldom that I am mistaken. This time, it seems, I am less so than usual. Lead us to *Madame* your wife, if you please."

"WHY——" I exclaimed as we entered the pleasant, chintz-hung room where young Mrs. Hildebrand lay, then stared at the girl in fatuous, hang-jawed amazement.

"*Nom d'un parapluie rose!*" de Grandin exclaimed softly. "I suspected it, now I know. Yes. Of course. Observe her, my friend."

I did. I couldn't help it. I knew it could not be, yet there on the bed before me lay Moneen McDougal, or her twin sister, and stared at us with the wide, hopeless gaze of a dumb thing taken in a trap and waiting in mute terror for the hunter's knife across its throat.

"*Madame,*" de Grandin began softly, deferentially, "we have heard of your trouble and are come to aid you."

A tiny parenthesis of puzzled wrinkles formed between the girl's arched black brows, but no sign of understanding showed in her pale face.

"*Madame,*" he essayed again, "*je suis un médecin français, et*——"

Still no sign of understanding in the wide, frightened gaze.

He paused a moment, his little, round blue eyes narrowed in concentrated thought, then launched forth a series of queer-sounding, singsong words which reminded me of the gibberish with which Chinese laundrymen address each other.

Instant recognition shone in her dark eyes and she answered in a torrent of droning, oddly inflected phrases.

He motioned me forward, still conversing in the outlandish dialect, and together we approached the bed, turned down the coverlet and bent to examine her. Like most modern young women she wore as

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her sole undergarment above the waist a knitted-silk bandeau about her bosoms, and as she had dressed only in her lingerie when the curious illness overtook her, we had no difficulty in observing the lash-marks across her cream-satin shoulders. High, angry-looking wales they were, as though freshly laid on by a heavy whip in the hands of a brutally strong tormentor. *"Cher Dieu!"* de Grandin swore, then bent to question her again, but stopped abruptly as she stiffened suddenly and gave a short, terrified exclamation; the sort a patient undergoing odontotrypy might emit; and under our very eyes there rose across her shoulders another scourge-mark, red, ecchymosed, swollen. It was as if the skin were inflated from beneath, for a mound like a miniature molehill rose as we watched, and the white skin turned bright, blood-sweating red.

Again she trembled in our grasp and again a red and angry welt showed on her shoulders. From scapular to scapular her back showed a wicked criss-cross of ugly, livid wales.

"Quick, *mon ami,* your hypo and some morphine, if you please!" he cried. "This will continue intermittently until—we must give her surcease of her pain at once!"

I prepared the mercy-bearing syringe with trembling hands and drove the needle deep into her quivering arm, then shot the plunger home, and as the opiate took hold upon her tortured nerves she relaxed from her rigid pose and sank back slowly on the bed, but as she did so another lash-track appeared on her shoulder, and now the fragile skin was broken through, and a stain of bright capillary-blood spread on the linen bedclothes.

"Good heavens, what is it, some obscure form of hemophilia?" I asked.

"Neither obscure nor hemophilia," de Grandin answered grimly. "It is devilment, my friend; but devilment we can do nothing to palliate until Costello finds the one we seek."

"Costello?" I echoed in amazement. "What has he to do with this poor child's——"

"Everything, *pardieu!*" the Frenchman interrupted. "Now, if we do prepare a bandage pack and soak it well with lead-water and laudanum, we shall have done all possible until——"

"Until?" I prompted, as he ceased speaking and proceeded to prepare the soothing dressing for the girl's lacerated back.

"Until the leaden-footed Costello bestirs himself," he returned sharply. "Have I not said it? Certainly.

"Renew the dressing every hour, my friend," he bade young Hildebrand as we prepared to leave. "If her attacks return with frequency, administer these codein tablets, but never more than one in each half-hour. *Au revoir,* we shall return, and when we do she will have ceased to suffer."

"You mean she'll be——" Archy choked, then stopped, afraid to name the dread eventuality.

"By no means; no," de Grandin cheered him. "She will survive, *mon vieux,* nor will she suffer much meantime, but though we do our work away from here you may be sure that we shall not be idle."

As the young man looked at him bewildered he added, "For ailments such as this some laboratory work is necessary," then smiled as a light of understanding broke in the tortured husband's face.

"The plausible explanation is always best," he murmured as we entered my car and turned toward home.

"Have you really an idea what's wrong

with her?" I asked. "It's the strangest case I've ever seen."

"But yes, my ideas are most certain," he returned, "although I can not set them forth in full just now. You are perhaps familiar with stigmata?"

"Only indirectly," I answered. "I've never seen a case of stigma, but from what I've read I understand it's a physical manifestation of a condition of hysteria. Aren't certain religious fanatics supposed to work themselves into a state of ecstasy and then show marks approximating wounds on their hands and feet, in simulation of the Savior's crucifixion-marks?"

"Précisément," he agreed with a nod. "And hysteria is a condition of psychoneurosis. Normal inhibitions are broken down, the conscious mind is in abeyance. You have doubtless seen in psychological laboratories the hypnotist bid the blood leave the subject's hand, and thereupon have observed the hand in question go corpse-pale as the vital fluid gradually receded?"

"Of course," I answered, "but what the deuce are you driving at, anyway?"

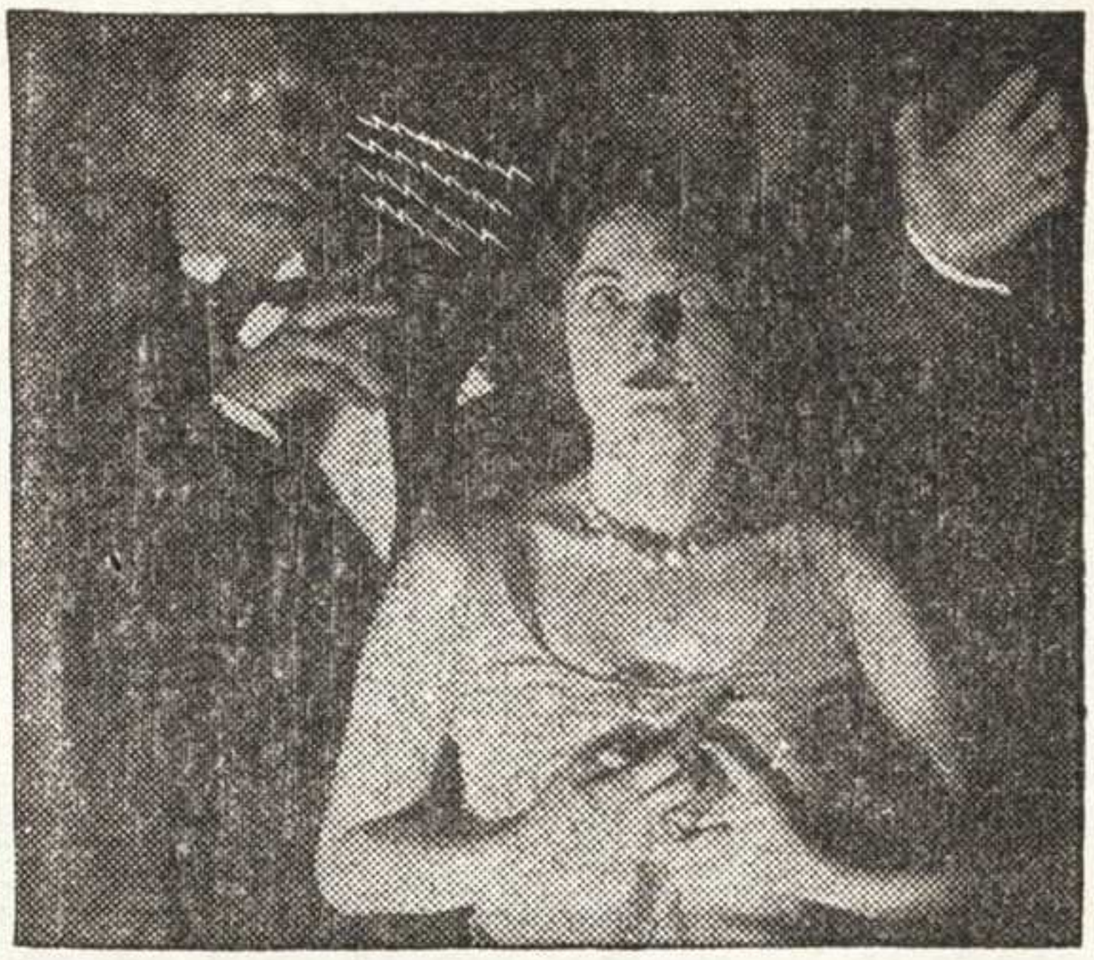
"I formulate an hypothesis. Anon we shall put it to the test, I hope."

5. *Sympathetic Magic*

DETECTIVE SERGEANT Jeremiah Costello was pacing gloomily back and forth across my study when we returned, a worried look in his blue eyes, a worried frown between his brows, his hands sunk elbow-deep in his trousers pockets.

"What news, *mon brave?*" de Grandin asked eagerly as he espied the big Irishman.

"Plenty, sor, such as it is," the detective returned. "Misther Dougal McDougal's been down to headquarters raisin' partic'lar hell wid everybody from th' Commissioner down. He's threatenin' to see th' Mayor an' petition Congress an'



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call out th' Marines if we don't find his wife's sister before dark."

"*Dites,* and have you been successful in the search for the mysterious Oriental gentleman as yet?" de Grandin asked.

"No, sor. 'Twas a crack-brained idea ye had there, if ye'll excuse me sayin' so. We'd have no more chance o' findin' 'em that way than we'd have o' meetin' up wid a needle in a haystack, as th' felly says, sor. Now, if 'twas me——"

"*Triomphe, victoire, je suis couronné de succès!*" Inspector Renouard burst into the room, his dark eyes fairly blazing with excitement, his beard and mustaches bristling electrically. "All the way from the *préfecture* I have run—as fast as a taximeter could carry me! Behold, we have found him! Those peerless realtors, Sullivan, Dorsch & Doerr have but recently rented a mansion to one Chinese gentleman, a fine, large furnished house with commodious garage attached. He particularly desired a garage, as he possessed an automobile of noble size in which he drove to the house agent's office, accompanied by a chauffeur and footman, also Orientals. Yes, of course. The gentlemen of real estate noticed this particularly, since such customers are of the rarest at their office. In lieu of references he paid them three months' rent in cash —in golden louis—no, what is it the American gold coin is called? Bucks? Yes, in golden bucks he paid one thousand berries—the *gendarme* at headquarters told me.

"How much in dollars is a thousand berries, my friend?" he turned bright, inquiring eyes upon Costello.

"T'ell wid stoppin' to translate now; let's git busy an' find *him!*" Costello roared. "Are ye wid me, Doctor de Grandin, sor?"

"*Cordieu,* when was I ever otherwise in such a case, *mon vieux?*" the little Frenchman answered in a perfect fever of excitement. "Quick, make haste, my friend!"

Of Renouard he asked: "And where may one find this so superbly furnished house and garage the Oriental gentleman rented, *petit frère?*"

"At 68 Hamilton Avenue of the West," the other returned, consulting his black-leather pocketbook. "Where is Friend Costello? He has not yet computed the berries into dollars for me."

Sergeant Costello had no time to explain the vagaries of American slang to the excited Inspector. With tight-lipped mouth pressed close to the transmitter of my office telephone he was giving directions to some one at police headquarters in a low and ominously calm voice. "Yeah," he murmured, "tear-bombs, that's what I said. An' a couple o' choppers, an' some fire-axes, an' riot guns, an' every man wid his nightstick. Git me? O. K., be 'round here *pronto,* an' if anny one rings th' bell or sounds th' siren on th' way I'll beat 'im soft wid me own two fists. Git *that,* too. Come on, now, shake a leg; I'm waitin', but I ain't waitin' long. See?"

THE early December dark had descended, though the moon was not yet high enough to illuminate the streets as the police car set out for Hamilton Avenue. Obedient to Costello's fiercely whispered injunction, gong and siren were silent, and we slipped through the dusk as silently as a wraith.

The house we sought stood well back on a quarter-acre plot of land planted with blue spruce, Japanese maples and rhododendron. As far as we could see, the place was deserted, for no gleam of light showed anywhere and an atmosphere of that utterly dead silence which seems the peculiar property of tenantless buildings wrapped it like a blanket.

"Spooky," Costello declared as he brought the car to a halt half-way down the block and marshaled his forces. "Gilligan, you and Schultz take th' back," he ordered. "See no one gits out that way, an' put th' nippers on anny one that tries to make a break. Sullivan, you an' Esposito git posted be th' front—take cover behind some bushes, an' hit th' first head that shows itself out th' front door. I'm leavin' ye th' job o' seein' no one gits out that way. Norton, cover th' garage. No one's to go in there till I give th' word. Git it?" The men nodded assent, and:

"All right," he continued. "Hornsby, you an' Potansky bring th' choppers an' come wid us. All ready, gentlemen?" he swept Renouard, de Grandin and me with an inquiring glance.

"More than ready, *mon brave,* we are impatient," de Grandin answered. "Lead on; we come."

From a shoulder-holster slung beneath his left armpit Inspector Renouard drew a French-army revolver almost as large as a field gun and spun its cylinder appraisingly. *"Bien,"* he murmured, "let us go." The two patrolmen with their vicious little submachine-guns fell in on either side of us, and we advanced across the lawn at a run.

"I've got th' warrant here," Costello whispered as we paused before the veranda. "Think I'd better knock an'——"

"By no means," de Grandin cut in. "Let us enter at once. If our presence is protested, the warrant will give it validity. Meantime, there is much value in surprize, for each moment of delay threatens death for two unfortunate ladies."

"Two women?" Costello asked in wonder. "How d'ye figure——"

"Zut! Action now, my friend; explanations can wait.

"Permettez-moi," he added as Costello drew back to thrust his shoulder at the



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door. "This is better, I think." He felt quickly in his pocket, producing a ring on which half a dozen keys dangled, and sinking to his knees began trying first one, then another in the door. The first three trials were failures, but the fourth key sprung the lock, and with a muttered exclamation of satisfaction he swung back the door and motioned us in.

"Bedad, what an illigant burglar wuz spoilt when you decided to go straight!" Costello commented admiringly as we stepped across the threshold.

Thick rugs ate up the sound of our footfalls as we entered the darkened hall, and a blackness almost tangible surrounded us while we paused to take our bearings. "Shall I give 'em a call?" the Sergeant whispered.

"Not at all," de Grandin denied. "If we advertise our presence we have assuredly lost what advantage we have thus far gained, and——"

Somewhere, faint and far-away seeming, as though strained through several tight-locked doors, there came to us a faint, shrill, eery note, a piping, quavering cry like the calling of a screech-owl heard a long way off, and, answering it, subtly, like an echo, another wail.

"Howly Mither, what's that?" Costello asked. "Which way did it come from?"

"From under us, I think," de Grandin answered, "and it is devilment of the most devilish sort, my friend. Come, let us hasten; there is no time to waste!"

We tiptoed down the hall, guided by an occasional flash from Costello's pocket light, crept softly through the kitchen, paused a moment at the basement door to reassure ourselves we followed the right track, then swung the white-enameled door back and passed quietly down the stairs.

At the turn of the stairway we paused, fairly petrified by the scene below us.

Draperies of heavy silk had been hung at all the basement windows, effectively cutting off all telltale gleams of light to the outside world. A heavy Chinese rug, gorgeous with tones of blue and gold and deep rust-red, was spread upon the floor, and at its four corners stood tall vases with perforated tops through which there slowly drifted writhing gray coils of heavy incense. Robed in yellow, a parody of a man squatted cross-legged in the center of the rug, and it needed no second glance to see he was terribly deformed. One arm was a mere shriveled relic of its former self, one shoulder was a full half-foot higher than the other, his spine was dreadfully contorted, and his round bullet-head thrust forward, like that of a vulture contemplating a feast of carrion. His cheeks were sunken, eye-sockets so depressed that they appeared mere hollow caverns, and the yellow skin was drawn drum-tight over his skull so that the lips were retracted from the uneven, discolored teeth studding his gums. "A very death's-head of a face!" I thought.

But this bizarre, uncanny figure squatting between the incense pots was but a stage-property of the show.

Nude and fainting, a young girl was lashed face-forward to a pillar in the floor. Her feet were raised a foot or more above the cement, and round the pillar and her ankles was passed turn after turn of finely knit silken cord, knotting her immovably to the beam and forcing her entire weight upon the thongs which bit so cruelly into her white and shrinking flesh. Her arms were drawn around the post, the wrists crossed and tied at the farther side, but this did little to relieve the strain upon the cords encircling her ankles.

As we came to pause at the turning of the stairs a short and slender brown-

skinned man clad in a sort of apron of yellow silk, but otherwise quite naked, stepped forward from the shadows, raised his right hand and swung a scourge of plaited leather mercilessly, dragging the lash diagonally across the girl's defenseless back.

She screamed and trembled and drew herself convulsively closer to the post to which she was bound, as though she sought to gain protection from her tormentor by forcing her body into the very substance of the pillar.

And at her trembling scream the seated monstrosity laughed silently, and from her other side another yellow-aproned man stepped forth and struck her with a leather lash, and as she screamed again a third attendant who squatted on the floor lifted a reed flute to his lips and with the cunning fidelity of a phonograph mocked her agonized cry with a trilling, quavering note.

As such things will flash through the mind unbidden in times of stress, I could not help comparing her despairing cry and the mockery of the flute to that composition called *Le Roitelet* in which a coloratura soprano sings a series of runs, trills and diversions while a flute accompaniment blends so perfectly with the voice that the listener can hardly say which is human note and which the note of woodwind instrument.

But my random thought was quickly dissipated by de Grandin's sharp whisper to Renouard: "The one at the right for you, the other one for me, my friend!"

THEIR weapons spoke in unison, and once again the noises harmonized, for the deep roar of Renouard's revolver was complemented by the spiteful, whip-like crack of de Grandin's automatic as a tenor complements a bass, and the two whip-wielding torturers pitched forward on the gorgeous rug as though an un-



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seen giant had pushed them from behind.

The flutist half rose from his seat on the floor, but crumpled impotently in the grasp of one of the policemen, while Inspector Renouard fairly hurled himself upon the deformed man and bore him backward.

"*Ah-ha* you pig-swine, I have you now!" he cried exultantly. "You would kill my men and mock the laws of France, and run off to the temple and think you hid successfully from me! You would follow those escaping lovers to America and put snakes and spiders where they could bite me to death, *hein?* You would torture this poor one here until she screamed for mercy while your so detestable musician made mockery of her suffering? Very well; you have had your laugh; now comes mine, *parbleu!* I think my laugh is best!"

He rose, dragging the other with him, and we saw the gleam of steel upon the cripple's wrists. "Sun Ah Poy," he announced formally, "I arrest you for wilful murder, for sedition and subornation of sedition, and for stirring up rebellion against the Republic of France.

"He is your prisoner, Sergeant," he added to Costello. "Look well to him, and on tomorrow morning I shall begin the extradition proceedings."

Costello nodded curtly. "Take 'em out, Hornsby," he ordered with a gesture toward Sun and the other prisoner. "Tell Sullivan an' Esposito to ring for th' van an' run 'em down to headquarters, an' call th' other boys in. We're goin' through this joint." He motioned to the other patrolmen to precede him up the stairs, then turned to us. "Annything I can do, gentlemen?" he asked, and I realized the innate delicacy of the man as I noticed how he conscientiously kept his glance averted from the nude, limp form which de Grandin cut down from the pillar of torture.

"I think not," the little Frenchman answered, looking up from his task with a quick, friendly smile. "We will join you upstairs anon, *mon brave.*"

Together we bent above the unconscious girl. Her white back showed a lattice-work of crossed whip-welts, and in several places the skin had ruptured, letting out the blood where the lash-marks crossed. At de Grandin's mute command I gathered her in my arms and bore her up the stairs to a bedroom, laid her under the covers, then went to help him search the bathroom for boric acid. "It is not much use," he admitted as we applied the powder to her ugly-looking bruises, "but it must do till we can secure opium wash at your house, my friend."

Headed by Costello and Renouard the police searched the house from foundation to ridgepole, but no sign of other occupants could be found, and the Sergeant went to the telephone to tell the city morgue of the bodies lying in the basement. "Will ye be afther comin' along now, sors?" he asked, halting in the doorway to the room where we treated Avis Brindell's hurts.

"But certainly," de Grandin agreed, taking a blanket from the bed and wrapping the girl in it. "Will you set us down at Doctor Trowbridge's, please? We must give this poor one further attention."

WITH the girl's injured back well rubbed with soothing medicine and carefully bandaged, a powerful hypnotic administered to assure her several hours' restful sleep, de Grandin and I joined Costello and Renouard in the study.

"She will do nicely," he pronounced. "By tomorrow morning the hurt will have vanished from her bruises; Christmas night she will assuredly be able to attend her sister's dinner party, though it will be

some time before she may again wear décolleté gowns without some slight embarrassment. However"—he raised eyebrows and shoulders in an expressive shrug—"things might have been much worse, *n'est-ce-pas?*

"Sergeant, *mon brave camarade*"—he looked affectionately at Costello — "I would suggest you telephone Monsieur and Madame McDougal and tell them the lost lady has been found."

He helped himself to a cigar and smoked in thoughtful silence while the big Irishman went to make his report.

"She much resembles her so charming sister, this Madame Avis, does she not?" he asked apropos of nothing as Detective Sergeant Costello rejoined us.

"Yes," I agreed, "the resemblance is remarkable. Indeed, I never recall seeing three women looking more alike than——"

"*Précisément,*" he interrupted. "It is there the explanation lies.

"When first the possibilities of this case appealed to me was when Inspecteur Renouard told Madame McDougal that this Thi-bah, the missing temple-dancer, resembled her," he added.

"Remember, Friend Trowbridge, *Madame's* nerves were all on edge last night because a strange man, a skull-faced Oriental, had accosted her in the streets of Harrisonville? 'That are outrageous!' I told me, but I thought no more about it until the good Renouard pops up like a jack-in-the-box from Cambodia and tells us this story of the runaways from the Angkor temple. When he informs Madame McDougal that the missing Thi-bah resembles her, something goes *click* in this so clever brain of mine —I begin to foresee complications; I also damn suspect why this Oriental with a face like a skeleton's has taken special note of a strange lady in an American city. Yes; Jules de Grandin is like that.

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"Now, as you know, I, too, have sojourned in Cambodia; the secrets of that land are not strange to me. By no means. Of the ways of her people I have inquired deeply, and this I have learned: Should a slave run off from those who own him, or a lady leave her lawful wedded spouse, or the man who claims her without the benefit of clergy, for that matter, the deserted one will seek to find the fugitive, but if he can not do so, he will resort to sympathetic magic to compel the runaway's return.

"You know how in the ancient days, and more recent times, too, the wizards and the witches were wont to make a waxen image of one whom they desired to be rid of, then place the figurine before the fire so it would slowly melt, and as it melted, the original would slowly pine away and die? Of course. Occasionally they would vary their technique by thrusting pins through the image in a vital spot, and as they did so, the poor unfortunate whose effigy the image was was seized with insupportable pains in the same region as that through which the pin was thrust.

"It does sound childish, I admit," he told us with a smile, "but magic is a most real thing, especially if it be believed in, and there is quite reliable evidence that deaths have actually been caused thus.

"Now, the Cambodians have a somewhat similar practise, though it entails double suffering: They procure some person who bears a real or fancied resemblance to the runaway, and thereupon they treat him most discourteously. Sometimes they beat the substitute—that is the usual manner of beginning. If that mild treatment fails they progress to branding with white-hot irons, to cutting off fingers and toes, hands and feet, ears, nose, breasts and tongue, with dull knives. Then comes the interesting process of gouging out the eyes with iron hooks, finally complete evisceration while the unfortunate one still lives and breathes.

"Preposterous? Not necessarily. I, myself, have seen Cambodians' hands wither, as though with leprosy, for no apparent reason, I have seen feet become useless, and seen eyes grow dim and blind. I sought to find some medical explanation and was told there was none. It was simply that some enemy was working sympathetic magic somewhere at a place unknown, and somewhere another poor unfortunate was undergoing excruciating torture that the hated one might also suffer.

"Remember, my friends, the Cambodians *believe* this to be possible, believe it implicitly; that makes a world of difference. So it was with Thi-bah; she who is now Madame Hildebrand. For all of her short life she had been subject to those monkey-faced priests, she was taught to believe in their fell powers, that they might not be able to do all they claimed had never once been entertained in her thought. Undoubtlessly she had seen such cases in the past, had seen unfortunate women tortured that some fugitive might suffer, had seen other unfortunates grow crippled, despair and die because somewhere an enemy worked magic on them.

"When we heard Mademoiselle Avis had been kidnapped and that she was Madame McDougal's sister, the reason for the crime at once leaped to my eye. That she bore family resemblance to her sister, who had been said to much resemble Thi-bah, I made no doubt. What the so amiable Doctor Sun would do in the circumstances I also could assume without great trouble. Therefore we set about finding him and finding him in haste, lest harm befall his unfortunate involuntary guest.

"I was on the point of asking Friend Trowbridge to accompany me to Mon-

sieur Hildebrand's to interview his bride when the young man saved me the trouble by appearing so opportunely. *Alors,* to his house we went; there we beheld his young and pretty wife, and saw the whip-scars take form upon her back, even as we looked. These scars were pyschic force physically manifested, of course, but they were none the less painful for that reason. Also, Mademoiselle Brindell, who served as substitute for her whom Doctor Sun would have liked to torment in person, was no less tortured because she suffered through no fault of hers. There is the answer and the explanation, my friends."

"But——" I began.

"Excusez-moi," he broke in, "I must inquire after Madame Hildebrand.

"And she rests easily?" he asked when his connection had been made and Archy had reported favorably. *"Très bien—ha,* do you tell me so! Excellent, *Monsieur,* I am most happy.

"Monsieur Archy reports," he told us as he replaced the receiver in the hook, "that *Madame* his wife not only rests easily, but that the whip-marks have almost entirely disappeared. A miraculously quick cure for bruises such as we observed this afternoon, *n'est-ce-pas,* Friend Trowbridge?"

"It certainly is," I agreed, "but——"

"And the day after tomorrow we dine with Monsieur and Madame McDougal, *and* the so charming Mademoiselle Avis," he interrupted. "Sergeant, you must go, too. The party would be dismal without you. Me, I devoutly hope they have procured a turkey of noble proportions. At present I could eat one as great as an elephant."

Again he faced us with one of his quick, elfin smiles. "Sergeant, Friend Trowbridge, will you be good enough to excuse Inspecteur Renouard and me for the remainder of the evening?" he asked.

"Come, Renouard, *mon petit singe,* we

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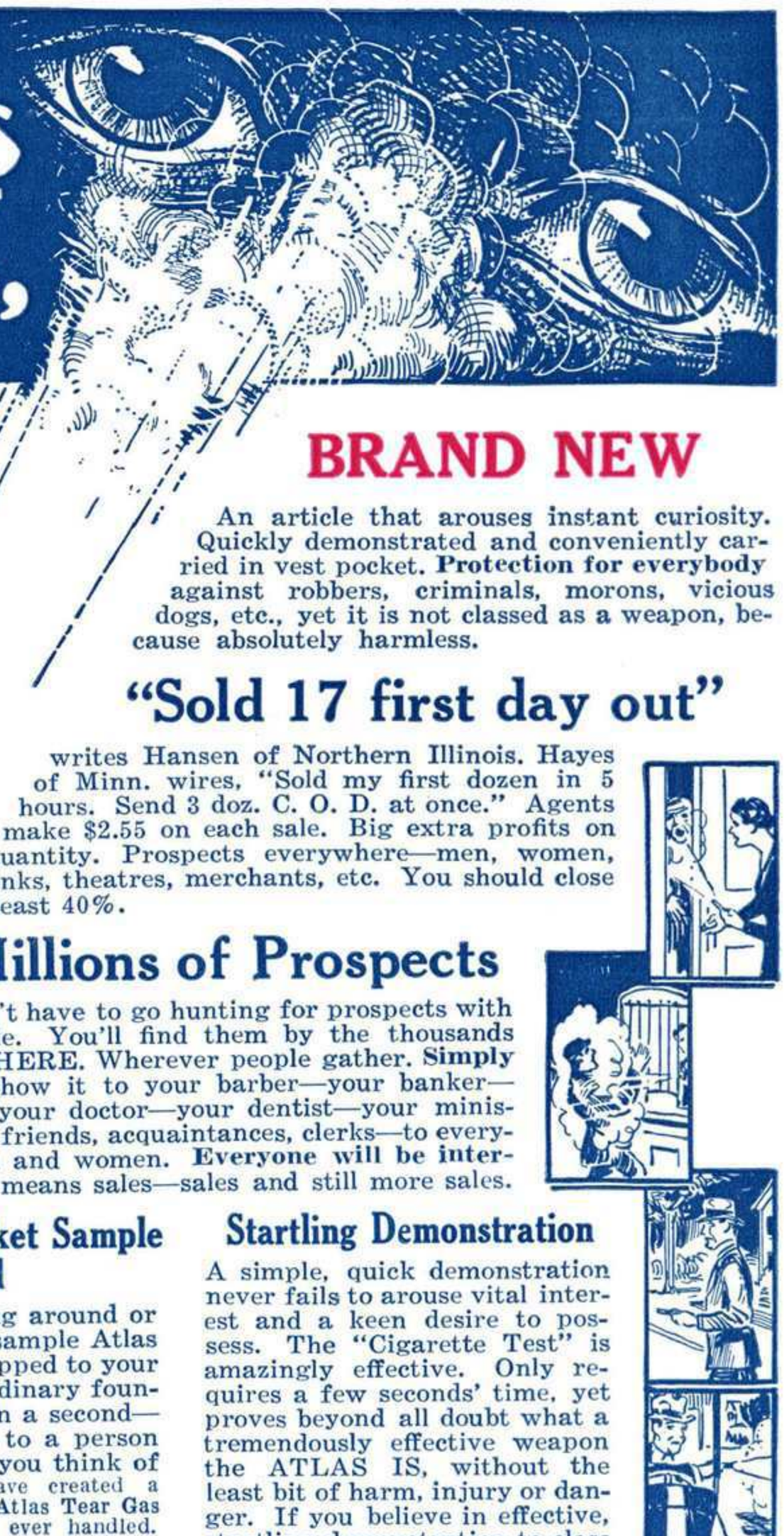


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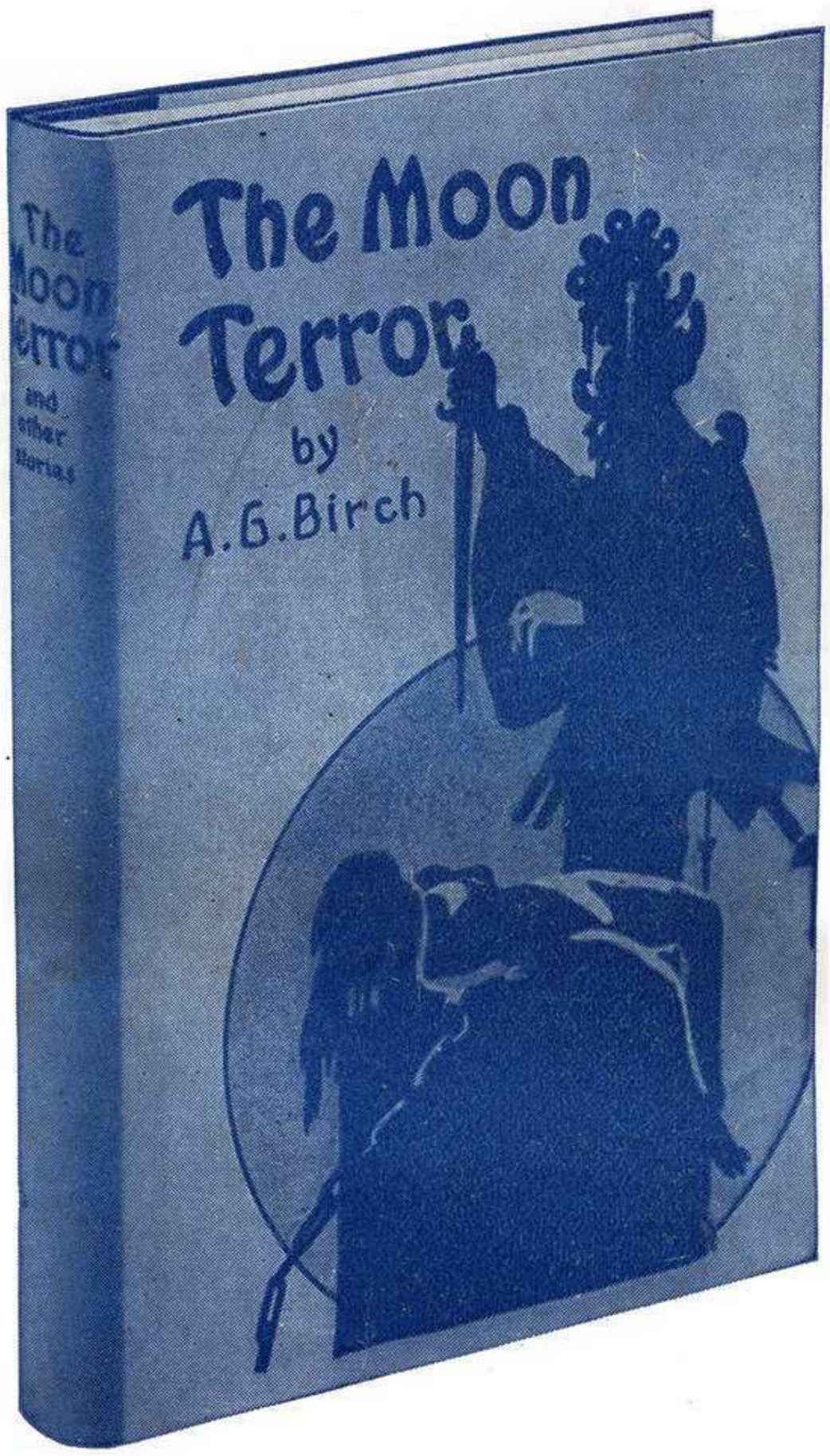
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